

blueprint

I KNOW THE PLANS I HAVE FOR YOU . . . *Jeremiah 29:11*

STRENGTHENING

My Relationship with God and Others

UNDERSTANDING

Who God Is

ABUNDANT

The Life He Promises



SHAPED & CHANGED SALON

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A CUT ABOVE THE REST

*Be shaped and changed because
of what Jesus has done for you!*

By one sacrifice he has made perfect
forever those who are being made holy.

Hebrews 10:14



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Welcome

to the newest issue of Blueprint, a
Christian magazine for teens.

The Bible is God's blueprint for us. Jesus
Christ is the foundation we build on. But we,
as teens, have to do the work of building our
own unique lives of faith.

Join us as we explore how God makes a
difference in our lives, and how He wants us
to make a difference in the world.

"For I know the
plans I have for
you, declares
the LORD, plans
to prosper
you and not
to harm you,
plans to give
you hope and a
future."

—Jeremiah 29:11

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By Lora Schrock

Growing Up without a Father

Once there was a teenage girl who never really gave a lot of thought to the fact that her father didn't pay attention to her—until he left their family for another woman.

It was then, as everything she knew to be true slid into gray, that she realized her dad never had any use for his five children, especially the three girls.

Her parents eventually divorced, and her dad remarried and moved to another state. The girl rushed into a marriage with a man who ended up treating her worse than her father did. Several years and one daughter later, they, too, divorced. The ex-husband also abandoned their daughter, never paying support or taking his visitation. The pattern of growing up without a father was repeating.

Today, my daughter is sixteen. She is bright, wonderful, and has never known her father. Many of you, too, may be growing up without a dad because of divorce, emotional distance, or other circumstances that are no fault of your own. How are you coping with it? Whether you like it or not, not having a strong male model will influence what kind of person you become—so stop and consider a few questions.

Girls, what do your relationships look like? Do you unconsciously seek out a father figure to fill the void of what you never received from your dad? You've seen it in movies or read it in books—a girl longing for the love and acceptance of a man enters into an unhealthy relationship with a guy who is after only one thing. Do you think that it can't happen to you? It can if you don't guard against it. Or, will you avoid men, having decided a long time ago that they are all scum? Don't judge the whole gender based on this experience.

Guys, how do you handle all your emotions concerning your father? Do you keep them hidden under lock and key, never to see the light of day? That could work for a while, but these feelings will come out—sometimes in very self-destructive ways, like alcohol or drug abuse, depression and varied disorders.

Maybe you express your emotions all the time. Counseling or talking to friends and family could be a constructive outlet for what you have to say. Just remember that your pain doesn't have to take center stage all the time.

Does not having a relationship with your dad make you feel like an outcast? A lot of kids are still blessed to be in two-parent homes. You may be treated differently by them because your father isn't around. Just remember that ungodly decisions your parents made do not make you any less of a person. You are special to God.

Even if you have to come to terms with the situation with your dad, somewhere deep inside a question echoes: What's wrong with me? After all, if you had just been smarter, funnier, taller, or an all-around better person, your dad would still be around, right? It's like a slow, dull ache that never goes away. Asking this question is normal, but you must realize that you had nothing to do with your dad's behavior toward you.

OK, that's the bad stuff. Now, here's the truth: God loves you. He knows about your dad and how much you hurt. He created you to be a unique individual before you arrived in this world. "For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb" (Ps. 139:13). He will never leave you (Heb. 13:5b). God is your strong comforter. Even if your earthly father isn't in the picture, God remains "a father to the fatherless, a defender of widows, is God in his holy dwelling" (Ps. 68:5).

Dads aren't the only ones who leave. Moms sometimes leave too.

Here are some tips for coping with friends who have lost parents.

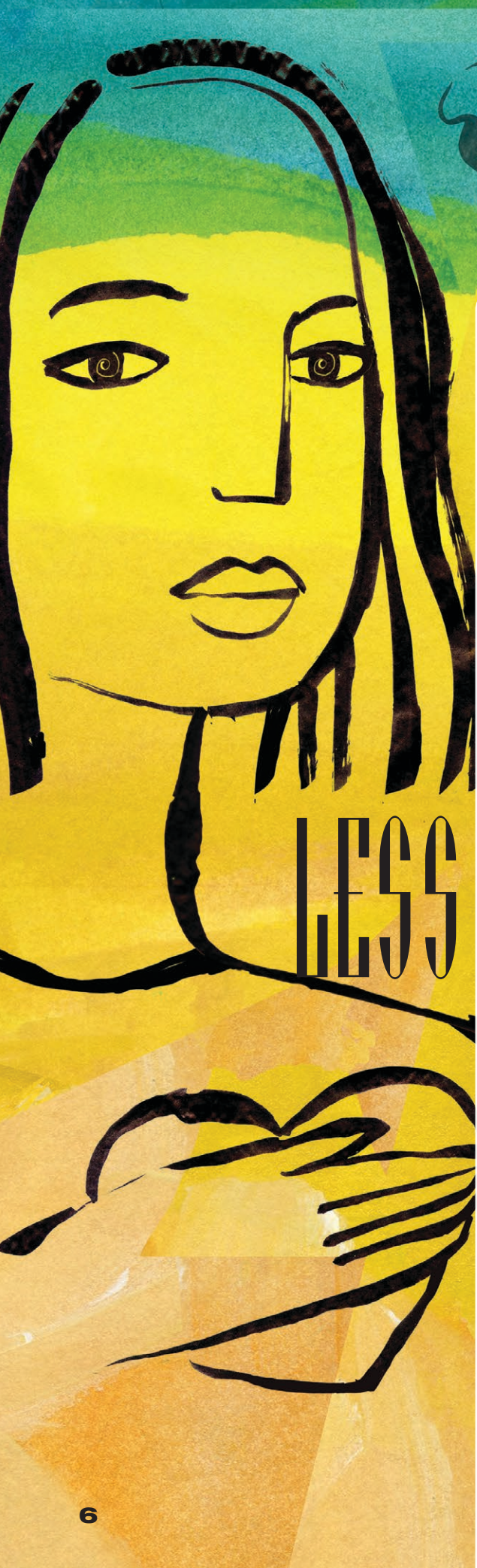
1. Don't avoid them. If you have a friend who is going through a divorce or has experienced death or abandonment within his or her family, now is the time to be there! Drop by, call, send text messages, check in, or put a note or gift in his or her locker. Your friend may be acting like he or she doesn't want anyone around. Create opportunities for the expression of feelings rather than simply avoiding your friend (or the topic) because it is awkward. "A friend loves at all times" (Prov. 17:17a).

2. Pray. Regardless of how your friend is reacting to his or her circumstance, it can't be easy. Your friend needs your prayers on his or her behalf. Pray that he or she comes to know God as Father.

3. If it feels strange to you that your friend is going through this, imagine how strange it feels for him or her. Instead of living at home like usual, your friend may be shuffling from house to house day-to-day or week-to-week. Instead of spending the holidays with family, he or she may be heading to another state. Continue to ask your friend how he or she is adjusting, and be sure to invite him or her over to your home often. Your friend will appreciate a sense of normalcy. A day away may be just what is needed for refreshment.

4. Don't feel like you have to offer advice. If you don't know what your friend is going through, express just that. No matter what counsel you give, your friend may be helpless to remedy the situation. Pray for wisdom about what to say. Everyone's situation is unique. Remind your friend that God cares and He is always constant.

5. Invite them to church and Christian activities you attend. They may not already know God their heavenly Father who loves them unconditionally. Now may be a time when your friend is open to learning more about Christianity. You won't know what they'll say unless you invite them...so do so! If your friend is a Christian, remind him or her of God's promises.



LESS

THAN LOVE

by Tara Janik

Growing up I didn't have the greatest example for a father. He just didn't know what real love was. I could never figure out why, though. If you have seen God's love in others and even experienced it for yourself, doesn't that mean that you have tasted and seen His love?

About two weeks ago I was on the phone with my mom. She was on her way to work and I was sitting in my dorm room grabbing a snack after a full day of school and other responsibilities. She reminded me of a commitment that I had made to her, which I regretted almost as soon as I said it. At the time I said a quick prayer in my head hoping that she hadn't heard me. The way that she carried on with the conversation now somewhat confirmed my prayer and my hope.

I was wrong.

"Remember when you said that your dad never paid attention to you while you were growing up? Well, I have been really thinking about it, and you are right, he never did. Although he would never yell at you, he did pay more attention to your brothers. Tara, I really think that he wanted to be a good dad to his little girl, but he just didn't know how." As she finished her voice cracked, trying to hold back the tears.

It's not that I grew up in a broken home. There was no alcohol and no beatings, but there was verbal abuse. If you have ever been verbally abused, you know the

pain. You may even have spent years confused, not knowing your worth, doubting that you were actually worth anything. At 16, I'd rock myself on my bed behind a locked door and confess over and over what I knew to be true. I was...stupid...ugly...a failure...a waste of breath...on and on. I was nothing. It made little difference if others tried to talk me out of it. They just didn't understand.

Through all of the verbal abuse and my parents' rocky marriage that included countless threats of divorce from both sides and a ten-month separation, I could have turned to many things to find the fulfillment I desperately needed.

Throughout my middle-school years and even through high school, I kept a commitment that I made at twelve not to date until I was old enough for marriage and to save myself until I crossed the threshold of an altar. I am now 20 years old and can say that I have fulfilled that commitment and don't have a single regret. Don't get me wrong. There were countless times I dreamed of turning to a boyfriend to feel loved, beautiful, secure, and safe. I still struggle with insecurity and the need for attention. But I know this to be true: a boyfriend will NEVER bring the kind of security that I had hoped to have once-upon-a-time with my father.

Over the past year, I have begun to pray for my dad (as the Lord has laid on my heart to do) and the relationship with my dad continues to grow. Whatever rocky times you may endure, know that true security cannot be found in a dad who was or wasn't in your life. The Lord's security is all that you will ever need, and He will never leave your side.

"Even if my father and mother abandon me, the Lord will hold me close" (Psalm 27:10, NLT).

carved in stone

Exodus 20:1-3; Psalm 99:2-5; Malachi 3:6

When God spoke the Ten Commandments directly to Moses, the commandments were literally carved in stone. They were also forever “carved in stone” as mirroring God’s character.

If you look carefully at the commandments, you’ll see that they hit all aspects of life—our relationship with God and with others.

► Read Exodus 20:1-3; Psalm 99:2-5; and Malachi 3:6

to discover more about the Ten Commandments and the God who gave them.

► Read Exodus 20:1-3 again.

- How do you think this commandment sets the tone for the other nine?
- Why is this commandment in Exodus 20:3 so important?
- Use Exodus 20:1-3; Psalm 99:2-5; and Malachi 3:6 as the basis for a list of characteristics (attributes) that describe God. Some characteristics will be obvious from the passages; others you can assume based on what the passage tells you about God. When you’re finished, underline the attributes that were true back then and are still true of God today.

Exodus 20:1-3

Psalm 99:2-5

Malachi 3:6

- Based on the words you have underlined, make one observation about God.
- Now, write one observation that must be true about God’s standards for His people.

Exodus 20:1-3

¹And God spoke all these words: ²“I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery. ³You shall have no other gods before me.”

Psalm 99:2-5

²Great is the LORD in Zion; he is exalted over all the nations. ³Let them praise your great and awesome name—he is holy. ⁴The King is mighty, he loves justice—you have established equity; in Jacob you have done what is just and right. ⁵Exalt the LORD our God and worship at his footstool; he is holy.

Malachi 3:6

I the LORD do not change. So you, the descendants of Jacob, are not destroyed.

»mon

Read James 1:17. List the descriptions of God you find in this verse; then complete this sentence using your descriptions: Because God is _____, I _____.

»tues

Read James 1:17 again. What images come to mind when you read this verse? Illustrate James 1:17.

»wed

On a piece of blank paper, draw different gift boxes. On each box, write some of the good and perfect gifts God has given you.

»thurs

During the day, observe the play of shadows and light. Watch the sun set or stargaze. Read Psalm 19:1-6. God created the heavenly lights, but unlike the lights, He doesn't change.

»fri

Read Psalm 102:27 and Hebrews 13:8. List some of the changes you've experienced this year (a move, graduation, a new friend). How did you feel about these changes? Thank God for never changing in a constantly changing world.

»sat

Read James 1:17 one more time. Just as God doesn't change, neither do His standards. Ask God to help you be consistent in following Him.

Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows.

James 1:17

FUTURE SHOCK

There's something about living in the twenty-first century that feels as if we're living out a strange science-fiction novel.

No matter how high-tech the twenty-first century is, God is still in control of the universe. And the twenty-first century might be the century in which the Lord returns.

You might not be the next president, but clues from life today can help you imagine what life will be like in the future. Use these questions to help you paint a picture of what the future might look like.

What will be standard equipment on cars 10 years from now?

What do you think will be "in," as far as clothes styles, in the year 2025?

List the main problems people face in the world today. Circle the ones you think will be solved in the twenty-first century, and underline the ones you think we'll still be dealing with in the twenty-second century if Jesus doesn't return before then.

What is the most exciting thing you hope will happen by the year 2025?

The Bible says that God never changes. Is this good news to you? Why?

THEN & NOW

As you reflect on this timeline and on the Then & Now statements, consider how far things have come, but keep in mind that God was faithful then, He is faithful now, and He will remain faithful to those who trust Him in the future.

1901

Marconi receives first transatlantic wireless message in Newfoundland

1913

Assembly line and mass production of cars

1918

Women over thirty get the right to vote in Great Britain

1903

Wright Brothers

1914-1918

World War I

1920

Women's suffrage movement in U.S.

1922

Soviet states form the U.S.S.R.

- » If you asked your grandparents to describe what it was like to watch the space shuttle *Challenger* explode on live TV, most would be able to describe, in detail, their reaction to this event.
- » If you asked your parents where they were on 9/11, they probably could describe, in detail, their reactions to events as they unfolded on TV and on the Internet.
- » Think about a life-changing event from your own life. Chances are you can remember very specific details, even if it happened years ago.

There are some world events that are frozen in time (and in our memories), because they changed the way we feel about the world.

In fact, the twentieth century was one massive

period of change. But with all the changes that have taken place, it's good to know that God, who doesn't change, is still in control of the world in the twenty-first century.

Take a look at how things were then, and how they are now.

THEN: At the turn of the twentieth century, if people wanted to hear music, they had to play it themselves or get a player piano. Many homes had an upright piano in the parlor for family sing-alongs.

NOW: To hear music, you can download any song instantly or stream it over the Internet.

1930

The Great Depression

1937

Mussolini comes to power in Italy

1941

Pearl Harbor attacked

1948

Israel becomes a nation

1952

Polio vaccine discovered

1954

Civil rights movement in U.S., segregation outlawed

1933

Hitler comes to power in Germany

1939-1945

World War II

1945

Atom bomb dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki

1952

Hydrogen bomb exploded in test

1965
Voting Rights
Act

1969
Man lands
on the moon

1979
Iran hostage
crisis

1983
First commercial
cell phone approved

1986
Challenger
explosion

1989-1991
Fall of Communism
in Europe

1963
JFK was
assassinated

1965
Racial riots begin in
numerous cities

1973
Roe v. Wade decision
legalizing abortions in the U.S.

1982
AIDS epidemic
comes to light

1989
Berlin Wall torn down,
Germany reunited

THEN: Alexander Graham Bell's invention changed the way people communicated with each other. In 1900, one home in thirteen had a telephone.

NOW: People own cell phones. We receive messages and information over the Internet.

THEN: In the early 1900s, only one U.S. home in seven had bathtubs, and showers were more rare.

NOW: It's hard to imagine facing the day without a morning shower!

THEN: In 1918, 500,000 Americans died from the "Spanish" influenza (that actually began in China), which affected 25 percent of the population.

NOW: Although some people still die from the flu, it's uncommon

THEN: In 1928, Alexander Fleming discovered penicillin. It wasn't used until 1939 when Dr. Fleming injected the entire supply—a teaspoonful—into a patient fighting an infection.

NOW: Doctors call in patients' prescriptions, choosing from all different kinds of antibiotics to fight off everyday infections people used to die from.

THEN: In 1939, NBC televised the opening ceremonies of the New York World's Fair. People crowded around 9 by 12-inch black and white screens on display at the RCA exhibit.

NOW: Can you imagine life without television?

THEN: In 1944, the first automatic general purpose digital computer was completed at Harvard University. It had 760,000 parts and 500 miles of wire and broke down frequently.

NOW: An incoming freshman probably brings his or her own computer to college and researches term papers online.

THEN: The first Japanese tape recorder was produced in 1950 by Tokyo Tsushin Kogyo (Sony). An engineer designed one that weighed nearly 40 pounds, used rice paper tape, and sold for nearly \$500.

NOW: People listen to music using small portable devices or cell phones while they jog or study.

1991
Persian Gulf War

1995
Devastating Oklahoma
City Bombing

2007
Original iPhone
Launched

2013
Boston Marathon
bombing

2001
World Trade Center
destroyed by terrorists

2008
Barack Obama is first U.S.
African-American president elected

2017
Donald Trump elected
President of the United States

Then & Now statistics and information are from Oct. 2013.

His day, His way

selections from Genesis, Exodus, Acts, 1 Corinthians

The commandment to “remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy” doesn’t sound as serious or as significant as “You shall not murder” or “You shall not steal.” Why does God want people to keep one day in His way?

Fill in as much information as you can discover or assume from Genesis 2:1-3; Exodus 20:8-11; 31:13; Acts 20:7; and 1 Corinthians 16:1-2 about the Lord’s Day.

▶ The First “Lord’s Day”

(Gen. 2:1-3)

▶ The Israelites’ “Lord’s Day”

(Ex. 20:8-11; 31:13)

▶ The New Testament “Lord’s Day”

(Acts 20:7; 1 Cor. 16:1-2)

▶ Your conclusions on what your “Lord’s Day” should include:

Genesis 2:1-3

¹Thus the heavens and the earth were completed in all their vast array. ²By the seventh day God had finished the work he had been doing; so on the seventh day he rested from all his work. ³Then God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it he rested from all the work of creating that he had done.

Exodus 20:8-11

⁸“Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. ⁹Six days you shall labor and do all your work, ¹⁰but the seventh day is a sabbath to the LORD your God. On it you shall not do any work, neither you, nor your son or daughter, nor your male or female servant, nor your animals, nor any foreigner residing in your towns.

¹¹For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but he rested on the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.

Exodus 31:13

¹³“Say to the Israelites, ‘You must observe my Sabbaths. This will be a sign between me and you for the generations to come, so you may know that I am the LORD, who makes you holy.’”

Acts 20:7

On the first day of the week we came together to break bread. Paul spoke to the people and, because he intended to leave the next day, kept on talking until midnight.

1 Corinthians 16:1-2

¹Now about the collection for the Lord’s people: Do what I told the Galatian churches to do. ²On the first day of every week, each one of you should set aside a sum of money in keeping with your income, saving it up, so that when I come no collections will have to be made.

devos daily Faith

»mon

List some reasons for going to church. Are there any reasons why someone might not be able to go to church?

»tues

Underline the phrase "let us encourage one another" in Hebrews 10:25. Call a friend from church, or jot an encouraging note to your youth leader.

»wed

Make plans to help someone on Sunday. For example, volunteer to baby-sit for free so a couple can enjoy the afternoon together.

»thurs

Thank God for different people in your church who have encouraged you. Make a point to talk to these people on Sunday.

»fri

During the weekend, spend extra time in personal Bible study. Read Hebrews 10:24-25 and think of practical ways you can follow these verses.

»sat

Before you go to sleep, pray about the way you'll spend the day tomorrow. Ask God to make this Sunday special.

Not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching

Hebrews 10:25

TIME SLICE

Relationships and things

When you appreciate what you have, you are less concerned about material things.

Make a top 10 happy list today.

Pass the peas, please. Kids who eat dinner with their families are less likely to have an eating disorder, eat healthier foods, and are less likely to be overweight.

Did you know just **watching T.V. can make you unhappy?** Ads make you want what you can't have. Do yourself a favor—go outside!

Research shows that most **parents are as technically tuned in as their 11-17 year olds.** Instead of texting each other... try talking instead.

Quiz

An old church hymn describes Sunday as the best day of the week. For a lot of people that's a better description of their Saturdays. How do you spend the Lord's Day? Check the boxes that best describe your Lord's Day experience.

- **Sunday mornings at my house**

- ☐ are the craziest times all week. It's like rush hour traffic in the bathroom.
- ☐ begin with a leisurely Sunday breakfast, the only uninterrupted meal all week.
- ☐ Saturday, Sunday—there's not much difference.
- ☐ other

- **At church, my family**

- ☐ sits together.
- ☐ scatters in 10 different directions and maybe meets at home after church.
- ☐ is represented by me.
- ☐ other

- **After church, my family**

- ☐ likes to have company for dinner.
- ☐ naps!
- ☐ participates in sports events.
- ☐ other

- **Sunday afternoons, I**

- ☐ don't have to do any chores.
- ☐ can hang out with my friends as long as the family doesn't have plans.
- ☐ finish homework and hang around the house.
- ☐ other

- **By the end of the day, I feel**

- ☐ tired. I do too much on Sundays.
- ☐ overdosed on family time.
- ☐ ready to face anything . . . well, maybe not a Monday morning.
- ☐ other

What would you change about the way you spend the Lord's Day?

What would you keep the same?

Just because the Lord's Day is a day of rest doesn't mean it's a day of boredom. It's a day to take a break from the routine and enjoy your relationship with God and His people.

- Write down your own ideas of how you'd like to spend the Lord's Day, and put your plan into action.

Journal



A Day Apart

Sunday means a lot of things to different people: church, Sunday dinner, Grandma's house, or sports. For some, Sunday is so full of church or family obligations that it has become a day to dread, not to enjoy. For others, Sunday is just an extra day to play or sleep, and God is forgotten or ignored.

What was the great idea God had behind a day of rest? Why was it such a big deal in the Old Testament? And does it matter to us today?

First, one thing might need some clearing up. Many Christians today use the words *Sabbath* and *Sunday* as if they mean the same thing. The Sabbath was the seventh day of the week, Saturday. Since the Lord's resurrection, many Christians celebrate Sunday as the Lord's special day.

Whatever its purpose, this day was so important that God included it as one of the Ten Commandments: "Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy" (Exod. 20:8). Ironically, this commandment is probably the least remembered and the least important to some people.

From the very beginning God knew what was very important—a day set apart for God. After God finished creating the world, He rested from the work He had done. Genesis 2:3 says that God blessed the seventh day and made it holy. Picture God standing back and celebrating the good work He had done.

The Sabbath wasn't supposed to be a typical day off, but a weekly reminder for God's people to stop work and worship their Creator.

The Old Testament gives some other reasons behind this commandment. One is that by taking a day

off from our work we acknowledge our dependence upon God.

Psalms 104:14-15 reminds us of where our food, our wealth, and life itself comes from. "He makes grass grow for the cattle, and plants for people to cultivate—bringing forth food from the earth: wine that gladdens human hearts, oil to make their faces shine, and bread that sustains their hearts." The Sabbath reminds us that we are the creatures, not the Creator.

It also reminds us of our responsibility to God's other creatures. Check out Exodus 23:12. The Sabbath shows God's care and love for all of His creation.

By Jesus' day, many people had lost sight of why God had commanded His people to keep the Sabbath. Instead, the Pharisees turned it into a drudgery with all kinds of rules and regulations about what you could and couldn't do. Instead of a joyful day of celebration and rest, it became a game of one-upmanship and self-righteousness. Jesus Himself felt the brunt of the Pharisees' self-righteous judgment.

One Sabbath Jesus and His disciples walked through a wheat field on their way to a synagogue. They stopped to pluck and eat grain kernels because they were hungry. The Pharisees accused the disciples of "harvesting"—that is, working—on the Sabbath.

Jesus reminded them that King David once took holy bread from the tabernacle to feed his hungry soldiers on a Sabbath, and even the priests who serve in the temple have to work on the Sabbath (Matt. 12:1-14).

Another time, Jesus decided to force a confrontation because He knew the Pharisees were just looking for an excuse to accuse Him. There was a man in the

synagogue with a crippled hand. Jesus had the man stand before the crowd, then turned to address the Pharisees: “Which is lawful on the Sabbath: to do good or to do evil, to save life or to kill?” (Mark 3:4). The Pharisees didn’t answer. Jesus was angry at their “stubborn hearts” and then He healed the man.

Jesus’ example reminds us not to be legalistic or overly restrictive in our approach to this special day. On the other hand, many Christians today don’t take the concept of a day of rest seriously enough.

In celebrating the Lord’s Day, you might take a lesson from the Jewish tradition of the Sabbath. The Jewish Sabbath begins Friday at sunset and ends at sunset on Saturday. On Friday night each family gathers at home for dinner. Special food is served, psalms are sung, Scripture is read, prayers are offered, and two candles are lit—one for obedience to God’s law and one to remember what God has done for Israel. On Saturday, Jews go to the synagogue to worship.

One way Christians can be better prepared for worship is to think about their Sunday activities the night before.

Here are some other ways you might (in principle) “keep the Sabbath” before God.

- **Be ready.** Spend time reading your Bible before church. Take time to pray for the worship service.
- **Be a servant.** Get involved by leading a Bible study, singing, or working in the nursery.
- **Be a family member.** One of the most significant things the Jewish Sabbath celebration can teach us is the importance of family worship. Take time to be with your parents and relatives.
- **Be quiet.** The Bible says, “Be still, and know that I am God” (Ps. 46:10). Spend time nurturing your relationship with Jesus. Take advantage of God’s great plan for a day of rest.

PSALMS ARE SUNG, SCRIPTURE IS READ, PRAYERS ARE OFFERED



BLUE LAWS

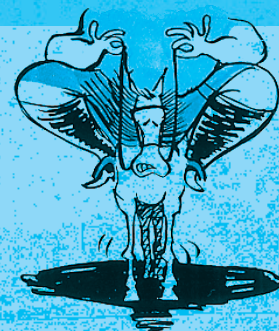
It seems as if people have been trying for centuries to figure out how to keep the Sabbath or Sunday as holy. In Jesus' day, the Pharisees added hundreds of nitpicky little laws to God's commandment.

This didn't end with the Pharisees. In colonial New England, some of the earliest printed laws were called "Blue Laws" that restricted Sunday activities.

Back then things were pretty strict. For example, a mother couldn't even kiss her own child on Sunday. Here are some humorous blue laws. Can you imagine enforcing these?



- In **Opal, Wyoming**, a woman who weighs over two hundred pounds can't ride a horse anywhere in public on Sunday.



- In **Studley, Virginia**, it's prohibited to swing a yo-yo anywhere in public on Sunday.



- In **Blackwater, Kentucky**, when you're at church, avoid tickling a woman under her chin with a feather duster. (You might have to pay a \$10 fine and spend a day in jail.)



- In **Honey Creek, Iowa**, only a policeman may carry a slingshot to church.



- Are you a sloppy eater? In **Gilman, Connecticut**, it's illegal to slurp your soup on Sunday. If you do, you could be arrested and fined \$5.



- If you live in **Slaughter, Louisiana**, you better not race your turtle on Sunday. In fact, don't even think about doing it within a 100-yard radius of a church building any time of the week.



be a people person

selections from Exodus, Ephesians, Romans

You talk about parents, siblings, and teachers. You talk about who's dating whom and who just broke up. Relationships make for some interesting conversations as well as some interesting living. It's a good thing God gave His people some guidelines about relationships. Read Exodus 20:12; Ephesians 6:1-3; Exodus 20:13-14; Romans 13:9-10.

► Read Exodus 20:12 and Ephesians 6:1-3.

- How do "honor" and "obey" differ in meaning?
- What does it mean to obey your parents "in the Lord"?
- How long should a person keep honoring his or her parents? How does this question apply to a child? A teen? A newlywed? A middle-aged person?
- Think up a slogan about ways you and your peers can "honor" and "obey" your parents.

► Read Exodus 20:13 and Romans 13:9-10.

- What did Paul mean when he said that all the commands are summed up in this one rule: "Love your neighbor as yourself"?
- Put Romans 13:10 into your own words.

► Read Exodus 20:14 and reread Romans 13:9-10.

- Discuss how God's commandment should affect dating relationships.
- What do these three commandments tell us about God and about human beings?

Exodus 20:12-14

¹²Honor your father and your mother, so that you may live long in the land the Lord your God is giving you. ¹³You shall not murder. ¹⁴You shall not commit adultery.

Romans 13:9-10

⁹The commandments, "You shall not commit adultery," "You shall not murder," "You shall not steal," "You shall not covet," and whatever other command there may be, are summed up in this one command: "Love your neighbor as yourself." ¹⁰Love does no harm to a neighbor. Therefore love is the fulfillment of the law.

Ephesians 6:1-3

¹Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. ²"Honor your father and mother"—which is the first commandment with a promise—³so that it may go well with you and that you may enjoy long life on the earth."

»mon

Read Matthew 22:37-39. Look at the second greatest commandment in verse 39. Describe or draw ways you "love" yourself. Ask God to help you love others the same way.

»tues

Read Matthew 22:37-39 again. How would your relationship with God and with others be different if you followed these commands?

»wed

Keeping in mind Matthew 22:39, read Ephesians 6:1-3 and write down two unusual ways you can follow these verses.

»thurs

Read Matthew 22:38. Write a letter to God, expressing your commitment to love Him with all of your heart, soul, and mind.

»fri

Make a list of people you know fairly well. Next to each name, put a plus sign if you feel good about the relationship or a minus sign if you don't. Rely on God to help you turn the negative relationships into positive ones.

»sat

Use Matthew 22:37-39 as the basis of a prayer to God about your relationship with Him and with others.

Jesus replied, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind." This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: "Love your neighbor as yourself."

Matthew 22:37-39

GETTING AWAY

WITH MURDER

It's easy to get away with murder—the murder of a person's self-respect and worth. The real crime is attacking the value of a person God has created.

Here are some different ways we get away with murder.

- **Don't tell anyone, but . . .**

Gossip is one of the top killers of friendships and reputations. Even so-called prayer requests can be a cover for juicy gossip. When you gossip, you damage that person's image and respect in the eyes of someone else.

- **He's hot!**

None of us like to think that we treat people as sex objects, but perhaps we do. When we salivate over that guy on the football team or at school, we don't see him as a person with fears and hopes and dreams. Not off the hook, same goes for guys checking out girls.

In our dating relationships, do we respect and honor the other person? Do we bring out the best in others? Do they bring out our best?

- **The outsiders**

Often we don't go out of our way to include people and hope they just keep their distance. Usually they do and fade into the background, perhaps believing that God really messed up when it came to making them. We miss out on a lot when we don't move beyond our circle of friends. Even the most off-beat person has value to God.

- **The truth hurts**

Being honest in relationships isn't a license to blast someone. Ephesians 4:15 says to speak the truth in love. The truth might hurt for a bit, but if it's spoken in love, in the long run it builds up someone and makes him or her a better person.

Let's treat people we meet as if they were great works of art. After all, they (and we) are God's greatest creation. And He doesn't make mistakes.

The Great Debate

What to do when your parents say no.

The Parent Trap

Sound familiar? Just when you think you've got your parents figured out, they surprise you. As a Christian and a son or daughter, you're expected to honor your father and mother. But how can you when they just don't seem to understand?

Mindy really felt cramped by her father's decision. From her perspective, he hadn't even thought about it. He'd just said a flat-out no. What can you do when you're up against the parental no?

In this case, Mindy told her father up front what she considered the most important information. Her friends from church would be there. It wasn't going to be a high-pressure situation. She just wanted to have fun.

When her father said no, Mindy had four options.

- She could argue until he gave in.
- She could ignore his advice and secretly plan to attend the party anyway.
- She could unconditionally accept his answer and skip the party.
- She could try to discuss the matter with him again.

Chances are her father had reasons for saying no. But he wasn't aware of how important the party was to Mindy. He may not have realized just how much his little girl has grown up, and he's reluctant to cut the strings. A loving father or mother can be slightly overprotective.

Perhaps Mindy's father wasn't a Christian as a teenager and knows from experience how out of control some parties can get. Lastly, he could have other reasons for saying no. He might not trust her judgment, or he might be angry at her for something else.

Mindy decided to find out why her father had said no. She also wanted to explain her own reasons in more detail. In talking with her dad, Mindy discovered that he remembered a time when as a Christian he was at a party that got way out of control. He'd been carted off to the police station where he had to take humiliating alcohol and drug tests before he was cleared and released.

After listening to each other, Mindy and her father reached a happy compromise. Mindy was allowed to attend the party with her friends, knowing that if at any time she started to feel uncomfortable, she could call her father. She promised to give him the details of the party the next morning. Her father's mind was set at ease knowing he could trust her.

"Dad," Mindy said, "Friday night my friends from youth group are planning on going to a party at Laura Bent's house. Is it OK if I go?"

"Mindy, Laura isn't a Christian, is she?" Dad asked.

"Well, no, but . . ."

"I think you'd better skip this one."

Parents Are People Too

Based on Mindy's experience, here are some suggestions for working things out with your parents.

- Find out what works and what doesn't work. Arguing and throwing a temper tantrum is a poor way to build a trusting relationship with your parents. You might accomplish a short-term goal if they give in. Yet the Bible commands you to honor your parents. Parents will usually treat you with respect if you earn it.
- Many kids secretly rebel against their parents' wishes. Planning to do behind their backs what your parents have already objected to is deceitful. You wouldn't trust someone who talked about you behind your back, but in essence, this is what you expect your parents to do if you secretly rebel.
- Unconditional acceptance of parental standards might seem like the most obvious way to "honor" your parents, but it may not be. Parents are people. They make mistakes. Learning from mistakes helps everyone grow spiritually. Your parents might never learn to trust you if they never allow you to venture out on your own.

So don't be afraid to occasionally ask them to reconsider a decision.

Timing Is Everything

The next time your parents say no, find out why they said it. One major word of advice: Timing is important. Choose a time when your parents have a minute to discuss the matter—not when they're stressed out or not after a rough day. Be considerate of their needs as well as your own.

When you're ready to talk, try not to put them on the defensive. Let them know you respect their judgment, but you feel more discussion might be in order.

Then present your facts. Make sure you're honest and direct with your parents. Give them a chance to explain their concerns with you. This builds trust and respect between you and your parents.

Really listen. You might discover your parents were justified in their decision. They could surprise you with how well they understand your situation. Or, like Mindy's dad, they might reveal an incident from their past that would help you understand their reactions. Discuss the problem honestly and intelligently, then allow your parents to come to a final conclusion. Whatever the decision, stick to it! Otherwise, your parents may not trust you the next time.

This method isn't a scheme to help you get your own way. Sometimes your parents will still make decisions you won't agree with. But it does provide you a chance to learn to respect and trust each other. You'll both benefit from talking to each other. And you will have discovered more of what it means to honor your parents.



to have or not to have

Exodus 20:15, 17 and Luke 12:13-21

Some people say that sometimes it's right to steal. You're starving and need food. Or the classic case: your father is dying and you can't afford the medicine to save his life. How rigid is the commandment not to steal? What kind of attitude does God want His followers to have about money and possessions?

▶ Read Exodus 20:15, 17.

- ▶ Look at Exodus 20:15 again. How absolute is this commandment?
- ▶ In Exodus 20:17, what does the word *covet* mean? What's the difference between coveting and admiring something?
- ▶ List some items people your age covet.
- ▶ Rewrite verse 17 using modern terms and examples.

Exodus 20:15 assumes our right to own things. But we have to be careful that possessions don't begin to control our lives.

▶ Read Luke 12:13-21.

- ▶ Look at the list about things people covet that you made. How can these possessions rule a person's life?
- ▶ Write a short sentence that summarizes Jesus' stand on the issue of greed and material possessions.
- ▶ Why do you think Jesus used the illustration of a man who had many crops but was soon going to die?
- ▶ What are some clues to watch for that tell us we are becoming too wrapped up in our possessions?

Exodus 20:15, 17

¹⁵You shall not steal. ¹⁷You shall not covet your neighbor's house. You shall not covet your neighbor's wife, or his male or female servant, his ox or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor.

Luke 12:13-21

¹³Someone in the crowd said to him, "Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me."

¹⁴Jesus replied, "Man, who appointed me a judge or an arbiter between you?"

¹⁵Then he said to them, "Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; life does not consist in an abundance of possessions."

¹⁶And he told them this parable: "The ground of a certain rich man yielded an abundant harvest. ¹⁷He thought to himself, 'What shall I do? I have no place to store my crops.'

¹⁸"Then he said, 'This is what I'll do. I will tear down my barns and build bigger ones, and there I will store my surplus grain. ¹⁹And I'll say to myself, "You have plenty of grain laid up for many years. Take life easy; eat, drink and be merry."

²⁰"But God said to him, 'You fool! This very night your life will be demanded from you. Then who will get what you have prepared for yourself?'

²¹"This is how it will be with whoever stores up things for themselves but is not rich toward God."

»mon

Read Luke 12:30-31. Make a list of your needs and another of your wants. Cross out the items you truly can live without. Are you willing to trust God to take care of your needs?

»tues

Do you think it's easier for a rich person or a poor person to have a Christian attitude toward possessions? Ask God to help you develop attitudes about possessions that please Him.

»wed

If possible, sit outside for a while and observe how God cares for His creation. Afterward, express your thanks to God for taking care of His creation—including people!

»thurs

Read Luke 12:22-31. Choose another example from nature and write an illustration of God's care for His creation. Include some of your observations from Wednesday.

»fri

Skim Luke 12:22-31. In a sentence or two, summarize the key message of this passage. Ask God to make you content as you seek His kingdom first.

»sat

Read Luke 12:30-31 again. How will you go about seeking the kingdom of God in the coming week?

“For the pagan world runs after all such things, and your Father knows that you need them. But seek his kingdom, and these things will be given to you as well.”

Luke 12:30-31

Enough? Stuff.

You might call it the right stuff—a smart phone, \$100 gym shoes, sports team jackets, \$50 haircuts—stuff that will attract other people's attention and make them sigh with envy.

But what if you don't own what it takes to get noticed? What if you're the one in the generic clothes, the hand-me-downs, the cheap gym shoes? How does having inferior stuff make you feel inside?

Everyone wants certain things, but we can't always have everything we want, whenever we want it.

Bummer, huh?

We talked with a high school youth group from the south side of Chicago, and here's what they had to say about stuff, money, and their attitudes. What do you think?

How content are you?

Larry: I'm not content because there are some things I want that I just can't get!

Gavin: I'm not content, and I never will be content because it's not in human nature to be content.

How do you feel when you don't have what you want?

Atesha: Upset. I don't have a job, so if I want something, I know my parents have to buy it, and if they don't want to, then I just don't get it.

Larry: If I can't get something, I don't really worry about it, 'cause it's gonna play out in about two months anyway.

Ronaldo: There are some things I want and I have my own money to buy the stuff, but my parents won't let me buy what I want!

Eon: Yeah, you might have money to get stuff, but your parents might say no.

How do you feel about money?

Eon: I feel I always need to have some in my pocket.

Ronaldo: I love money!

Gavin: Money in itself means nothing to me; it's just a vehicle that allows me to get what I want.

Larry: Money is nice, but I don't want to get to the point where I'm going crazy over it. I want enough to get what I want and still have a little bit left in my pocket.

Atesha: I love money, but I wouldn't do anything to get it. If I have it, that's real good, but if I don't, that's OK too.

Charlene: Money is no object when I don't have any. But when I get it, I don't want to let it go!

Charlene, Gavin, and Eon have jobs, but Larry, Atesha, and Ronaldo don't work. All still receive money from parents.

What do you do with your money?

Larry: I give to the church, buy my bus pass, go out with my girlfriend, and save the rest. I get \$50 a week.

Gavin: Food, clothes, and tithes.

Atesha: Buy clothes, or whatever I see that I want at the time.

Charlene: It's not that much, so I save it.

Ronaldo: I spend it on whatever comes to mind.

Eon: I put some of it in the offering each Sunday. The rest I spend.

Are you ever jealous of people because of what they have?

Charlene: I used to be, but with God's help, I'm learning not to be so envious.

Gavin: Only if someone is getting what he or she wants in the wrong way. It's like I'm earning my share, but it bothers me that someone is getting things illegitimately.

Atesha: Usually, I'm not jealous of someone's stuff. Even if I get what I want, I know I still may not be satisfied. Like if I get a designer coat, a couple of months later I'm going to want the latest designer coat. My parents aren't going to keep buying stuff just 'cause I want it.

Gavin: When I was younger, I used to wear a lot of generic clothes and shoes and people used to make fun of me. So when I got a job I went stupid-crazy and blew my money on great clothes so people would no longer see me as "Gavin with the generic clothes."

Where does God fit in with your wants and desires? We know God will supply our needs, but what about our wants? Do you pray about your wants?

Atesha: Sometimes I pray about what I want.

Larry: Yes, but I don't name them specifically; I just say "my needs and wants."

Gavin: Not really, because God does things when He feels like doing them, so my praying isn't going to do any good.

The truth is that God is concerned about your needs and your desires, but He also knows what's best for you.

God sometimes makes us wait for things until He knows we can be trusted to handle what we want. An eighteen-year-old may be able to deal with the responsibility of a car better than a sixteen-year-old.

Owning stuff isn't unchristian as long as you use your possessions for God! It's your attitude toward your stuff that makes the difference in what you do with it.

And remember, no matter what you have or don't have, God's plan for you is the best.

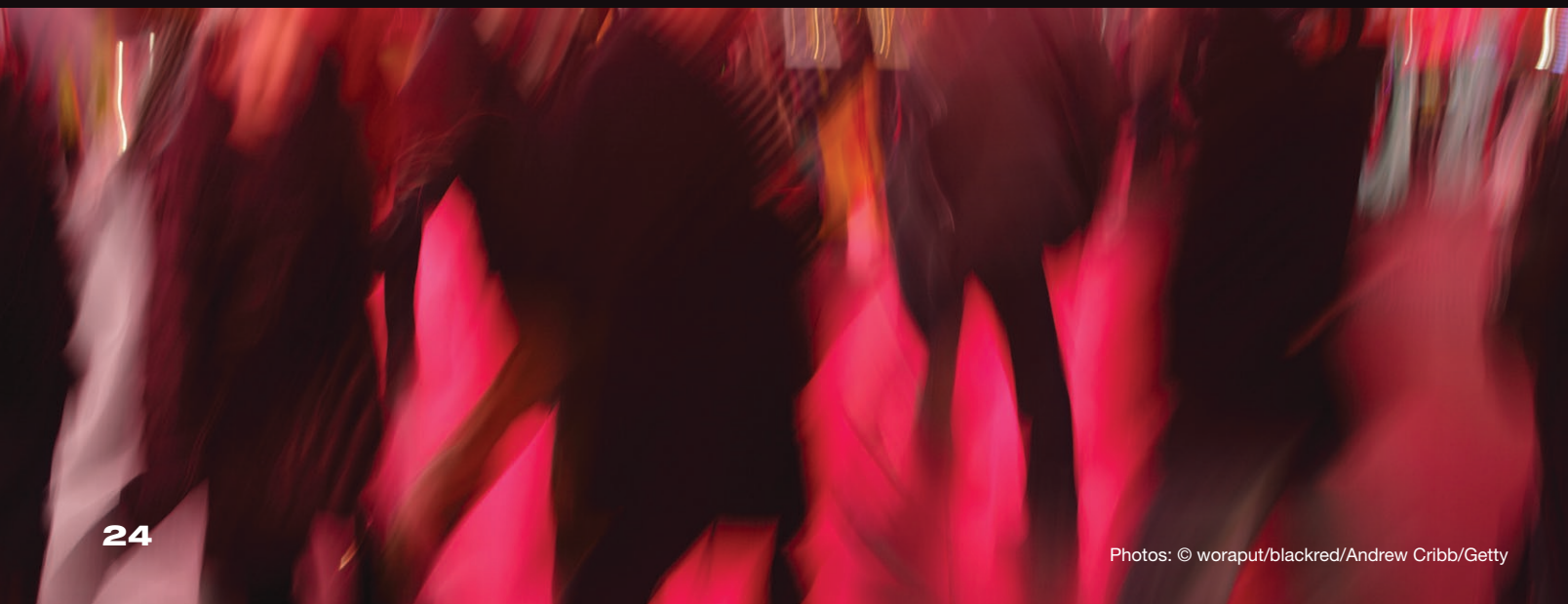




For the pagan world runs after all such things, and your Father knows that you need them.



But seek his kingdom, and these things will be given to you as well. Luke 12:30-31



i cannot tell a lie

Exodus 20:16; Numbers 23:11-20

Even if George Washington did tell the truth about the cherry tree, he probably had his off days when he didn't tell the truth. It's almost second nature for people to dodge the truth and lie.

▶ Read Numbers 23:11-20.

In today's Bible study, Balaam could honestly say he couldn't tell a lie. Read Numbers 23:11-20 to find out why Balaam was honest.

- ▶ Balaam wasn't exactly a spiritual giant, but he did have enough sense to tell the truth. What things might have tempted him to be less than a truthful communicator of God's message?
- ▶ If Balaam hadn't delivered the complete truth, what do you think might have happened to him? Give a reason for your answer.

▶ Read Exodus 20:16 and Numbers 23:19-20.

- ▶ Contrast God's character with people's inclination to be dishonest.
- ▶ Check today's Scripture again. What is the best reason for not lying that you can find in these passages?

Exodus 20:16

You shall not give false testimony against your neighbor.

Numbers 23:11-20

¹¹Balak said to Balaam, "What have you done to me? I brought you to curse my enemies, but you have done nothing but bless them!" ¹²He answered, "Must I not speak what the LORD puts in my mouth?" ¹³Then Balak said to him, "Come with me to another place where you can see them; you will not see them all but only the outskirts of their camp. And from there, curse them for me." ¹⁴So he took him to the field of Zophim on the top of Pisgah, and there he built seven altars and offered a bull and a ram on each altar. ¹⁵Balaam said to Balak, "Stay here beside your offering while I meet with him over there." ¹⁶The LORD met with Balaam and put a word in his mouth and said, "Go back to Balak and give him this word." ¹⁷So he went to him and found him standing beside his offering, with the Moabite officials. Balak asked him, "What did the LORD say?" ¹⁸Then he spoke his message: "Arise, Balak, and listen; hear me, son of Zippor. ¹⁹God is not human, that he should lie, not a human being, that he should change his mind. Does he speak and then not act? Does he promise and not fulfill? ²⁰I have received a command to bless; he has blessed, and I cannot change it."

»mon

Read 2 Corinthians 8:21. You know the expression “no pain, no gain.” The same thing applies to doing the right thing. Ask God to help you do the right thing, no matter how painful it may be.

»tues

Read Exodus 20:16. Describe one situation in which you might be tempted to lie about another person. Remember you can trust God to help you live by His standards.

»wed

Read 2 Corinthians 8:21 again. What grade would you give yourself for honesty? What grade would your parents give you? Your friends?

»thurs

Read Ephesians 4:15. What do you think this verse means? What doesn't it mean? Ask God to give you the courage to speak the truth in love.

»fri

Look up the word *integrity* in a dictionary. Describe the qualities a person of integrity would have.

»sat

Complete this sentence by writing your name in the blank, and then ask God to help you speak and live the truth. *With God's help, _____ will be a person of integrity and truth.*

For we are taking pains to do what is right, not only in the eyes of the Lord but also in the eyes of man.

2 Corinthians 8:21

Breathing Room?

When God gave the command—ment about not lying, did He leave some breathing room? Is it ever OK to lie? Or are all lies—even those tiny white lies—wrong?

Read the following situations, and check the **yes box if you think it's OK to lie. Check the **no** box if you don't.**

- You went to the mall instead of study group. You don't tell your parents because you got the work done already and they don't really need to know where you were the past 3 hours.

☐ **Yes** ☐ **No**

- A friend wants to play a joke on his cousin. So he asks you to send her your picture saying who you are and would you like to go out. Would you do it even though the date isn't going to happen?

☐ **Yes** ☐ **No**

- Your friend is wearing an outfit that looks horrible on her, and she asks you what you think. Would you lie to your friend and say something like “That's really cool,” when you're really thinking it's the worst outfit you've ever seen?

☐ **Yes** ☐ **No**

- Someone from youth group invites you to a party, and you don't want to go. Would you turn her down like this, “I can't come, I'll be busy . . .” but not finish your sentence? Who knows, you might be busy that night.

☐ **Yes** ☐ **No**

- On the Fourth of July camp-out, some kids broke a few minor rules the youth leaders set at the start of the weekend. You know who did it; would you keep quiet about it?

☐ **Yes** ☐ **No**

- During World War II, Corrie ten Boom and her family hid Jews in their home, and then lied to the Nazis. If you were in the same situation, would you have lied to protect the lives of innocent people?

☐ **Yes** ☐ **No**

It would have been easier to follow God's commands if He had spelled out the specifics, but life isn't always cut-and-dried. We can depend on God to give us wisdom to have integrity and tell the truth in tough situations.

SIMON SAYS

Simon snapped his fingers in front of my face,
“Hey, Jazmine! What gives? You’ve hardly touched your lunch.”

I wanted to tell him, but we’re never alone at lunch, and walking with Simon Rutledge through the corridors of Emerson High is like being bodyguard for the president. Everyone wants to talk to him about everything.

Still Simon could see I was upset.

“Let’s ride home together,” he said.

I’ve known Simon since our families moved into the Westgate subdivision the fall we began third grade. We were both the shortest kids in our class, so Simon and I stood next to each other in every line in grade school and sat together in the kids’ choir. As a result, we became good friends.

Though I’m on the smart side, I pretty much blend into the woodwork. But when you’re a boy and a head shorter than every other guy, you don’t blend in at all. I worried about Simon in middle school. His nickname was “shorty,” but I noticed that it really didn’t bother him. Simon liked being himself.

Simon is so good in everything he can’t decide what he likes best. When you ask him if he’s picked a major for college, he always says the same thing, “I don’t know yet, but I’m torn between a philosopher or a brain surgeon.” I don’t doubt he could do both equally well.

In tenth grade, while the rest of us scrambled for part-time jobs, Simon put an ad as a tutor in the school newspaper. Within four months, Simon was tutoring half the school. He should pay rent on the back table in the cafeteria. “Shorty” was the big man on campus. Now in his senior year, he was even more popular than ever.



"I CAN'T BEAR THE THOUGHT OF TELLING MRS. MORRISON THE TRUTH."

Simon drove me home after school. As we were driving past the little playground where he'd once watched me break my arm, he pulled over. "OK, let's stop here and talk."

I winced. "Yes. It's an appropriate spot."

"As bad as that?" his eyes were smiling, but serious too.

"Maybe," I said. "I cleaned at the Morrisons' yesterday, and made dinner there too . . ."

This was no surprise to Simon. It had been his idea for me to start my own business, cooking and cleaning for people a couple afternoons a week.

"I was making chicken cacciatore and spinach salad." I paused uncertainly.

"My favorite."

I smiled. "I wanted to layer the salad in something pretty, so I rummaged through the dining room hutch and found a huge crystal bowl. While I was drying it off, I dropped and chipped it."

I stopped looking at him at this point. "Simon, I hid the bowl in the back of the hutch. I'm almost positive it's an antique. It's irreplaceable! I can't bear the thought of telling Mrs. Morrison the truth—especially since I didn't tell her right away."

"When are you planning to do it?" he asked.

"How do you know I will?"

"Because you wouldn't have told me if you weren't going to tell them," he pointed out. "Besides, I've seen you tell the truth too many times to doubt you now." We got back in his car.

We drove to a subdivision I'd never seen before. A brick archway said Emerson Hollow. Then I saw the irony of the name. The subdivision had never been finished. The houses stood as if caught in time. New houses are started every day. There's something alive and hopeful in that. This overwhelmed me with sadness—with the waste of potential.

"Do you know why they're like this?" I asked.

"No. I found this place in seventh grade. I used to come here when things got hard at school."

Simon looked at me. "I hated being so short that every boy in the class could carry me around. I knew it bothered you, too, but I didn't want to say anything. When I saw this place, I realized I'd turn out like this if I kept God from working in my life, if I stopped being willing to grow even when things were hard."

He gave me a knowing look. "You're calling about the bowl when you get home, right?" I nodded. "You know I will," I managed a grin, thankful for a friend like Simon I could confide in and thankful he understood me like he did.

the one true God

selections from Deuteronomy, Matthew, 2 Corinthians

Three of the world's major religions—Judaism, Islam, and Christianity—all believe in one God. One of the major reasons why Orthodox Jews and Muslims reject Christianity is that Christians believe there are three distinct personalities within that “oneness.”

The Bible clearly describes God as one—but it also describes Jesus and the Holy Spirit as divine. Since the Bible is God’s Word, there must be a way to reconcile these two ideas. They can be reconciled in the doctrine of the Trinity.

► Look up the references below.

► Place a check next to the verses that describe the oneness of God. Describe what they say about the oneness of God.

► Place a star next to the verses that imply that there is more than one person in the Godhead. Explain what is said about the personalities in the Godhead.

- | | |
|---------------------|------------------------------|
| – Deuteronomy 6:4-5 | – Galatians 2:20 |
| – Hebrews 1:3 | – John 1:1; 5:23; 14:8-9, 26 |
| – Mark 12:29 | – Philippians 2:5-6 |
| – Acts 5:3-4 | – 1 Corinthians 8:4 |
| – Matthew 28:19 | – 2 Corinthians 13:14 |

► One God (Unity)

Israel was surrounded by nations who believed in a lot of gods. These nations were always tempting the people of Israel to follow these gods.

- How could Deuteronomy 6:4-5 counteract this temptation to worship many gods?
- How does Isaiah 43:10b-11 support this view?

► Three-in-One (Trinity)

The word Jesus used for “name” in the Great Commission (Matt. 28:19) is singular, but then He gives three names.

- How does this verse support the idea of the Trinity? Look at the benediction of Paul in 2 Corinthians 13:14.
- How does this verse support the idea that each member of the Trinity is unique?
- What are some different roles of each member of the Trinity?
 Father Son Spirit
- Suppose you had to describe the doctrine of the Trinity to a young person who had never heard of it before. What picture would you draw for him or her to explain it?

Deuteronomy 6:4-5

⁴Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. ⁵Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength.

Matthew 28:19

Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

2 Corinthians 13:14

May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

»mon

In the first part of Isaiah 43:10, God has asked us to act as His witnesses. You don't have to give a sermon to do this, but you can highlight God consistently with little comments or deeds. Do it today. Pray for opportunities to identify with Christ.

»tues

Before this declaration of God's oneness, He calls us servants. Plan some practical ways to work for God this week. Pray that your service might glorify God and advance His kingdom on earth.

»wed

The God of the universe has chosen you. Make a list of the talents, gifts, and character qualities that God has given you. Ask God to help you use these gifts in a way that honors Him.

»thurs

God accepts no competitors. Anyone claiming to be His equal is an impostor. Ask God for a discerning heart this week to recognize those things that may compete with Him in your life.

»fri

There's nothing in the universe with which you can successfully compare God. Make a list of God's unique qualities. Pick one of these qualities, and worship God for it.

»sat

Only Jesus can save people from an eternity without God; no other saviors exist. Pray for those who believe there are many roads to God. Ask the Lord to open their spiritual eyes to the truth.

"Before me no god was formed, nor will there be one after me. I, even I, am the LORD, and apart from me there is no savior."

Isaiah 43:10b-11

What is God like?

Some view God as a harsh grandfather, ready to judge the slightest infraction of His law.



Who can fathom the Spirit of the LORD, or instruct the LORD as his counselor?

Some view God as a cosmic Santa Claus.



With whom, then, will you compare God? **To what image** will you liken him?

Some call God "the big guy upstairs."



"To whom will you compare me? **Or who** is my equal?" says the Holy One.

Some view God as an impersonal force.



Lift up your eyes and look to the heavens: **Who created** all these? He who brings out the starry host one by one and calls forth each of them by name. Because of his great power and mighty strength, not one of them is missing.

Some view God as a senile but kind old man who sleepily wishes them to be happy in their own way.



Do you not know? Have you not heard? **The LORD** is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He will not grow tired or weary, and his understanding no one can fathom.

Isaiah 40:13, 18, 25, 26, 28

God is like nothing you've ever seen.

THE TRINITY

IS AN
IMPORTANT
DOCTRINE TO
GET UNDER
YOUR BELT.

One of the hardest truths to explain to people, especially to non-Christians, is that of the Trinity—the reality that God is one, but exists in three persons: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. What makes it even harder is that the word *Trinity* cannot be found in the Bible. In fact, the term was not coined until the second century A.D.! Many cults jump on this fact and deny the existence of the Trinity altogether. So if you really want to get a grip on what you believe, this is an important doctrine to get under your belt.

The best way to understand the Trinity is to see, first, the biblical basis for this truth and, second, why the early Christian church put the idea in the form it exists in today.

Throughout the Bible, God is said to be one. During the early history of Israel, Moses proclaimed, “Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one” (Deut. 6:4). Also, during the early history of the Christian church, Paul wrote, “We know that ‘An idol is nothing at all in the world’ and that ‘There is no God but one’” (1 Cor. 8:4). According to the Bible, there are no actual gods except the one true God.

As we read the Bible, however, we see in this oneness three unique personalities. In John 10:30, Jesus said to the Jews, “I and the Father are one.” He was not speaking in riddles of deep symbolism here. He clearly was declaring His oneness with God, a characteristic that was unique to Him—and the Holy Spirit. In Matthew 28:19, when Jesus gives the Great Commission, He says, “Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.” The key to this statement is that the word *name* is singular, yet it refers to all three persons of the Trinity.

Although the Bible offers us some understanding of the Trinity, the idea still remains mysterious. Because the idea was so

complex, a number of heresies emerged in the early church about the nature of God.


In the second century, one of the early church fathers, Tertullian, used the Latin word *Trinitas* (Trinity) in a formal statement to express this doctrine of God. It was not until the Council of Nicaea (A.D. 325), however, that the Christian church officially affirmed the doctrine of the Trinity, which has been key to sound Christian doctrine ever since.

The Christians at the Council of Nicaea faced a problem that is similar to what the church faces today—dealing with the teachings of groups who call themselves Christian, but who diminish the importance of Jesus Christ. During the early fourth century, a teacher named Arius taught that Jesus was not equal to God the Father, but that He was merely a creation of God. The Council of Nicaea declared this teaching heretical and established the doctrine of the Trinity.

There are many cults that currently say many wonderful things about Jesus Christ, but deny His full deity. They will proclaim Jesus as their Lord, and even as the Messiah, but they reject Him as being one with God. It is not enough to praise Jesus Christ as a great teacher; we must also worship Him as truly God.

Paul ended his second letter to the Corinthian church by saying, “May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.” Our demonstration of this grace, love, and fellowship may be the best way to explain the Trinity.

It is not enough to praise Jesus Christ as a great teacher. We must worship Christ as truly God.



Before me no
god was formed, nor will
there be one after me. I, even I,
am the Lord, and apart from me
there is no savior.

Isaiah 43:10b-11

God is the perfect Father

selections from Acts, Matthew and Galatians

By virtue of being the Creator, God is the Father (or life-giver/source) of everyone—Christians and non-Christians. But He is uniquely the Father of only those who have been redeemed and adopted by Him.

► Read Acts 17:24-29.

- List three creative things God did according to Acts 17:24-28.
- According to Acts 17:27, what was God's purpose in creating human beings?
- In verse 28, Paul quoted a non-Christian poet who said, "We are God's offspring." In what sense is every human being the offspring of God?

► Read Matthew 7:9-12.

- What did Jesus mean in verse 11 when He said, though you are evil, you know how to give good gifts to your children?
- What kinds of gifts do earthly fathers give their children?
- What kinds of gifts does God give His children?
- Explain Galatians 3:26 to someone who says to you, "God is everyone's Father. What's so special about the Christian?"

Acts 17:24-29

²⁴"The God who made the world and everything in it is the Lord of heaven and earth and does not live in temples built by human hands. ²⁵And he is not served by human hands, as if he needed anything. Rather, he himself gives everyone life and breath and everything else. ²⁶From one man he made all the nations, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and he marked out their appointed times in history and the boundaries of their lands. ²⁷God did this so that they would seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him, though he is not far from any one of us. ²⁸'For in him we live and move and have our being.' As some of your own poets have said, 'We are his offspring.'

²⁹"Therefore since we are God's offspring, we should not think that the divine being is like gold or silver or stone—an image made by human design and skill.

Matthew 7:9-12

⁹"Which of you, if your son asks for bread, will give him a stone? ¹⁰Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a snake? ¹¹If you, then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask him! ¹²So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets."

Galatians 3:26

So in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith.

»mon

It may surprise you to know that your parents have not reached perfection. You are not surprised? Ask God to help you see your parents realistically. If necessary, ask Him to help you forgive them.

»tues

Your parents have given you some good things in life. List the good things your folks have done for you. Ask God to help you appreciate the good in your parents.

»wed

If an imperfect parent knows how to take care of you, just imagine what a perfect parent could do. God, the only perfect parent, wants to nurture you. Ask Him to parent you daily.

»thurs

When our parents disappoint us, God will continue to love us as a perfect father. Cry out to God if your parents have hurt you.

»fri

Our heavenly Father, owner of everything in the universe, promises to give us good gifts. What is the best gift God could give you? Ask Him to show you the love behind His gifts.

»sat

God never abuses. He won't even push a gift on you—He waits for you to ask for it. Have you received His great gift of salvation? Thank God for His perfect love.

Sf you, then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask him!

Matthew 7:11

WHAT

In light of the following passages, are th

UNITARIANISM

Genesis 1:2, 26
Matthew 28:19-20

PANTHEISM

Romans 1:20

DUALISM

Exodus 20:1-6
Job 1

POLYTHEISM

Deuteronomy 6:4-5
Daniel 5
Isaiah 45:18-25

TRINITARIANISM

Isaiah 9:6-7
John 1:1-18
1 John 5
1 Peter 1:1-2
2 Corinthians 13:14

HUMANISM

Job 38
Psalm 8:3-5
Psalm 14; 53
Isaiah 55:8-9

TRITHEISM

Deuteronomy 6:4-5
Colossians 1:15-20



IS GOD LIKE?

These views true or false? Why?

Jesus

The Bible

Salvation

Jesus

The Bible

Salvation

Jesus

The Bible

Salvation

Jesus

The Bible

Salvation

Jesus

The Bible

Salvation

Jesus

The Bible

Salvation

Jesus

The Bible

Salvation

So what? If this view were true, how would it affect your understanding of

ANSWER KEY:

UNITARIANISM

There is only one God; therefore, Jesus can't be God. This is the major belief of Unitarian Universalists and Jehovah's Witnesses.

PANTHEISM

God isn't a person. God is a force or an influence found in all of nature. There is no such thing as good or evil. Whatever is, is God. All is one. We are gods. This is the philosophy behind the Eastern religions of Hinduism and Buddhism.

DUALISM

There have always been two main forces in the universe. God is the good force, and the devil is the bad force. Life is a battle between these two opposite powers. The good is to be worshiped, the evil, to be feared. This is the basic philosophy behind many primitive religions and all occult practices and beliefs.

POLYTHEISM

There are many gods. Each one has its own sphere of power or influence. The gods are often mischievous and must be pacified with sacrifice. This belief has been the most common form of religion throughout history. It incorporates primitive superstitions and usually some form of pantheism or dualism.

TRINITARIANISM

There is only one God, revealed in three persons—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. These three are one in substance and power. God is infinite, personal, all-powerful, all-knowing, and ever-present. This is the Christian belief, based on God's revelation of Himself in the Bible.

HUMANISM

All religions worship the same God because "God" is merely a human invention. Intelligent people believe that God is nothing more than a creation of the mind. Part of what makes a person "human" is that he or she is "religious" or a god-creating animal. Human beings are in the process of fulfilling their potential. We are merely the final product of a long evolutionary process.

TRITHEISM

There are three Gods—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. They are three distinct beings who do not share the same divine nature. Modalism believes God can exist in three persons (Father, Son, and Spirit), but in only one form at a time.

the Word was God

Colossians 2:9-10; John 1:1-12

▶ Read Colossians 2:9-10.

- ▶ What does it mean to have been given fullness in Christ?
- ▶ How does Jesus reveal what God is like?

▶ Read Colossians 2:9-10 and John 1:1-12.

- ▶ Use lines and symbols to show the relationship between God the Father, God the Son, and the world, using Colossians 2:9-10 and John 1:1-12.

▶ Read John 1:4-12.

- ▶ According to these verses, what was Jesus' role in the Creation? Reread John 1:4-12. Using the symbol of a lamp, draw the relationship between light and darkness that these verses describe.

▶ Reread John 1:4-12.

- ▶ According to these verses, what was John the Baptist's role in Jesus' ministry?
- ▶ Someone says Jesus was just a very good man, perhaps a great teacher. Respond by completing each of the following sentences:
 1. Wrong, according to (insert verse from today's text) _____, Jesus is...
 2. Wrong, according to (insert verse from today's text) _____, Jesus is...
 3. Wrong, according to (insert verse from today's text) _____, Jesus is...

Colossians 2:9-10

⁹For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form, ¹⁰and in Christ you have been brought to fullness. He is the head over every power and authority.

John 1:1-12

¹In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ²He was with God in the beginning.

³Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. ⁴In him was life, and that life was the light of men. ⁵The light shines in the darkness, but the darkness has not understood it.

⁶There came a man who was sent from God; his name was John. ⁷He came as a witness to testify concerning that light, so that through him all men might believe. ⁸He himself was not the light; he came only as a witness to the light. ⁹The true light that gives light to every man was coming into the world.

¹⁰He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him. ¹¹He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him. ¹²Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God.

»mon

If you could live anywhere in the universe, where would you choose? Read Colossians 2:6-10. These verses admonish us to live in Jesus. Ask God to help you live in the fullness of Christ.

»tues

We can easily get caught up in traditions and worldly fads. Examine yourself to see if what you do and how you live is mostly popular or biblical. Pray for God's wisdom to live according to Christ's teachings.

»wed

All the fullness of deity lives in Christ—Jesus is fully God. List some attributes of God the Father, then list attributes of Christ. Compare the lists. Praise God in prayer for revealing Himself to us through Jesus Christ.

»thurs

Imagine allowing yourself to become handicapped in order to relate better to those who have a disability. Pray that you might understand and appreciate Christ's sacrifice on your behalf.

»fri

As the fullness of deity dwells in Christ, so the fullness of Christ can dwell within us. Ask God to fill you with His Spirit today so that you can experience the fullness of Christ.

»sat

List all the powers and authorities that exist in your life—from parents to principals. According to Colossians 2:10, Jesus is sovereign over all authorities. Thank God for His sovereignty over the leadership He has placed over you.

For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form, and in Christ you have been brought to fullness. He is the head over every power and authority.

Colossians 2:9-10



Blondin's Question

The Great Blondin, the famous French tightrope walker, strung a cable across the Niagara Falls. A huge crowd gathered. And as they watched, he walked across and back-160 feet above the falls—like he was out for a Sunday stroll.

He repeated the feat several times, each time adding a different, daring twist—once in a sack, then on stilts, on a bicycle. The crowd went wild.

Then Blondin attempted something even more difficult. He carefully walked across Niagara Falls on his thin cable—blindfolded and pushing a wheelbarrow.

Upon reaching the other side, the crowd's applause was louder than the roar of the falls. Blondin suddenly stopped and addressed his audience. "Do you believe

that I can carry a person across in this wheelbarrow?" The crowd enthusiastically shouted, "Yes, yes, yes! You are the greatest tightrope walker in the world. You can do anything!"

But then the Great Blondin asked, "Who then will volunteer to get in the wheelbarrow and come with me?"

And there was a deathly hush.



The story of Jesus **doesn't start** in the New Testament

in the beginning

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.

Genesis 1:1

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

John 1:1

It's no accident that the book of Genesis and the Gospel of John begin in a similar way—they are describing the same characters and events! Jesus was with God in the beginning. When the earth was being formed, the Son was there. In fact, the Bible describes Jesus as the sovereign creator and sustainer of the universe. The apostle Paul said, "For in him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things have been created through him and for him." (Col. 1:16). Every creative act of God described in the first chapter of Genesis can be attributed to Jesus. The story of the Son doesn't start in the New Testament.

It's difficult to understand how the one we know as Jesus could exist before His birth on earth. Certainly the crowd was surprised when Jesus said to them, "Before Abraham was born, I am!" (John 8:58). They were so surprised that they picked up stones to throw at Him, because He was making Himself out to be God. By referring to Himself as "I am," He was identifying Himself with the Lord of the Old Testament, the same who said to Moses, "I AM WHO I AM. This is what you are to say to the Israelites: 'I AM has sent me to you'" (Ex. 3:14).

Anyone who
has seen me
has seen the
Father.

Christians believe that to know Jesus Christ is to know God. This was the claim of Jesus. “Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father” (John 14:9) and “If you knew me, you would know my Father also” (John 8:19).

Hebrews 1:8 also speaks of God the Father calling God the Son “God”: “But about the Son he says, ‘Your throne, O God, will last for ever and ever; a scepter of justice will be the scepter of your kingdom.’” Hebrews 1:3 says that “the Son is the radiance of God’s glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word.”

After describing Jesus as God, John went on to say that “In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind” (John 1:4). John’s reference to life goes beyond the physical well-being of plants and animals. He was referring to a quality of life that the Creator of the universe wants to provide for all people—a life full of hope and security for the future.

The contrast between light and darkness is seen a lot in John’s writing. The Christians to whom John was writing were well aware of the darkness that surrounded them. It is no different today—fear, anger, and hatred bring a terrible darkness into the world. But John reminded us that “The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it” (John 1:5). Only the light of the Christ can illuminate a heart darkened by sin.

The great truth taught in the first chapter of John is that the creator and sustainer of life wants to have a relationship with you. He became one of us, taking on our flesh and blood, in order to make this possible. He is the only one worthy of our highest loyalty and love. John 1:12 says, “Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God.” Jesus gives this invitation to those who want to be led out of the darkness. How about you . . . have you seen this light?

Lesson 9 Bible Study

Spirit controlled

selections from Romans

Once a person becomes a Christian, he or she receives the Holy Spirit. The Spirit helps us live in such a way that we please God. In one sense, our "flesh" is dead (Gal. 5:24), but the "corpse" still hangs around and tempts us to go back to the old ways.

► Read Romans 8:1.

- What kinds of things are people condemned for apart from Christ? Why aren't Christians condemned?

► Read Romans 8:5-11.

- List the characteristics of the "sinful nature" (flesh) and another list of those of the Spirit-controlled person.
- Why do we still struggle with the desire to sin if we are "dead to sin"? What is the role of the Holy Spirit in our struggle?

► Read Romans 8:14-17.

- What are some of the responsibilities and privileges of being an adopted child of God?
- Why is it necessary to suffer in order to share in Christ's reward? How does the Spirit help us in this kind of suffering?

► Read Romans 8:26-27.

- When you're wiped out, and you don't know what to pray, what do you say to God? How does the Holy Spirit help us in our prayers?
- What have you learned about the Holy Spirit from these verses?

Flesh

Spirit

Romans 8:1, 5-11, 14-17, 26-27

¹Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.

⁶Those who live according to the flesh have their minds set on what the flesh desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires. ⁸The mind governed by the flesh is death, but the mind governed by the Spirit is life and peace. ⁷The mind governed by the flesh is hostile to God; it does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so. ⁸Those who are in the realm of the flesh cannot please God.

⁹You, however, are not in the realm of the flesh but are in the realm of the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, they do not belong to Christ. ¹⁰But if Christ is in you, then even though your body is subject to death because of sin, the Spirit gives life because of righteousness. ¹¹And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies because of his Spirit who lives in you.

¹⁴For those who are led by the Spirit of God are the children of God. ¹⁵The Spirit you received does not make you slaves, so that you live in fear again; rather, the Spirit you received brought about your adoption to sonship. And by him we cry, "Abba, Father." ¹⁶The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children. ¹⁷Now if we are children, then we are heirs—heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory.

²⁶In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us through wordless groans. ²⁷And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for God's people in accordance with the will of God.

»mon

Has a time of failure ever caused you to turn to God? Was there a time you didn't know what you should pray for? Thank God for allowing these times of weakness to enter your life—they help you see your dependence upon the Holy Spirit.

»tues

Note that Romans 8:25 says, "But if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently." What have you been waiting for? Thank God for the capacity to put off immediate gratification in order to receive God's best.

»wed

Are there people in your church who serve as good role models? Give them a call, and thank them for the example they set for you and your friends. Say a prayer of thanks for these individuals.

»thurs

Because of human weakness and ignorance, people need the help of God's Spirit. Think about how God has helped you with difficulties in the past. Ask the Lord for the strength to tackle the problems ahead of you.

»fri

Look at Romans 8:27. The apostle Paul said that God is able to search our hearts. He knows how we feel. Ask God to intercede for you as you struggle with thoughts you cannot express.

»sat

Think about a friend who is experiencing some sort of heartache. Pray about the problem. Feel it with your friend. Ask God to use you in some way to help your friend through this time of struggle.

In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us.

Romans 8:26a

TIME SLICE
God

Omni in Latin means everything or all. **God is omnipresent, omnipotent, and omniscient** (everywhere, all-powerful, and all-knowing).

Be amazed by **the universe God created**. A piece of string wrapped around the equator ten times is about the distance from **Earth to the moon**.

We can't live without the **Trinity**. **God** is eternal, unchanging, and sovereign. **Jesus** is the way, truth, and life. **The Holy Spirit** is a teacher and revealer of truth.

The concept of the **Trinity** has been explained to children using apples and eggs.
Apple = skin, fruit, core.
Egg = shell, white, yoke.



DESTRUCTIVE HABITS

SAGE WAITS OUTSIDE THE BATHROOM.

She glances at the clock. Her shift at work starts in 20 minutes, and her younger sister shows no signs of emerging. A few minutes later the door opens and Sage lunges for the smaller girl, shoving her against the wall and clearing the sink with one sweeping motion. As brushes, bottles, and other items crash to the floor, Sage feels sick. Wasn't it just a couple weeks ago she promised God she would control her temper?

EVEN AS MITCH SAYS THE WORDS.

he knows he will regret lying to his mother about arriving late. He knows he's lying more and more, but he can't seem to stop. He feels trapped. When his mother walks away, Mitch flops across his bed and buries his face in the pillow, overwhelmed with remorse.

These habits seem to possess them, destroying their will to resist. Is there help for Christians who struggle with these kinds of habits?

Yes! The Holy Spirit can help believers beat habits like lying, stealing, lust, anger, and others. While you may seem helpless, God isn't!

After the incident in the bathroom, Sage's parents insisted she see a Christian counselor and get help for her problem. "I knew I would have to get my temper under control. I knew I couldn't do it alone. My counselor reminded me that I'm not alone; the Holy Spirit helps me be strong," she said.

Like Mitch, Sage couldn't overcome her hurtful habit without help. Romans 8:5-6 tells us there is a solution for our lack of control: "People who are ruled by their desires think only of themselves... If our minds are ruled by our desires, we will die. But if our minds are ruled by the Spirit, we will have life and peace" (*Contemporary English Version*).

HOW DOES IT WORK?

So, it takes the Holy Spirit to release us from harmful habits. But how? What does it mean when someone says, "You need to give it over to the Lord"? Here are some suggestions on how to surrender your bad habit to God.

PRAY

The next time you're tempted by a habitual sin, ask God to help you resist. As a Christian, you have the Holy Spirit. When you cooperate the Spirit will gradually make you more and more like Christ. He begins the work and finishes it.

When you feel guilty about repeating this sinful habit, it's the Holy Spirit who is pulling on the strings of your heart. Without His proddings, we wouldn't make changes. Stay in touch through prayer with the One who can help you.

BE PATIENT

Behavioral experts say it helps to deal with a problem one day at a time. Each morning, remind yourself that by the power of the Holy Spirit you can get through that day without going back to that familiar habit.

While you're working on it and praying, make yourself accountable to someone, maybe a friend. Mitch talked to his youth minister, but any mature Christian can be helpful. His youth minister encouraged Mitch to pray when tempted to lie. Besides praying for Mitch, the youth minister regularly asked him about his progress.

"Sometimes I slipped up," Mitch says. "My youth minister explained that habitual sin is like a ringing tower bell. Even after you stop pulling the rope, it's going to gong a few times. He said I should just be patient, trust God, and keep on going."

GARBAGE IN/GARBAGE OUT

Imagine what you'd look like if all you ate were junk foods. Some Christians are that careless when it comes to feeding their minds. Are there influences from television, movies, radio, or books that are supporting your habit? Think about it and plan how you'll get rid of these. Start a program of Bible reading and meditation—build up an arsenal to use when the problem rears its ugly head.

KEEP A RECORD OF SUCCESS

If you don't have a spiritual diary, now's a good time to start. Write out how you feel about the habit you're struggling with. Write a prayer to God asking for the Holy Spirit's help.

Most importantly, when you successfully resist, write down what happened. Keep this journal with you. When you think it's impossible to resist, reread your last success and let the Holy Spirit rekindle the fire that burns away poisonous habits.

Mitch and Sage are both still struggling with their habits, but they're having more successes than failures. They have made amends with the ones they have offended. Sage says she thinks of it as developing a new habit. "The Holy Spirit is giving me a new response system," she says. "Every day, it gets easier to control my problem."

know your enemy

selections from 1 John, Ephesians, 2 Corinthians, 1 Peter

► ASSIGNMENT 1

Write a short biography of Satan. Mention any past events and future happenings in the Bible in which Satan has had a part. Base your biography on today's Scripture text. Also use Matthew 4:1-11; Revelation 20:1-10; 2 Peter 2:4; Jude 6; and any other passages you know that specifically mention Satan. Some see Isaiah 14:12-23 and Ezekiel 28:11-19 as illustrative of the Devil. What do these passages say about the way Satan thinks?

- What was the first sin of Satan?

► ASSIGNMENT 2

- Write a short description of what Satan does. What are his objectives in the world? For information, use today's Scripture text and also John 8:42-47; Luke 11:14-26; Matthew 4:1-11; and Job 1:6-12.

- How much power does Satan hold over the world?

► ASSIGNMENT 3

- Write a Christian plan of defense against Satan. List suggestions on how we can resist Satan's influence. Consult today's Scripture text and also John 8:42-47; Matthew 4:1-11; Luke 11:14-26; and Ephesians 6:13-18.

- How does Satan masquerade as an "angel of light" today?

1 John 3:8

The one who does what is sinful is of the devil, because the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil's work.

Ephesians 2:2

In which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient.

2 Corinthians 4:4

The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel that displays the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.

2 Corinthians 11:14

And no wonder, for Satan himself masquerades as an angel of light.

1 Peter 5:8

Be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour.

Ephesians 6:11-12

¹¹Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. ¹²For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.

»mon

Jesus was aware of Satan's power. Take a look at a newspaper today to remind yourself of the reality of sin around you. Ask God to keep you aware of the enemy.

»tues

Jesus commanded Satan to leave. He called an end to the contest. List areas in your life where the powers of darkness may pester you. Face what you need to face, and then ask God to send Satan packing.

»wed

In the wilderness, Jesus didn't use any of His miraculous powers to defeat the Devil. He just kept referring to the Scripture—simply telling the power of darkness what was true. Ask God to help you think biblically when it comes to facing temptation.

»thurs

Read Matthew 4:1-11 and note the verses Jesus used in His fight against Satan. Look these verses up in the Old Testament. Pray for the wisdom to use Scripture in your spiritual battles—to do more than just quote it, and to make it a part of who you really are.

»fri

Jesus refused to worship anything or anyone but God the Father. Take some time to worship God right now. Pray for a single-mindedness to worship God at all times.

»sat

Jesus served only God. List three ways that you could serve God today. Pray that God would open your eyes to the opportunities for service around you.

Jesus said to him, "Away from me, Satan! For it is written: 'Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only.' "

Matthew 4:10

Dangerous Angels

Danielle was curious about life, death, and what happens after you die. She turned to astrology, levitation, and other mystical practices, and she read books on the occult and even a few on Satanism to try to answer her questions. She didn't believe Satan existed, but she was attracted to the power of the occult. Like Danielle, many people get involved in the occult because they don't believe Satan exists. If demons aren't real, they reason, then every supernatural occurrence must come from God. But the Bible makes it clear that the demonic world can "fake" just about any miracle. That's why God tells us to avoid all forms of the occult (Deut. 18:10-12).

Jesus knew Satan was real. He spoke to him and successfully defeated him during His 40-day fast in the desert. He commanded demons to come out of people. He warned Peter that Satan wanted to sift him like wheat (Luke 22:31). Paul said that "our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against . . . the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil..." (Eph. 6:12). These powers are behind occult activities.

Jesus said Satan is the "father of lies" and can never be trusted (John 8:44). He is intent on deceiving us. Scripture warns us to "be self-controlled and alert..." because "the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour" (1 Pet. 5:8). Satan is opposed to God, and everything associated with Him. This includes human beings, because they are created in the image of God. Satan knows that God has provided a plan to redeem His creation through Jesus Christ, His Son, and Satan tries to oppose God's people. Jesus refers to Satan as "the prince of this world." Paul called him "the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient" (Eph. 2:2). Isaiah 14:13-14 shows Satan's warped way of thinking: "I will ascend to heaven; I will raise my throne above the stars of God... I will make myself like the Most High." Even though Satan knows his time is short; his plans to destroy continue but he has lost the battle. His doom is sure.

Jesus died on the cross to conquer Satan's power over us. God has the powers of darkness on a leash; they can do nothing eternally to us. To protect ourselves from Satan's attacks, we need to constantly be wearing the armor of God (Eph. 6:10-13).

What is so dangerous about Satan is that he thinks he can beat God. He is the ultimate psychopath.

Do you have yours on?

Encounters With Evil

Satan is a subtle schemer. It's common to find situations in which Satan tries to tempt us to fall prey to one of his evil schemes. Look at the following chart. Mark each situation you or a friend have encountered.

Encountered?	Evil?	Not Evil?	What's the danger?
<input type="checkbox"/> Drugs	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
<input type="checkbox"/> Social Networking	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
<input type="checkbox"/> Witchcraft	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
<input type="checkbox"/> Superstitions	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
<input type="checkbox"/> Astrology	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
<input type="checkbox"/> Alcohol	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
<input type="checkbox"/> Exploring physical/sexual boundaries	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
<input type="checkbox"/> Movies/TV shows with main characters that are vampires, wizards, mediums, etc.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
<input type="checkbox"/> Books about mythology	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
<input type="checkbox"/> Politicization of faith	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
<input type="checkbox"/> Lifting content from the Internet	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
<input type="checkbox"/> Premise of being rewarded for lying	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
<input type="checkbox"/> Obsession with the supernatural	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
<input type="checkbox"/> Supporting morally questionable corporations	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
<input type="checkbox"/> Consulting the dead (seance, etc.)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
<input type="checkbox"/> Self-harm	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
<input type="checkbox"/> A culture of "stuff"	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

What does the Bible have to say about these things?

Look up the following passages and jot down your thoughts:

Leviticus 19:26, 31; 20:6, 27 _____

Deuteronomy 18:10-11, 20-22 _____

1 Samuel 28 _____

Proverbs 26:24-28 _____

Isaiah 8:18; 47:8-15 _____

Habakkuk 2:1-14 _____

Matthew 22:15-22 _____

Acts 13:8-10; 16:16-19 _____

1 Corinthians 6:12-20 _____

Galatians 1:10; 5:19-21 _____

Ephesians 5:3-18 _____

Philippians 4:4-9 _____

Be alert!



Now go back to the chart. Fill in the last column using what you learned from the Bible passages.

Satan is **scheming** to give
YOU an encounter with **evil**.

called to be free

selections from Galatians, Ephesians, 1 Peter

“Whoever dies with the most toys wins.” “Life is short. Eat dessert first.” These two slogans sum up the philosophy that many people live by. Christians, however, are called to something more. We are called to be free.

▶ Read Ephesians 4:17-19.

- ▶ Underline the phrases that describe how these “Gentiles” went after doing what felt good.
- ▶ Write each of these descriptions in your own words.

▶ Ephesians 4:22

says that the person who is living life like this is “being corrupted by its deceitful desires.” How are such desires deceitful?

- ▶ One word that describes this kind of lifestyle is *hedonism*. Look up the dictionary definition of this word. Underline words and phrases in Galatians 5:19-21 and 1 Peter 4:1-5 that fit this definition.
- ▶ In contrast to hedonism, what did Paul command Christians to do in Galatians 5:13, 16?

▶ Read Galatians 5:13, 16.

- ▶ Why do you think Paul contrasted indulging the sinful nature with serving one another in love? In what way are these two incompatible?
- ▶ What does it mean to live by the Spirit?

▶ Look at Ephesians 4:20-24.

- ▶ What did Paul say the Ephesian Christians were taught to do?

▶ Reread 1 Peter 4:1-5.

- ▶ Have you ever had abuse heaped on you for the stand you’ve taken as a Christian? What makes it worthwhile for you?

Galatians 5:13, 16, 19-21

¹³You, my brothers and sisters, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the flesh; rather, serve one another humbly in love.

¹⁶So I say, live by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature.

¹⁹The acts of the flesh are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; ²⁰idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions ²¹and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like.

I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God.

Ephesians 4:17-24

¹⁷So I tell you this, and insist on it in the Lord, that you must no longer live as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their thinking. ¹⁸They are darkened in their understanding and separated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to the hardening of their hearts. ¹⁹Having lost all sensitivity, they have given themselves over to sensuality so as to indulge in every kind of impurity, and they are full of greed.

²⁰That, however, is not the way of life you learned ²¹when you heard about Christ and were taught in him in accordance with the truth that is in Jesus. ²²You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; ²³to be made new in the attitude of your minds; ²⁴and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.

1 Peter 4:1-5

¹Therefore, since Christ suffered in his body, arm yourselves also with the same attitude, because whoever suffers in the body is done with sin. ²As a result, they do not live the rest of their earthly lives for evil human desires, but rather for the will of God. ³For you have spent enough time in the past doing what pagans choose to do—living in debauchery, lust, drunkenness, orgies, carousing and detestable idolatry. ⁴They are surprised that you do not join them in their reckless, wild living, and they heap abuse on you. ⁵But they will have to give account to him who is ready to judge the living and the dead.

daily faith

devos

»mon

Freedom doesn't free us for just anything and everything. How do you use your freedom? Read Galatians 5:13 for some insight.

»tues

Being drunk is the result of abusing a chemical in order to "feel good." Is there anything you are abusing? Ask God to reveal it to you. Write the name of someone who can hold you accountable.

»wed

Debauchery is a big word for wild partying and excess. Have your excesses gotten you into trouble? Ask God's forgiveness and wisdom to live a balanced life.

»thurs

If you are going to be full of something, God wants it to be His Spirit. What would your life look like if it were full of the Spirit? Are you willing to let God change you?

»fri

The weekend is here. You've got to make some decisions about what you're going to do for fun. Make a list of all your options. Pick the ones that would please God.

»sat

Being filled with God's Spirit begins with submission to God. Ask Him to fill you with His Spirit today and prepare your heart for church tomorrow.

Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit.

Ephesians 5:18

Rank your goals

Here is a general list of goals. Each may be important in some way. In what order would you rank them? In the first column, number them in order of importance to you personally. Number them from 1 (most important) to 12 (least important).

Fill in only the first column now.

- | | | |
|-----------------------|-------|-------|
| a. Financial security | _____ | _____ |
| b. A comfortable life | _____ | _____ |
| c. Freedom | _____ | _____ |
| d. To be respected | _____ | _____ |
| e. True friendship | _____ | _____ |
| f. A world at peace | _____ | _____ |
| g. Recognition | _____ | _____ |
| h. Happiness | _____ | _____ |
| i. National security | _____ | _____ |
| j. An exciting life | _____ | _____ |
| k. Self-respect | _____ | _____ |
| l. Inner harmony | _____ | _____ |

What's number one in your life?

Now go around the class and have each member share the two most important goals and two least important. Use the second column to record your class's rankings. Circle the things that are most important to your class.

God is very concerned about our goals.

Today's text underscores just how important it is for Christians to set the highest goals for their lives—goals that place Christ first, instead of self.

BY JENNIFER BALL AS TOLD TO TODD SORENSON

My Life Was a Party

Party! That was my motto in high school.

Actually, I should probably start with middle school. That's when I started hanging around with the party crowd. I was brought up in a church-going family, going to Sunday school every Sunday until eighth grade, but there was no personal relationship with God.

In middle school I wanted to be popular. My older brother and sister were part of the "in" crowd, so I wanted to be like them. I smoked pot for the first time at a girlfriend's house in seventh grade. As the joint was passed around, I said no the first time, but eventually I gave in to peer pressure. In eighth grade I found some cocaine in my brother's room and tried it with a girlfriend. Fortunately, I only tried that a couple of times. But access to alcohol and drugs was pretty easy because of my older brother and sister.

I spent eighth grade getting high and drinking every weekend, and often during the week. I became interested only in myself and having a good time. There was no fear of consequences—I thought I was invincible. And for a while, there were no serious consequences to the lifestyle I had chosen to lead.

Once, a friend of mine was house-sitting for some people. We had a huge party and ended up trashing the place—kids were drinking, throwing up, having food fights. Everyone thought it was a big joke until the neighbors called the police. My parents had to come and pick me up at the police station at two in the morning. Up until then, I don't think they had any idea of what I was into. In fact, when they came to get me I told them that this had only been my first time using pot, which seemed to be their major concern. I had become a good liar and alibi planner by then.

The Bible talks about the "fleeting pleasures of sin" (Heb. 11:25). It's true. God gives us freedom to choose, and for a while you can ignore Him. However, there was an emptiness inside me, a voice that asked, "What's so great about this? Are you really all that satisfied with life?" But for a while, that voice wasn't so loud that I paid much attention to it.

***"God gives
us freedom
to choose."***

In high school I was big into sports, especially soccer and softball. I had to cut down on partying, especially the pot smoking, because it interfered with my stamina. Plus, I met a Christian girl named Megan, and we became friends. She wasn't really living a Christian lifestyle at first. In fact, she and I and another



***"It would be all or nothing.
God wanted me 100 percent."***

girlfriend used to go over to our soccer coach's house and drink and smoke pot with him sometimes. Over time, however, my friendship with Megan grew, and she started to get serious about her faith.

Eventually, Megan and Julie (another girlfriend who was also a Christian) invited me to a Bible study with other high school people—most of whom I knew from school. I remember how surprised one of them was the first time I showed up.

I thought I was already a Christian because I believed in God and had gone to church. As I came to understand what a Christian really is, though, I remember wondering why, after all that church going, I'd never heard about the need to repent of my sins and receive Christ.

By my junior year, the emptiness inside me, despite my popularity, had become much greater. My happiness had depended a lot on what I thought other people thought about me. And I'd been hurt many times by supposed friends who were just as self-centered as I was. I saw a difference in the depth and quality of friendship I had with Megan and Julie. Their friendship and the Bible study led to my spiritual awakening.

One Sunday at their church, the pastor was asking people who wanted to receive Christ to come forward. He kept saying that he knew there was one more person who wanted to come up. I wouldn't go up, but I was sure he meant me.

One thing I knew was that it would be an all-or-nothing thing—that God wanted me 100 percent—and I didn't want to make that decision until I was sure about it. The next night, I went with Megan to talk to the pastor. I was scared to death when he asked me if I wanted to pray to receive Christ, but God had convinced me and I wanted to do it. That was the summer between my junior and senior years.

When I look back, I feel bad about how I treated my parents, being so rebellious, living a kind of double life, lying—was that me? How could I have wrecked someone's house? I was really out of control, ignorant, and self-seeking.

When I first became a Christian, I wanted to prove to my family that I'd changed because of Christ in me, that I wasn't a rebellious, self-centered person anymore. Things like getting drunk or high were pretty easy to quit doing. But it was hard not being so popular anymore. My friends wouldn't see me at parties, and would ask my brother where I was. He'd tell them I'd become a born-again, holier-than-thou person. That kind of hurt.

I wasn't afraid to tell my friends about it, but they thought I'd been brainwashed or become a member of a cult or a nun or something. I had a hard time explaining that I still liked them, but I just didn't desire the same things anymore.

"It was hard not being so popular anymore."

My parents still don't really understand my faith. And my younger brother, who claimed to be a Christian, has walked away from what he knows is true. I still have to work on my rebellious attitude—wanting my own way in my own time. But now I have a deep sense of direction, and I know that God has great things in store for me. I'm not just floating along with the crowd.

I really want to share the new life I have in the Lord with the kids in our middle-school youth group. I know God has placed me there because I can really relate to what they are going through, but it's a challenge.

One thing is for sure—the Christian life is never dull.

***"I wanted
to pray
to receive
Christ."***

what is faith?

Hebrews 11:1-13a

TEACHER: Sammy, what is faith?

SAMMY: Faith is believing in something that is not true.

WRONG!

What is faith, really?

A good way to answer this question is to quote the definition of faith given in Hebrews.

▶ Read Hebrews 11:1-13a.

- ▶ What is faith according to these verses?
- ▶ Read the following references and tell how the person in each reference lived up to the definition of faith given in Hebrews.
 - Genesis 6:9-22; 7:1-5
 - Genesis 22:1-18
 - Job 1:18-22; 19:25-26
 - 2 Corinthians 4:7-18; 11:23-27
- ▶ Because of advances in science and technology, some people are now saying, "We don't need God because science will eventually be able to explain everything." How would you respond to such a claim using Hebrews 11:1-13a as your source?

Hebrews 11:1-13a

¹Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see.

²This is what the ancients were commended for. ³By faith we understand that the universe was formed at God's command, so that what is seen was not made out of what was visible.

⁴By faith Abel brought God a better offering than Cain did. By faith he was commended as righteous, when God spoke well of his offerings. And by faith Abel still speaks, even though he is dead.

⁵By faith Enoch was taken from this life, so that he did not experience death: "He could not be found, because God had taken him away." For before he was taken, he was commended as one who pleased God. ⁶And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.

⁷By faith Noah, when warned about things not yet seen, in holy fear built an ark to save his family. By his faith he condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness that is in keeping with faith.

⁸By faith Abraham, when called to go to a place he would later receive as his inheritance, obeyed and went, even though he did not know where he was going. ⁹By faith he made his home in the promised land like a stranger in a foreign country; he lived in tents, as did Isaac and Jacob, who were heirs with him of the same promise.

¹⁰For he was looking forward to the city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God.

¹¹And by faith even Sarah, who was past childbearing age, was enabled to bear children because she considered him faithful who had made the promise. ¹²And so from this one man, and he as good as dead, came descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and as countless as the sand on the seashore.

¹³All these people were still living by faith when they died. They did not receive the things promised; they only saw them and welcomed them from a distance.

daily devos faith

»mon

Write down what you think faith is. Why is it necessary? What does it mean to Christians?

»tues

Hebrews 11:6 says that faith pleases God. What steps of faith could you take this week? How would these steps be pleasing to God?

»wed

Faith in God is believing that He exists. What one thing happened to you last week that increased your faith in God? Think of one way to apply that faith in the next few days. Pray that the Lord will help you to grow in your faith.

»thurs

Hebrews 11:6 says that God rewards those who earnestly seek Him. Take some time today to seek God in your quiet time. Spend time in prayer and listen to what He has to say to you.

»fri

Faith is trusting God and following His precepts even when we do not understand or see their value. Which ones are hardest for you to follow? Ask the Lord to increase your commitment to follow His will.

»sat

Faith isn't easy. It is difficult to always believe in what can't be seen. Ask for God's guidance today in living by faith. He can meet all of your needs.

The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom; all who follow his precepts have good understanding.
Psalm 111:10a

TIME SLICE

Overcoming the Devil

Satan tried to be better than his Creator God before being ousted from heaven. **Now he is God's enemy and ours, too!**

The dictionary defines **abundant** as: present in great quantity; more than adequate; over sufficient! That's what **God's grace** is for you (2 Cor. 9:8).

In the desert, Satan tried to woo Jesus with power. Jesus used Scripture to **rebuttle Satan**. We can too (Matt. 4:10).

Have you ever seen a **mustard seed**? It is one-twentieth of an inch in size. **Supersize your faith** in God (Heb. 1:6)!



Science & Faith

A scientist talks about
his Christian faith.

The following is an interview with Dr. Adrian Spronk, a biochemist with a large pharmaceutical company in Chicago, Illinois.

DR. SPRONK is a Christian and serves as a lay leader in his church.

This interview frequently mentions the “scientific method.” This method involves (1) writing a hypothesis that tries to explain something in nature, (2) designing experiments that will either prove or disprove the hypothesis, (3) observing the results, and (4) drawing the appropriate conclusions.

● **Dr. Spronk, as you know, there is a lot of skepticism in the scientific community about Christianity. Some of your colleagues say that the scientific method cripples religious belief. They believe this because faith (and God) cannot be quantified or observed. How would you respond to this conclusion? How has the scientific method affected your faith?**

The scientific method was developed in the 16th and 17th centuries by Christians such as Copernicus, Galileo, Kepler, Bacon, Pascal, and Newton. All of these scientists approached their scientific inquiry with a basic belief in God as creator and sustainer of the universe.

Whether or not the scientific method supports the idea of religious belief depends on your starting point—if a scientist begins with the basic belief that the supernatural world does not exist, and miracles are impossible, then he or she isn’t going to see God’s influence in his or her work.

Personally, the scientific method has strengthened my faith. The systems of nature are too complex not to have an intelligent and purposeful designer behind them.

◆ **Does living by faith mean we should stop thinking about the “unexplainable” in nature?**

No. God gave to Adam what is commonly called the cultural mandate. God told Adam to have dominion over creation. Part of this commandment for the first human being was to name the animals. That was classification—Adam was doing science. Scientific research is also part of God’s cultural mandate for our time—we too are to increase our dominion (understanding and control) over creation.

To stop thinking about the “unexplainable” is unbiblical. Some things will always remain a mystery, of course—but that should not stop us from exploring these mysteries.

◆ **How far can science take us in solving the mysteries of the universe? Can science provide us with a purpose for living or a sense of meaning for our existence?**

One thing is for sure—scientists will never be lacking for work. The world has so many different facets, explored and unexplored, that scientifically-minded people will never be without something to do. Scientific research is of great value to humanity and should be pursued enthusiastically.

Even so, a purpose for living cannot be found within the realm of science. Meaningful existence can only be found in relationships, especially in a relationship with God. The scientific method can tell us very little, if anything, about love. The behavioral sciences have tried, but failed for the most part. This is because there is no objective standard of reference for psychology or sociology, as you have in the biological, chemical, and physical sciences. This is because there are as many opinions about human behavior as there are people!

Some aspects of human existence simply lie outside the limits of science. Matters of the heart and the will are areas that the scientific method cannot help us in.

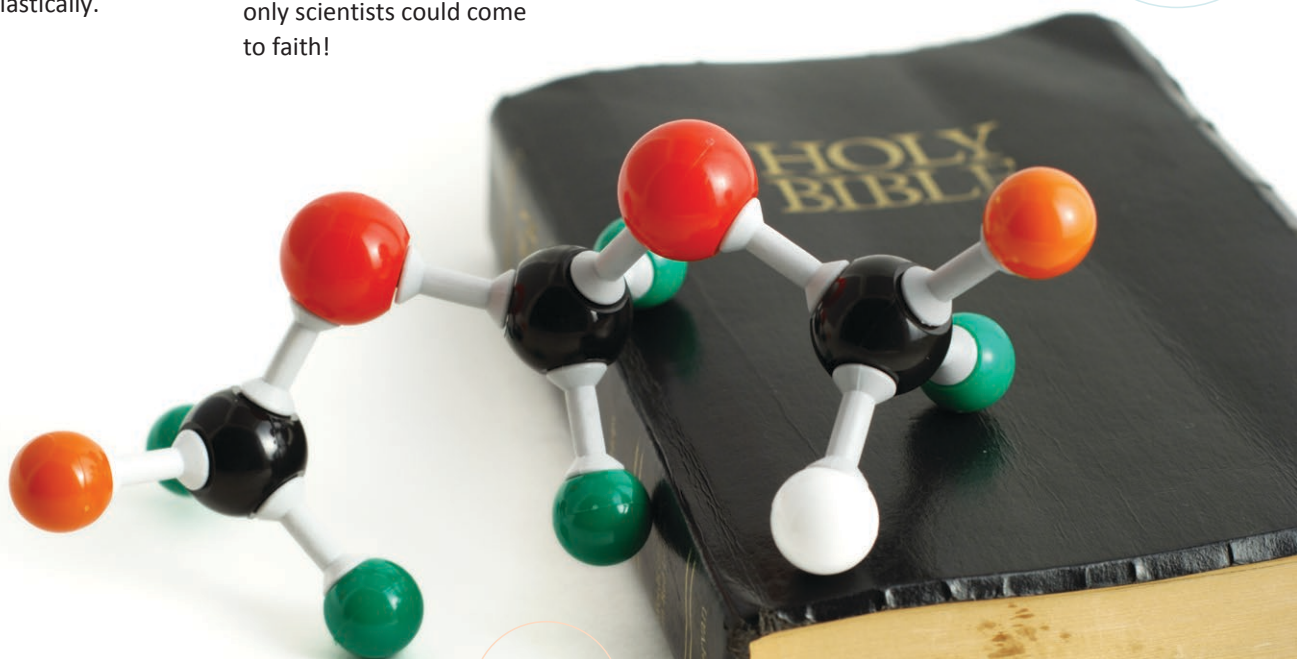
◆ **From a scientific point of view, what is the best way to approach the Bible?**

The Bible is not a scientific textbook—it deals primarily with relationships, an area that lies outside the boundaries of the scientific method. Scripture generally does not speak in scientific terms—neither do we for that matter. For instance, we still say “the sun rises,” a phrase used frequently in Scripture, even though we know full well the sun does not move around the earth. If the Bible was written on a scientific level, then only scientists could come to faith!

The best way to approach the Bible is to look at the original writers intent—very rarely, if ever, is that intent “scientific” in the sense that we mean the term. I believe, however, that the Bible provides the best starting point for science—that is, it reveals the creator and sustainer of the world we are attempting to study and gain dominion over.

When I was in school, I had a teacher who kept telling us “Life is religion.” What he meant is that everyone approaches life from a religious point of view, whether he or she acknowledges the existence of God or not. In the same way, every scientist comes to his or her work with some kind of religious framework. That scientist might believe in the God of the Bible. Or perhaps he or she believes in a supreme being that got things rolling, so to speak, but then walked away. Or maybe he or she places man in the role of God—as the one being who has ultimate worth and gives meaning to life. In any case, a scientist’s religious framework or “faith” significantly affects the way he or she does science, and the conclusions he or she draws from observations.

Where you start makes all the difference.



not of ourselves

selections from John, Ephesians, 2 Corinthians

On the surface, humanism sounds great. The humanist says, "The individual is of highest importance. 'Right' is what is right for the individual. We can, in our own ability and potential as human beings, change our world for the better."

Christianity agrees that the individual is of inestimable worth. But at the same time, we are sinning human beings and can reach our full potential only through a relationship with Jesus Christ.

Jesus makes some bold claims about Himself in today's text.

▶ Read John 10:7-10.

- ▶ What gives Jesus the right to say something this outrageous?
- ▶ Under what circumstances do people your age think they are experiencing a rich and fulfilling life?

▶ Read Ephesians 3:14-21.

- ▶ According to this passage, what is necessary for the Christian to live a rich and fulfilling life?

▶ Read 2 Corinthians 9:8, 11-12.

- ▶ What resources does God make available to us to live a rich and fulfilling life?
- ▶ Why do you think there is such an emphasis on thanksgiving in this passage?
- ▶ Below are some statements commonly made by humanists. Using today's text and other Scriptures you know, try to give a Christian response to each.

"Religion, especially Christianity, is responsible for most of the misery in this world. It helps the rich get richer and the poor get poorer, and it keeps people from working to make things better."

"Christianity is a crutch for weak people. You invent a heaven because you can't handle life here on earth. I don't want pie in the sky. I believe we are responsible for shaping our own destiny. We can make this a better place if we just pull together."

"Christianity is so negative and intolerant. Christians are always trying to impose their morality on other people. Do you really think it's any of your business how others choose to live their lives or what they believe?"

- ▶ How do the goals of Christians differ from humanists?

John 10:7-10

⁷Therefore Jesus said again, "Very truly I tell you, I am the gate for the sheep. ⁸All who have come before me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep have not listened to them. ⁹I am the gate; whoever enters through me will be saved. They will come in and go out, and find pasture. ¹⁰The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full."

Ephesians 3:14-21a

¹⁴For this reason I kneel before the Father, ¹⁵from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name. ¹⁶I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, ¹⁷so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, ¹⁸may have power, together with all the Lord's holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, ¹⁹and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.

²⁰Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, ²¹to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations.

2 Corinthians 9:8, 11-12

⁸And God is able to bless you abundantly, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work.

¹¹You will be enriched in every way so that you can be generous on every occasion, and through us your generosity will result in thanksgiving to God.

¹²This service that you perform is not only supplying the needs of the Lord's people but is also overflowing in many expressions of thanks to God.

»mon

Think about a time when God helped you or your family get through a rough time. That was His grace. Pray for God's grace to abound in your life.

»tues

God's grace works in any situation. List the problems where you need God's grace today. Pray for God's grace in your specific situation.

»wed

God's grace is what we need. Make out a schedule for today and star the times where you know that you need God's special help.

»thurs

God with His grace will meet your every need. His grace is sufficient. On a scale of one to ten rate your faith in God who is gracious. Pray and ask God for the faith to rely on His all-sufficient grace.

»fri

God wants us to have an abundant life. He promises that we will abound in His grace. Chart on a graph your life over the past year. Show the highs and lows. How did God show Himself in the peaks and the valleys through His grace? Ask for God's blessing for the coming year.

»sat

God gives His grace that we might abound in good works. Respond by doing something nice for someone today. Look for opportunities to do good works for God.

And God is able to bless you abundantly, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work.

2 Corinthians 9:8

paper rungs

Jason prided himself on being the best. His ability in sports had earned him the reputation of a hard worker. His grades ran circles around those of his friends. His part in the school musical was considered to be *the* role.

To top it all off, Jason lived in the "right" neighborhood and drove a sports car that made his classmates drool. With a track record like that, you'd think his friends would put him on a pedestal. Not so.

"Lighten up, Jay," they'd often tease. "Come down from the clouds and get a life, man."

While others were struggling with the usual problems of self-esteem, Jason seemed to breeze through life, oblivious to any such thing as a downside. When crisis hit, however, he saw how his self-image was built solely on appearance and achievement. It was as dependable as a ladder with paper rungs.

Granted, floating around with an attitude of self-sufficiency seems to show a high self-esteem, but arrogance attracts few friends. Shoot for a healthy but not necessarily high self-esteem. Regardless of our accomplishments, each of us experiences difficulties. God, who already knows our deepest needs, can use these to develop a healthy self-image within us.

Second Corinthians 9:8 affirms that "God is able to bless you abundantly, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work."

Look to God, not your ability or resources, to determine your significance in the world.

IN THE NOT TOO DISTANT FUTURE

By Steven Slaight



MICHAEL SNAPPED HIS FINGERS TO SHUT OFF THE JUMBO SCREEN SHOWING GUN (GOVERNMENT UPDATE NEWS). TWO CHRISTIAN TEENAGERS WERE DEAD. SHOT FOR ATTENDING A PRAYER MEETING ON SCHOOL GROUNDS.

Hate-motivated shootings never make GUN headlines, thought Michael. *Maybe their parents were famous before the government mandates.* Regardless of this family's prior status, they now would be outcasts. All Christians were. "These teens should have known better than to pray together in a public setting, especially a high school," Michael growled to himself. Overt religious events in the past had been tolerated, but now, the government forbade them.

Michael's mind floated back to last week's underground Sunday school lesson in which he had studied the early church. Many Christians then were martyred. It was happening again . . . only this time, Michael was part of it.

Although Michael was nervous about praying, he went into his closet and shut the door. *The government can't find me here. I must lift up those hurting families in prayer,* he thought. Michael fell to his knees and prayed earnestly. The longer he prayed, the more distinctly he knew the answer. "You're the one."

"The one for what?" Michael finally cried out. Yet he knew what he had to do. God was urging him to meet with other Christians at school. Only two years earlier, Christian students at Jefferson High had met frequently. Those meetings had ended abruptly when Jefferson's principal, Mr. Lambert, had received an electronic computer warning that demanded he download and obey the latest mandates on religious activities.

"But God," Michael argued, "I can't lead a Bible study. Besides, people are getting killed. I won't do You much good if I'm dead." Michael cringed as he realized that he hadn't done much good being alive, either.

The last few years had been difficult ones for both Christians and non-Christians. People rarely ventured outdoors for fear of the government. Violent crime was rampant. Unwanted pregnancies could be terminated by drinking a sweet-tasting formula. Old and young people alike could receive a "peaceful death" pill from their doctor. Life had lost all meaning.

"You might as well paint a target on your forehead and yell, 'Shoot me!'"

Up in heaven, however, God's view of the earth was quite different. He saw a planet full of people ready for revival. God needed each Christian on earth to do his or her part to make way for this great awakening. It was up to Michael, and others like him, to stand up for what they believed in. God had an awesome plan for the world—if only His people would act courageously for Him.

Michael felt overwhelmed. "Can't You get someone else? After all, You are God, aren't You?" Michael stammered. *Things are as bad as they are because everybody's waiting on someone else to do something. If God is leading me, who am I to argue?* Michael humbly acknowledged.

Megan had locked herself in her house and was doing her homework when Michael electronically phoned her. In light of the condition of the world, advanced trig wasn't Michael's idea of time well spent. Megan graciously stopped and listened, however, as Michael explained his calling.

"God wants you to start a prayer group?" Megan laughed. "Are you crazy?" When she saw that Michael

out of your mind to even think of doing this." Michael had only wanted to face the principal knowing that somebody was on his side! So far, things weren't looking good.

Back in his room, Michael prayed. "Why me, God? I can't save the world." But after praying some more, it was suddenly clear. *It's up to me to show those around me that their lives can have meaning. I may not reach everyone, but if even one person comes to God or grows in faith as a result, it will be well worth any suffering I may face. My part is to live for God; He'll take care of the rest,* Michael decided.

Michael knew exactly what he needed to do. He also knew who he needed to talk to. *Even if I fail, I've at least got to try,* he thought.

The next day Michael made an appointment with the principal. Michael walked into the principal's office. In what seemed like an hour, but was only two minutes, Michael outlined his plan. He could see from the scowl on the principal's face that this was going to be an uphill battle.

"Michael, it's just too dangerous," the principal implored. "I can't stop you from meeting, but I will

"Tell me you aren't serious, son. Please!"

was serious, she softened "Reconsider. Please! You might as well paint a target on your forehead and yell, 'Shoot me!'" Megan continued, "Besides, you'll never get it past the principal. Now that any religious gathering is considered dangerous, you can't even bow your head and pray at lunch!"

"Thanks for being such a great encouragement," Michael said sarcastically. He and Megan had been friends since middle school when Megan convinced him to go to her church. Now it was Michael's turn to do the convincing.

Although Michael's father wasn't a Christian, they had a decent relationship. Michael's dad respected his son's Christianity but didn't think the Bible applied to him. Michael hoped that his dad would take some time to listen to him now.

"Tell me you aren't serious, son. Please!" his dad implored as Michael told him of his plan. "You must be

make it tough on you. You'll have to find a teacher to sponsor your group, and frankly, I will do everything I can to stop that from happening. Be warned. I won't tolerate more violence."

Michael was faced with a difficult decision. He could start a student prayer group that might change the world, or he could save his own neck and keep praying to God on his own.

.....

If you were Michael, what would you do? What might the consequences be? How could you motivate Megan to join you? How could you use the prayer group to witness to your dad? What might God do to show you His power? How might your world change? Take a few minutes and jot your own ending to this story about Michael.

Off-center

How do these self-help sayings measure up to the truth? Are they on target or a bit off-center? Are they 10%, 60%, 100% true? Mark your estimate on the “Truth Meter” under each quote, and then explain why each one may or may not tell the whole truth.

- The answer to your problems lies within.



- Once you are moving in the direction of your goals, nothing can stop you.



- Live up to your unlimited potential!



- Our aspirations are our possibilities.



- You can do anything if you try hard enough.



- We cannot direct the wind, but we can adjust our sails.



- In this world, you've got to pull yourself up by your own bootstraps.



- In the middle of every difficulty lies opportunity.



- When you realize the power of your mind, you will be able to accomplish anything.



- The harder you work, the luckier you get.

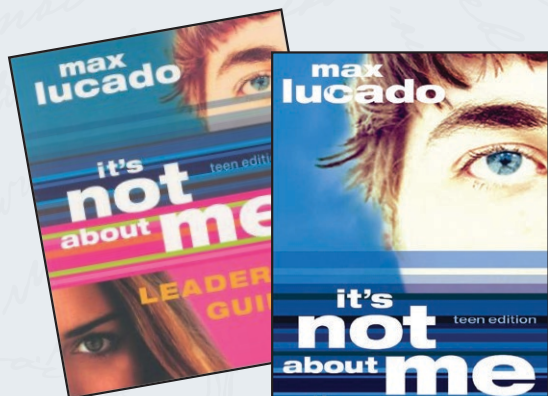


Contrast these Scripture passages with the quotes on the previous page.

- Proverbs 13:4
- Proverbs 16:9
- John 15:5
- 2 Corinthians 12:9
- Philippians 4:13
- Proverbs 16:3
- Ecclesiastes 6:2
- Romans 7:18
- Ephesians 3:20-21
- James 4:13-15

Write your own phrase or expression here—one that shows a balance between human effort and God's ultimate control.

This image shows a single sheet of cream-colored paper with horizontal blue ruling lines. Two vertical red lines are positioned near the left edge, creating a margin. The paper is otherwise blank, with no handwriting or other markings.



IT'S NOT ABOUT ME—

LIVE LIKE YOU MEAN IT (TEEN EDITION) BY MAX LUCADO

“Read? Over the summer? I just finished reading, writing and studying...” you might say.

It's Not about Me—Live Like You Mean It (Teen Edition) by Max Lucado encourages teens to think, ponder, and observe the glory of God. An easy read (only 118 pages), *It's Not about Me* is packed with examples of people who display God's glory. Questions at the end of each chapter help you journal life experiences and reflect on what you've learned.

“When God looks at the center of the universe, He doesn't look at you.” Lucado writes, “Like the planets that revolve around the sun, God wants us to become ‘Son reflectors.’” *It's Not about Me* is about becoming so acquainted with God, that people see Jesus, His Son, in everything you are about. This is quite a shift in thinking from today's “me, myself, and I” mentality.

Remember Moses? Lucado reminds us that Moses prayed for God to show him His glory and God did. Moses' face was so glorious after he talked with God that he had to put a veil on his face. (See Ex 33; and 34:29-35).

The following is a thought-provoking byte from the chapter, “My struggles are about Him.”

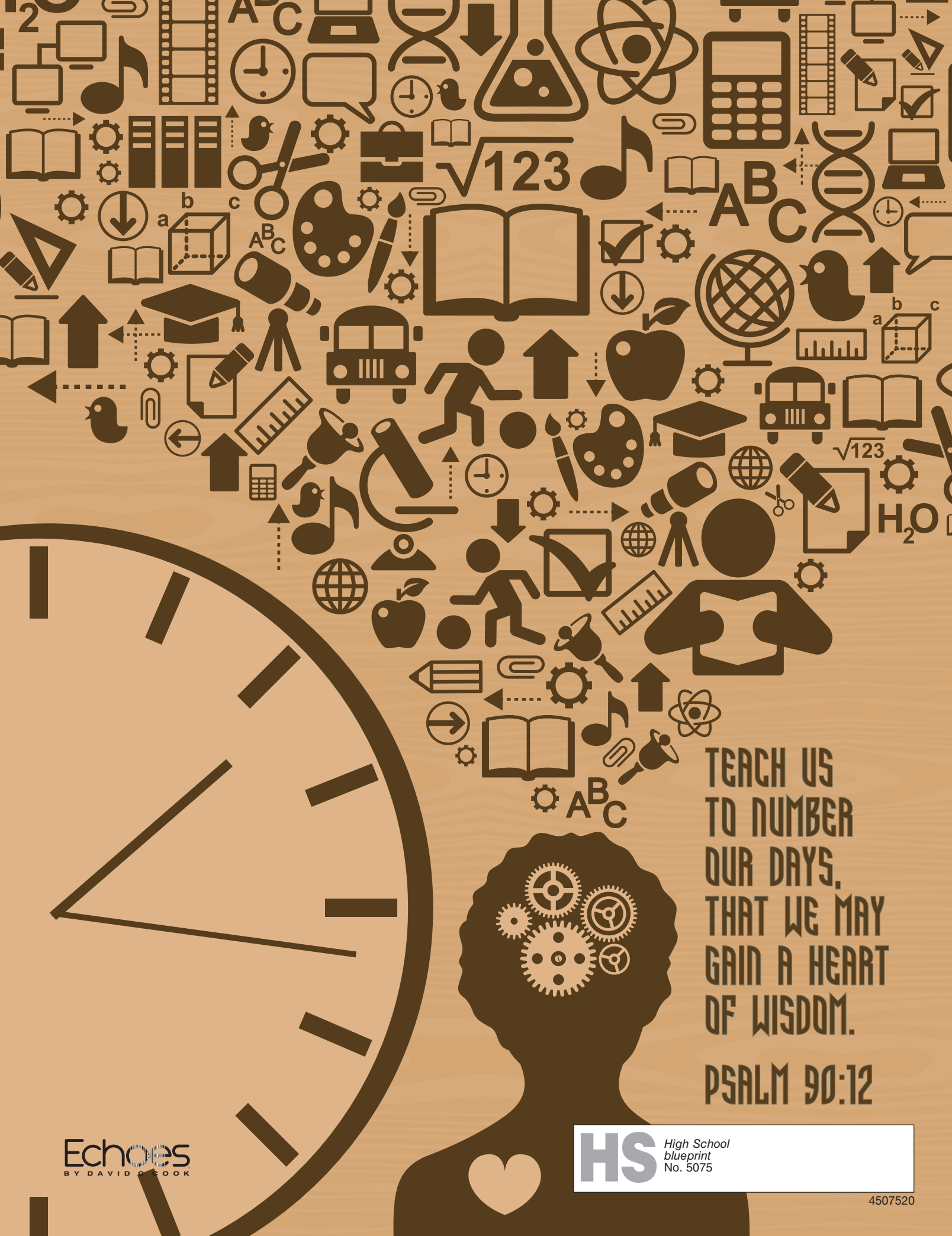
“Nika, a vibrant eighteen-year old Christian was voted Most Likely to Succeed in high school and headed off to college to pursue her dream (in broadcasting)...six weeks after her twentieth birthday, she suddenly fell on her face in her bedroom, unable to move. Lupus, an autoimmune disorder had caused a massive brain injury...in

the time it takes to turn a radio dial, she became a quadriplegic.”

Lucado, in retelling Nika's story, gives a beautiful depiction of an encounter Jesus had with a man born blind (John 9:1-3). The disciples questioned Jesus as to whether this man's parents' sin or his own sin had caused his blindness. Jesus replied that it was not one or the other; instead, it was so the works of God might be displayed in him. This book dives into the idea that God works to reveal His glory in all circumstances, both good and bad.

Christians are promised eternal, abundant life in God—not a life on this earth without problems or difficulties. We are all called to show His glory in whatever He has called us to do. We can do that as we choose to focus on Him instead of on ourselves. That means that playing soccer, being in a school play, running track, getting good grades, serving the elderly, volunteering, singing in the church choir, surviving our parents' divorce, living without a father or mother, having a disability, being obedient, being a friend...can give God glory because we live in and through all these situations in such a relationship with God that we naturally reveal Him.

This summer start making more of your life about Him. Get to know God. See His glory. Ask how He wants you to show His glory to those around you. See God differently and be different. As God slowly reveals His glory to you, you will be able to live like you mean it.



TEACH US
TO NUMBER
OUR DAYS,
THAT WE MAY
GAIN A HEART
OF WISDOM.

PSALM 90:12