THE LIFE OF JESUS CHRIST
From Matthew, Mark, Luke, John

INTRODUCTION

How to use this course:

1. Transformation:
   - The course has the power to transform the students, making them passionate followers of Jesus Christ. Each of the stories is powerful to transform not only his knowledge but his convictions, not just his mind, but his heart. So let the Holy Spirit be at the centre of all that you do.
2. Facilitate the discovery process:
   - The teacher should facilitate learning by asking good questions that lead the students to discover the answers. Where there is a possible deviation from the truth, the teacher gently guides the discussion for the students to discover the answers to the questions.
3. The classroom process:
   - Step 1: Read the introduction to every lesson.
   - Step 2: Read the Bible text aloud in the classroom thrice, if needed more. All the Bible texts have to be read. If the teacher suggests additional supporting texts they have to be read also.
   - Step 3: Ask the students to narrate the story. Ask questions to verify and clarify the story line and its content. The teacher assists the discussion to get the facts right.
   - Step 4: Divide the students into small groups of three to five and ask them to discuss the “group discussion questions.” Then bring them back and ask them to discuss their findings in the larger group.
   - Step 5: Give the students their activity. Review the activity periodically. Give the student grades based on portfolio assessment (his growth performance indicators).
4. The stories of the heart:
   - The course has been designed to be chronological and therefore the student will be able to narrate the 30 stories. Encourage the stories to become a part of the student’s life, where the story is not only in the Bible, but in his heart.

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Introduction to the Context

Political:

In the first century, when Jesus lived, the Romans ruled modern day Israel. The people of Israel were ruled by a self-governed Roman government, headed by Herod, who was in turn ruled by the Roman ruler Emperor Caesar. The Roman government maintained strict control, but allowed for religious freedom, political freedom and thought freedom.

There were two religious ruling structures in Israel: the Pharisees who were the 'people's party' and the Sadducees, who were the wealthy and conservative leaders. The Pharisees taught the law and traditions of Israel's patriarchs, and confirmed strictly to Jewish law; while the Sadducees rejected the traditions in favour of political and religious cooperation with the Romans. The Sanhedrin was the Jewish court system and the Jewish citizens were under their authority.

Socio-Economic:

There was a big divide between the rich and poor among the people of Israel. There were three main sources of economic support, agriculture, trade and government building projects. Local people were appointed as tax collectors by the Roman government and heavy taxes were collected. The tax collectors were hated by the local people.

The Jews bought animals and offered sacrifices in the temple. The temple courtyards often became a marketplace where merchants sold animals, making a big profit. The common languages in the Roman Empire were Greek and Latin but the Jews commonly used Hebrew or Aramaic. Jesus spoke Aramaic. Jews lived in a joint family system where parents, unmarried children, and a married son and his spouse would often all live under one roof. Women were given a second-class citizen treatment.

Religious:

The "Sabbath" was very important in the religious life of the people of Israel. It began on the evening of Friday and ended on the evening of Saturday. The Sabbath started with prayer and was followed by a Friday dinner. Saturday was considered to be a day of rest and worship and was dedicated to honour God. According to the prophets who spoke the word of God, the Jewish people were seeking a "Messiah" or saviour. They were watching for the Messiah who (according to popular understanding) would bring them spiritual renewal and political freedom from the Roman Empire.

The culture of first century Israel was very interested in the supernatural – it was common for people to believe in curses and to be controlled by superstitions.The major religious holiday during the Jewish year was the Passover feast, celebrating the deliverance of the Jewish people from their slavery in Egypt. During the Passover, many Jews would travel to Jerusalem in order to celebrate in the holy city.

Educational:

The written Torah and Oral Mishna law were both responsible for the passing of the learning through the generations. All of the learning in religion, law, history, ethics and education were bundled together in the learning process.

The teachers (called Rabbis) and the place of teaching (the synagogue, also called "the house of assembly") were key in the formation of spiritual lives of the Jews. The "Torah," translated "law," was the source of all learning – religious, historical and ethical. The Torah includes the first five books of the modern Bible (Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy).

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Lesson 1: The Pre-existence and Genealogy of Jesus

Introduction:

In this section you will get a glimpse of the pre-existence and genealogy of Jesus.

Bible passages:

John 1:1-18, Colossians 1:15-17, Genesis 1:1, 26, Matthew 1:1-17, Luke 3:23-38

The story:

The Pre-existence of Jesus

The Bible bears witness to the pre-existence of Jesus. It bears light that Jesus existed before the world and the world was created through Him. His coming into the world was God's divine plan so that all that believed in Him and called on His name He gave the right to be called the children of God. In this section you will read about the Bible giving us light into Jesus before He came into this world.

His Genealogy

In this section you will read the genealogy of Jesus. God gave a promise to Abraham, *"And I will multiply thy seed as the stars of heaven, and will give unto thy seed all these lands. And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed. "* Gen 26:4 (ASV). The birth of Jesus is a fulfilment of that promise.

Group discussion questions:

1. Where was Jesus during creation?
2. What was God's plan to redeem the world?
3. Why was Jesus sent into the world?
4. What does this tell you about Jesus?
5. Trace the lineage of Jesus to Abraham.
6. What significance does the birth of Jesus in the lineage of Abraham have on our faith?

Activities:

1. Draw a picture of how Jesus was there when the world was created and all things were created by Him.
2. Write down what it means to you to know that Jesus was (He existed) before all things.
3. Make a list of all your family who are yet to hear about Jesus, and make a plan to reach them with the Gospel.

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Lesson 2: Jesus' Birth

Introduction:

In this section, you will read about how the Lord sent His angel Gabriel to Zacharias and Mary. To each of them the angel took news of a child to be born. One was going to prepare the way for the other and the other was to be named Jesus, whose kingdom would never end. One is a story of how the Lord answered the prayer for a son who was to be named John, and the other of a virgin giving birth to a child who was to be named Jesus, who was going to be the saviour of the world.

Bible passages:

Luke 1:1-80, Matthew 1:18-25, Luke 2:1-38

The story:

The Angel Visits Mary

The angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth, to a virgin name Mary, engaged to be married to a man whose name was Joseph. And the virgin's name was Mary. The angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall give Him the name Jesus. And He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there will be no end." And Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, because I am a virgin?" And the angel answered her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the child to be born. For nothing will be impossible with God." And the angel departed from her.

The Angel Visits Joseph

When Mary had been engaged to Joseph, before they came together Mary was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit. It was a matter of great shame for Joseph. But being a just man and not willing to put her to shame, he resolved to divorce her quietly. But as Joseph was considering these things, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, "Joseph, do not fear to take Mary as your wife, for that which is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will bear a son, and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins." When Joseph woke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him: he took his wife, but knew her not until she had given birth to a son. When Jesus was born he called His name Jesus.

Jesus is Born in a Manger

In the days of Caesar Augustus a word went out that all the world should be registered. Joseph and Mary also went from Galilee, from the town of Nazareth, to Judea, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and lineage of David, to be registered with Mary. Mary was a child and the time came for her to give birth. They knocked from door to door, at every inn to find a place to rest. But they found no place and Mary gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped Him in swaddling clothes and laid Him in a manger

Shepherds and wise men came to visit Jesus and worshipped Him with many gifts.

Group discussion questions:

1. How did the angel make known to Mary and then Joseph God's plan for Jesus?
2. What did the angel tell Joseph about God's plan for Jesus?
3. What are your views on the character of Joseph?
4. Narrate the story of the birth of Jesus?
5. Why Jesus did choose such a lowly birth?
6. What is the significance of the shepherds the field being told of the birth of Jesus?

Activity:

Draw a picture or a timeline of events of God's plan for Jesus to be born into this world.

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Lesson 3: Escape to Egypt and the Childhood of Jesus

Introduction:

This story outlines the childhood of Jesus. God had a plan for His son Jesus; could the king stop it?

Bible passages:

Matthew 2:1-23, Luke 2:39-52

The story:

The Wise Men

Wise men from the east came to Jerusalem, saying, "Where is He who has been born king of the Jews? For we saw His star and we have come to worship Him." This news of a king being born, reached Herod and he was troubled. Herod assembled all the chief priests and scribes of the people and he inquired of them where the Christ was to be born. They told him, "In Bethlehem of Judea."

Herod and the Wise Men

Then Herod called the wise men secretly and asked from them what time the star had appeared. He sent them to Bethlehem, saying, "Go and search diligently for the child, and when you have found Him, bring me word, that I too may come and worship Him." The wise men followed the star that they had seen until it came to rest over the place where the child was. They went into the house and they saw the child with Mary His mother, and they fell down and worshiped Him. Then, opening their treasures, they offered Him gifts, gold and frankincense and myrrh.

The Angel Warns

When they were to return they were warned in a dream not to return to Herod and they departed to their own country by another way. An angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, "Rise up, take the child and His mother, and escape to Egypt, and remain there till I tell you, for Herod is about to search for the child, to destroy Him." Joseph rose up after the dream and took the child and His mother by night and escaped to Egypt and remained there until the death of Herod.

Group discussion questions:

1. What was God's divine plan to save Jesus?
2. What can we learn from the childhood of Jesus?
3. Why did Jesus stay back in the temple in Jerusalem?
4. How did Jesus acquire such great knowledge of the scriptures?
5. What did the high priests say about the boy Jesus?

Activity:

Write down a timeline of God's plan and intervention to protect baby Jesus from birth to when He came to live in Nazareth.

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Lesson 4: John the Baptist Prepares the Way

Introduction:

In this section you will read about how the Lord chose John the son of Zacharias to prepare the way for Jesus' ministry.

Bible passages:

Luke 3:1 – 4:4, John 1:19-34, John 1:35-2:25

The story:

John the Baptist

As soon as John, the cousin of Jesus, is old enough to understand, his father tells him, "Before you were born, God planned for you to serve Him in a special way." John grows up preparing to serve God. And after the death of his parents he goes into the wilderness to pray and study. There God calls him to begin his work. News spreads far and wide about the man who looks and speaks like a prophet of old. Crowds come out from Jerusalem to hear the man called John the Baptist. Some are only curious, but John knows their thoughts.

Preparing the Way

He went into all the region around the Jordan, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. As it is written in the book of the words of Isaiah the prophet, "The voice of one crying in the wilderness: Prepare the way of the Lord, make His paths straight. Every valley shall be filled, and every mountain and hill shall be made low, and the crooked shall become straight, and the rough places shall become level ways, and all flesh shall see the salvation of God.'"

Group discussion questions:

1. What was John's life style?
2. What were the three firsts from the life of John the Baptist.
3. What was John the Baptist's testimony?

Activity:

Write a character sketch of John the Baptist.

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Lesson 5: Jesus is Baptized

Introduction:

In this section you will read how Jesus is baptized by John the Baptist. Read about the events that occur during Jesus' baptism. Jesus has come down to be baptised and John baptises Jesus. The Spirit of God descends like a dove upon Him.

Bible passage:

Matthew 3:13-17

The story:

Jesus is Baptized

Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan and there John was baptizing people, those who repented of their sin. Jesus walked up to John, to be baptized by him. But John looked at Jesus and said "I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?" But Jesus answered him, "Let it be so now, for it is fitting for us to fulfil all righteousness." Then he, John, agreed to baptise Jesus. And when Jesus was baptized, the heavens were opened to Him, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and coming to rest on Him; and a voice from heaven said, "This is My beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased."

Group discussion questions:

1. What was John's reaction when he saw Jesus coming up to him to be baptized? Why?
2. How did the God the Father affirm Jesus during His baptism?
3. What does the dove signify?
4. Why did Jesus need to be baptized?

Activity:

What are your views about baptism?

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Lesson 6: The Temptation of Jesus

Introduction:

In this section you will read how about Jesus, driven by the Spirit, went into the wilderness and fasted for 40 days. During this time Satan tempted Jesus. You will learn how Jesus overcame the temptation and defeated Satan.

Bible passages:

Luke 4:1-13, Matthew 4:1-11

The story:

Forty Days of Prayer

Jesus was filled with the Holy Spirit as He returned from Jordan and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness. He was there for forty days being tempted by the devil. He ate nothing during those days and at the end of those days He was hungry.

The Temptation:

The devil said to Jesus, "If you are the Son of God, command this stone to become bread." And Jesus answered him, "It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone.'" The devil took Him up and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time, and said to Him, "To you I will give all this authority and their glory, for it has been delivered to me, and I give it to whom I will. If you, then, will worship me, it will all be yours." Jesus answered him, "It is written, 'You shall worship the Lord your God, and Him only shall you serve.'" Then Satan took Jesus to Jerusalem and set Him on the top of the temple and said to Him, "If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down from here, for it is written, 'He will command His angels concerning you, to guard you, and on their hands they will bear you up, so that you do not strike your foot against a stone.'" Jesus answered him, "It is said, 'You shall not put the Lord your God to the test.'" And when the devil had ended every temptation, he departed from Him until an opportune time.

Group discussion questions:

1. What was the first temptation and how did Jesus reply Satan?
2. What was the second temptation and how did Jesus defeat Satan?
3. What was the third temptation and how did Jesus defeat Satan?
4. How can we defeat temptation?
5. What are the temptations that are common to us?

Activity:

Write down one sin which has been hard to overcome and what you plan to do to overcome it.

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Lesson 7: Jesus Chooses His Disciples

Introduction:

In this section you will read about how Jesus chose His disciples very early on in His ministry. He took them along and they saw and learned from Jesus.

Bible Passage:

Mark 1:14-39

The story:

Start of His Ministry

Jesus began His ministry coming into Galilee, preaching the Gospel of God, and He said, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the Gospel."

He Chooses His Disciples

As Jesus began His ministry He began to choose His disciples, whom He would love and teach through three and a half years. As He went past the Sea of Galilee, He saw Simon and Andrew, the brother of Simon, casting a net into the sea, for they were fishermen. Jesus said to them, "Follow me, and I will make you become fishers of men." And immediately they left their nets and followed Him. Then as He went a little farther, He saw James the son of Zebedee and John his brother, who were in their boat mending the nets. And immediately He called them, and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired servants and followed Him.

Choosing the Twelve

Jesus went on to choose twelve whom He called the Apostles. They lived and walked with Jesus and were witnesses to all that Jesus did. They would later become the pillars of the church.

These are the names of the twelve Apostles: first, Simon (who is called Peter) and his brother Andrew; James, the son of Zebedee, and his brother John; Philip and Bartholomew; Thomas and Matthew the tax collector; James, the son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus; Simon the Cananaean and Judas Iscariot, who later betrayed Jesus.

Group discussion questions:

1. What was Jesus' message as He went about preaching the kingdom of God?
2. How did Jesus call Andrew and Peter to follow Him?
3. How did Jesus call the rest?
4. How did Jesus show His purpose of His ministry to His disciples?
5. In your life do you have a mentor?
6. What do you understand by mentorship?

Activity:

Evaluate your life and write down the key people who mentored you and in what regard.

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Lesson 8: Water into Wine

Introduction:

Jesus, His mother Mary and His disciples were invited to a wedding feast. During the feast Mary discovers something that will embarrass the groom: there is no more wine. She tells Jesus, then she goes to the servants. She tells them to do whatever Jesus tells them to do. Jesus tells them to fill the jars with water. The servants sense a strange authority in Jesus and they obey Him. When the servants take the water in the jars to be served to the guests, a miracle happens: the water turns into wine. The head waiter is so surprised when he tastes the wine. This was Jesus' first miracle.

Bible passages:

John 1:4, 7–51, John 2:1-11, 23-25, John 3:1, 2

The story:

Jesus at the Wedding:
Jesus, His mother and His disciples were invited to a wedding at Cana in Galilee. At the wedding the wine ran out, and Jesus' mother told Him that there was no wine. Jesus said to her, "Woman, what does this have to do with me? My hour has not yet come." Jesus' mother said to the servants, "Do whatever He tells you."

The Empty Jars
Now there were six stone water jars there for the Jewish rites of purification, each holding twenty or thirty gallons. Jesus said to the servants, "Fill the jars with water." And they filled them up to the brim. Then Jesus ordered them to draw out the wine and take it to the master of the feast.

The Miracle
When the master of the feast tasted the water now become wine, and did not know where it came from (though the servants who had drawn the water knew), the master of the feast called the bridegroom and said to him, "Everyone serves the good wine first, and when people have drunk freely, then the poor wine. But you have kept the good wine until now." This Jesus did at Cana in Galilee. It was the first of His many signs, by which He manifested His glory.

Group discussion questions:

1. Why did Mary tell Jesus about the situation?
2. What made the servants obey Jesus?
3. What impact would this miracle have had on the disciples?
4. What is your conviction about miracles happening today?

Activity:

What has been your experience with the miraculous work of Jesus in your life? Write down your experience.

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Lesson 9: Nicodemus Meets Jesus

Introduction:

In this section Nicodemus meets Jesus at night. Jesus answers the deepest question of his heart, “How can one enter the kingdom of God?” Learn here about how one can enter the kingdom of God.

Bible Passage: John 3:1-21

The story:

At Night

There was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews. Nicodemus came to Jesus by night, probably because he did not want to be seen by the others. As they spoke Jesus told Nicodemus, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God.” Nicodemus was perplexed by this and said to Jesus, “How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born?” Jesus answered, “Truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.“

Salvation

Jesus was talking about a change in heart, being born of the Spirit, and living a life of witness. Those who have a transformation of both heart and life will be able to see the kingdom of God.

Group discussion questions:

1. How can one enter the kingdom of God?
2. What is your conviction about how one can enter the kingdom of God?
3. Share your experience of salvation.

Activities:

1. Ask two of your friends about their experience of being born again.
2. Share your faith with any two friends.
3. Write down the names of five friends.

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Lesson 10: Four friends and Their Faith

Introduction:

Everywhere Jesus goes the crowds follow Him. One day in Capernaum so many people crowd into the house where He is teaching that no one else can enter. Some men who have brought a sick friend to see Jesus cannot get through the crowd, so they carry the man to the roof top. They make a hole in the roof and let the sick man is let down through the roof. Read this story of extraordinary faith and love.

Bible passage:

Mark 2: 1- 12

The story:

The Crowded Room

Jesus was teaching and many were gathered together to hear Him speak. There were so many gathered there was no more room, even at the door. There were four friends who were carrying a paralytic man to be healed by Jesus. But they could not get near Him because of the crowd.

Faith

They were so full of faith and desperate for their friend to be well, they removed the roof above Jesus, and when they had made an opening, they let down the bed on which the paralytic lay. When Jesus saw their faith, He said to the paralytic, “Son, your sins are forgiven.” Some of the scribes who were sitting there questioned in their hearts, “Why does this man speak like that? Who can forgive sins but God alone?”

The Power to Forgive

Jesus, immediately perceiving in His spirit that they thus questioned within themselves, said to them, “Why do you question these things in your hearts? Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, ‘Your sins are forgiven,’ or to say, ‘Rise, take up your bed and walk?’ I have said this so that you will know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins” .Jesus looked at the paralytic and said “I say to you, rise, pick up your bed, and go home.” And he rose and immediately picked up his bed and went out before them all, so that they were all amazed and glorified God, saying, “We never saw anything like this!”

Group Discussion questions:

1. What made the friends make a hole in the roof?
2. What did Jesus find amazing about the four friends?
3. Why did Jesus talk about forgiveness of sin before healing him?
4. What does this say about Jesus and His power?

Activity:

In view of Hebrew 11, what is your walk of faith in Jesus? Write down your experience.

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Lesson 11: The Sermon on the Mount

Introduction:

Jesus went about doing good, healing the sick, driving out demons and proclaiming the kingdom of God. Seeing a large crowd of people following Him, he went up the mountain and sat down. And His disciples came up to Him and Jesus preached to them.

Bible passage:

Matthew 5:1-16

The Sermon:

Happy are the poor in spirit: for the kingdom of heaven is theirs.
Happy are those who are sad: for they will be comforted.
Happy are the gentle: for the earth will be their heritage.
Happy are those whose heart's desire is for righteousness: for they will have their desire.
Happy are those who have mercy: for they will be given mercy.
Happy are the clean in heart: for they will see God.
Happy are the peacemakers: for they will be named sons of God.
Happy are those who are attacked on account of righteousness: for the kingdom of heaven will be theirs.
Happy are you when men give you a bad name, and are cruel to you, and say all evil things against you falsely, because of me. Be glad and full of joy; for great is your reward in heaven:

Group discussion questions:

1. Who are those Jesus says are blessed, and why?
2. Explain the illustration of Christians and salt?
3. Explain the illustration of Christians and light of the world?

Activity:

Write a song or draw a picture from the teachings of Jesus, which captures the true essence of what Jesus was trying to teach.

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Lesson 12: The Woman with the Alabaster Flask

Introduction:

This is a story of Jesus forgiving a woman in sin. This story is a striking example of love that springs from forgiveness. Ask yourself, who loves God most?

Bible Passage:

Luke 7:36-50

The story:

At a Pharisee's Home

A Pharisee named Simon invited Jesus to his home and Jesus went and sat at the table. When a sinner-women learned that Jesus was a guest in the Pharisee's home, she took a bottle of perfume (Alabaster) and sat behind Jesus, weeping. With her tears she washed the feet of Jesus and brushed them dry with her hair. She did not stop kissing His feet and anointing them with the perfume. The Pharisee saw this and said in his heart, "If Jesus were a prophet, He would know that this woman who is touching Him is a sinner!" Then Jesus called out to Simon the Pharisee and told him a parable.

The Parable

"Two men owed money to a money-lender. One owed him 500 denarii and the other 50. When they couldn't pay it back, the money lender generously cancelled the debts for both of them."

Who Loves More?

Jesus asked Simon, "Now which of them will love him more?" Simon answered, "I suppose the one who had the larger debt cancelled." Jesus said to him, "You have answered correctly."

Jesus then said to the Pharisee, "I came into your house, but you did not give me water for my feet. But this women has washed my feet with her tears and dried them with her hair. You did not give me a kiss, but she has not stopped kissing my feet. You did not give me oil for my hair, but she has anointed my feet with perfume. Her sins, as many as they are, have been forgiven, and that's why she has shown such great love. But the one to whom little is forgiven loves little."

Jesus turned to the women and said, "Your sins are forgiven; go in peace."

Group discussion questions:

1. Why was the act performed by the women in sin unacceptable to the Pharisee?
2. What comparison did Jesus make between the love of the Pharisee and the woman?
3. Is it true that the Pharisee was forgiven less and the woman more? Why?

Activity:

Write or share with a friend an answer to this question: When was the last time my love for Jesus was showed in action? Has it sprung out of the forgiveness that God has given?

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Lesson 13: Jesus Rebukes the Storm

Introduction:

Jesus taught His twelve disciples as they travelled and watched every move of Jesus. Jesus expected His disciples to grow in faith and exercise their faith in times of testing.

Bible passages:

Matthew 8:18-27, Mark 4:35-4, Luke 8:22-25

The story:

The Storm:

Large multitudes of people followed Jesus and He healed every one of them. One such day, Jesus asked His disciples to get into the boat and go on to the other side. As the boat sailed into the sea, a huge storm and waves beat against the boat. So bad was the storm that it threatened to turn over the boat. The disciples were terrified, but Jesus was fast asleep.

Fear

The fearful disciples came to Jesus and woke Him up saying, “Save us master, we are drowning.” Jesus woke up and asked them, “Why are you so fearful? You have so little faith!”

Jesus Rebukes

Jesus arose and calmed the storm and it obeyed Him. The winds and the waves died out and it as calm. The disciples were amazed and spoke among themselves asking, “Who is this Jesus, that even the winds and sea obey Him?”

Group discussion questions:

1. As the disciples were traveling with Jesus what problem did they run into?
2. Did the disciples do the right thing by being fearful? What is the right reaction in that situation?
3. Why does Jesus tell the disciples, “you of little faith?”

Activities:

1. Share with the group one incident from your life when you were really fearful, and how you reacted.
2. Discuss the question, “What should be the right reaction when you are in a life threatening situation?”

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Lesson 14: Jesus Walks on the Water

Introduction:

This is an astonishing story of Jesus walking on the water. Jesus teaches His disciples to have faith.

Bible passages:

Matthew 14:22-36, Mark 6:45-56, John 6:15-21

The story:

Jesus Goes to Pray

After Jesus had miraculously fed the five thousand, Jesus asked His disciples to take a boat and go to Bethsaida which was across the sea. Jesus stayed back, dismissing the crowd, and later went up to the mountain to pray. As the disciples were traveling across the sea, the waves and the winds became rough and they were having great difficulty and danger crossing the sea.

Jesus Walks on Water

Jesus knew this and went to them, walking on the water. He meant to go past them, but on seeing Him, the disciples were afraid and took Him to be a spirit. In fear they cried out loudly. “Do not be afraid, it is I,” Jesus told them. He got into the boat with them and the winds died down.

Group discussion questions:

1. Why did Jesus go to them walking on the water? Is there a lesson for the disciples in this?
2. Can you state another example where nature obeyed Jesus?
3. Read in the book of Psalms and list the relationship between God and nature?

Activities:

1. Enact the story in a drama, with all/most of the students playing a role.
2. After the drama ask the entire group these questions:
    - What was the reaction of the disciples seeing Jesus walk on the sea?
    - What was Jesus’ purpose of approaching His disciples walking on the water?

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Lesson 15: The Mad Man by the Sea

Introduction:

At the end of a day of teaching Jesus asks His disciples to take Him across the Sea of Galilee. He lies down to sleep but soon after a sudden and violent storm strikes. In terror the disciples rush to the stern of the boat. They wake Jesus and He rises and faces the stormy sea. Instantly the wind dies and the waves vanish. In the morning the boat reaches shore and as Jesus and His disciples are walking up the beach, a man possessed by an evil spirit rushes down to meet Jesus. Jesus commands the unclean spirit to come out of the man. Instantly the man is cured. The people who see it are amazed and they wonder what power Jesus has to make evil spirits obey Him. The man seeks to go with Jesus, but He asks him to return home and tell his friends what God has done for him.

Bible passages:

Mark 4: 7–41, Mark 5:1-24, 35–43

The story:

The Sea

In was evening and Jesus planned with His disciples to cross over to the other side of the sea. They took a boat to cross over. Jesus slept on the ride in the back of the boat. Suddenly a violent windstorm came up and the waves began to beat against the boat. It was so strong that it seemed like they were going to sink.

Jesus Rebukes

The disciples were greatly terrified. They began to look for Jesus and found Him sleeping at the back of the boat. They woke Him and asked Him, "Teacher, don't you care that we're going to die?"

Jesus got up and spoke to the winds and the waves. "Calm down! Be still!" Then the wind stopped blowing, and there was a great calm.

Where is Your Faith?

Jesus turned to His disciples and asked them, “Why are you such cowards? Don't you have any faith yet?" But the disciples were extremely surprised and said among themselves, "Who is this man? Even the wind and the sea obey Him!”

Group discussion questions:

1. What made the disciples so afraid?
2. Where was Jesus when the storm raged?
3. Why did the storm obey Jesus?
4. What did the disciples learn from this incident?
5. What do you think about the evil spirit in the man who was possessed?
6. Why did the evil spirit obey Jesus?
7. What did the disciples learn from this incident?

Activity:

Have you ever come across a situation or heard about a person possessed by an evil spirit. How was he healed? What is your perspective about the power of God over evil spirits? Write down your thoughts in a few words and share them with your teacher.

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Lesson 16: The Parable of the Good Samaritan

Introduction:

One day while Jesus is preaching a lawyer decides to test Him. He asks a question for which the Pharisees had offered many complicated rules. His question is, “What shall I do to inherit eternal life?” Jesus replies by asking a question that forces the lawyer to disregard the rules of the Pharisees and go straight to the commandments of God. He asks, “What does God’s Word say on the commandments?” The lawyer replies, “Love God with all thy heart and thy neighbour as thyself.” Jesus replies, “You are right, do that and you will have eternal life.” The lawyer asks, “Who is my neighbour?” Jesus replies with a story. Jesus tells the story of the Good Samaritan, seeking to clarify the concept of “neighbour.” Read first this beautiful story from the Bible a couple of times and ask yourself “Who is my neighbour?”

Bible passage:

Luke 10: 25–39

The story:

“The Parable of the Good Samaritan”

A man was traveling from Jerusalem to Jericho and was attacked by robbers on the way. He was stripped of all that he had and left to die on the road. A priest by chance happened to pass by and saw the man, and walked away. A Levite came along, saw him and passed on to the other side. But a Samaritan came along, saw this man half dead on the road, and had compassion on him. He cleaned his wounds with oil and wine and bound him up. He then set him upon his own donkey and took him to a health-care place. He gave some money to the caretaker and asked him to take good care of him, and promised to pay for all the additional expenses that would be suffered.

Who is My Neighbour?

After Jesus had told them this parable He asked them, “Who was a neighbour to the man who was attacked by the robbers?” To this question the lawyer said, “The man who showed mercy.” Jesus then told him to go and do likewise.

Group discussion questions:

1. What is the commandment that Jesus is referring to?
2. Why did the first two people overlook the person hurt?
3. What cultural implications does a Samaritan have in this story?
4. What did the Samaritan do for the man hurt on the road?
5. What does this story teach us about our neighbours?

Activities:

1. Do any one of the following:
    a. Write down the story of the Good Samaritan in your own words, in a drama format.
    b. Draw a story board of the Good Samaritan.
    c. Make a collage of the Good Samaritan story.
    d. Write a song on the Good Samaritan story.
2. Enact a drama of the Good Samaritan story.

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Lesson 17: The Transfiguration

Introduction:

In this section you will read how Jesus went with three of His disciples up the mountain. And He was changed in form before them; and His face was shining like the sun, and His clothing became white as light. Moses and Elijah came down before their eyes and spoke to Jesus. Peter said to Jesus, “Lord, it is good for us to be here: if you will let me, I will make here three tents, one for you, and one for Moses, and one for Elijah.” While he was still talking, a bright cloud came over them, and a voice out of the cloud, saying, “This is my dearly loved Son, with whom I am well pleased; give ear to Him.” Jesus came down from the mountain and told His disciples not to tell anyone about what they saw.

Bible Passage:

Matthew 17: 1-13

The story:

The Transfiguration

Jesus leaves behind most His disciples and takes with Him Peter, James, and John, his brother, up into a high mountain. On the mountain Jesus is transfigured (His form changes) before the three disciples. His face shines as the sun, and His garments become white as the light. In their midst there appears Moses and Elijah and Jesus talks to them. Peter sees this and asked Jesus, “It is good for us to be here: if Thou will, I will make here three tabernacles; one for Thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elijah.” As Peter is still talking a cloud covers them and a voice is heard, “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear Him.” When the disciples hear it, they are fearful and fall to the ground. But Jesus helps them out; He touches them and says, “Be not afraid.” Right after, Moses and Elijah disappear and they see no one, save Jesus only.

Do Not Tell Anyone

As they were coming down the mountain Jesus told the disciples not to tell anyone about this incident, until He was raised from the dead. The disciples asked Jesus, “Why do they say that Elijah must come first?” Jesus answered and said, “Elijah has already come but they did not know Him, but did to Him whatsoever they would.” The disciples then understood that He spoke about John the Baptist.

Group discussion questions:

1. Why did Jesus take only three of His disciples?
2. What happened there in the mountain?
3. What did the voice from heaven say?
4. How is the impact of this visit to the mountain on the lives of the three disciples?

Activity:

Discuss with your peers the impact of your being there with the three disciples?

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Lesson 18: Feeding the Five Thousand

Introduction:

This is an amazing story of Jesus feeding five thousand people. Jesus was speaking to the people and it became late. Jesus was moved with compassion and He challenged His disciples to feed the people. Read this miraculous account and read the heart of Jesus through this miracle.

Bible passages:

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

The story:

The Crowd Without a Shepherd

Jesus went away to the other side of the Sea of Galilee, which is the sea of Tiberia, taking along His disciples to rest. But a great number of people went ahead of Jesus and His disciples to meet them. Jesus saw the huge multitude of people and had compassion on them because they were like sheep without a shepherd.

Feed the People

Jesus gave them teachings about a number of things. When it became evening, the disciples asked Jesus to send the crowds away so that they could eat. But Jesus asked Philip where they could get bread for all of those people gathered, to which the disciples replied that it was not possible for them to feed such a big number of people.

The Five Loaves and Two Fish

Andrew the disciple brought a boy to Jesus who had five loaves of bread and two fish. Jesus asked the people to be seated on the grass in fifties and hundreds. Jesus took the bread and fish and gave thanks to God and asked for it to be distributed to those seated. The bread and the fish multiplied and people had their fill, as much as they had need of. Jesus then asked that the remaining pieces be collected so that nothing would be wasted. So the disciples took up twelve baskets full of broken pieces of bread and fish. And those who ate there were five thousand men.

Group discussion questions:

1. Why did Jesus take His disciples away to a quiet place to rest?
2. What is the role of rest and Sabbath in the lives of Christian workers?
3. Jesus had compassion on the people gathered. What did the people lack?
4. If we had the compassionate eyes of Jesus, in today's world what would our reaction be?
5. What impact has this miracle on your life?

Activities: All of the 3 below could be done personally or in a group of people targeting the one particular group.

1. Make a list of the "sheep without a shepherd" in your locality/ community / work place.
2. How do you think you can care for the "sheep without a shepherd?"
3. Make an action plan in response to the needs you see around you. Review your plan to see if it is "SMART." Plan to review this with your teacher over the next six months of the course. (A "SMART" plan is: S – Specific, M – Measureable, A – Achievable, R- Realistic, T – Time bound.)

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Lesson 19: Lazarus Brought Back to Life

Introduction:

Jesus loved Mary, Martha and Lazarus. Lazarus was very ill and the sisters sent word to Jesus. But Jesus said the end of this illness was not death but for the glory of God. He delayed His coming to meet with Lazarus. This is an amazing story of the manifestation of the power of God and how Lazarus was brought to life.

Bible passage:

John 11

The story:

Jesus Delays

Jesus heard from Mary and Martha that their brother Lazarus was ill. Jesus loved them very much. But when Jesus heard it, He said, "This illness is not meant to end in death. It is for God's glory, so that the Son of God may be glorified through it." And Jesus stayed on and did not go to visit with them. Jesus told His disciples that Lazarus was sleeping and He would go to awake him.

Lazarus in the tomb

When Jesus arrived in Bethany, Lazarus was dead and had been kept in the tomb for four days. The relatives of Mary and Martha had come to visit with them and console them. When Martha heard that Jesus had entered the village, she ran to Him and met Him as He was yet entering, and fell at His feet. Jesus told her, “Your brother will rise again. I am the resurrection and the life. The person who believes in me, even though he dies, will live. Indeed, everyone who lives and believes in me will never die.”

Then Martha told Mary that Jesus wanted to see her. She went to Jesus and met Him. When Jesus saw her crying, and the Jews who had come with her crying, He was greatly troubled in spirit and deeply moved. Jesus asked them, "Where have you put him?" They asked Jesus to come and see. Jesus burst into tears.

Jesus Brings Lazarus to Life

Jesus was deeply pained as He arrived at the tomb. It was a cave, and a stone was covering it. Jesus asked that the stone covering the tomb be removed. But Martha told Jesus that there must be a bad smell by now. Jesus said to her, "I told you that if you believed you would see God's glory, didn't I?" So they removed the stone. Jesus prayed to His father and proclaimed with a loud shout, “Lazarus, come out!” Lazarus who had died came out, alive. Jesus asked that He be untied and they let him go.

Group discussion questions:

1. Why did Jesus delay His going to meet with Lazarus?
2. What did Jesus ask of Mary and Martha in regard to Lazarus?
3. What does Jesus wept imply?
4. How as Lazarus brought back to life?
5. What has been the most difficult part of your life that Jesus has transformed?

Activity:

Share one such incident in your life where something bad has happened for the glory of God.

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Lesson 20: The Rich Young Ruler

Introduction:

A rich young ruler came up to Jesus and asked Him “What good thing have I to do, so that I may have eternal life?” Jesus answered him and began to deal with his heart. Read this story of a young man who came to Jesus with the right question, but went away sorrowful.

Bible passages:

Matthew 19:16-26, Mark 10:17-2 7, Luke 18:18-27

The story:

The Question

A rich young man came to Jesus and said, “Teacher, what good deed should I do to have eternal life?" Jesus replied, “You must keep the commandments.” When the young man asked which ones to keep, Jesus said, “You must not murder, you must not commit adultery, you must not steal, you must not give false testimony, honour your father and mother, and you must love your neighbour as yourself.” The young replied, "I have kept all of these. What do I still lack?"

He Retreats, Sad

Jesus said to him, "If you want to be perfect, go and sell what you own and give the money to the destitute, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come back and follow me." When the young man heard what Jesus told him about selling his possessions, He became sad. He went away from Jesus sad.

Group discussion questions:

1. What did the rich young ruler ask Jesus?
2. Which of the Ten Commandments did Jesus talk about in His reply?
3. Which of the Ten Commandments did Jesus leave out? What significance do you think these have on people with wealth and treasure?
4. Why did the young man go back sorrowful? What might have been going through his mind?
5. What analogy does Jesus use to refer to the rich, and how will they enter the kingdom of God?
6. As Christians what should our attitude to wealth be?

Activities:

1. Make a list of all the items on this earth that are most dear to you. After the list is complete, ask yourself what would be your reaction if these were taken away from you.
2. Make a study from the life of Job, with focus on wealth and the loss of it.

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Lesson 21: Zacchaeus is Converted near Jericho

Introduction:

Zacchaeus was a rich tax collector who desired to see Jesus. Jesus loved him and visited him. During this visit Zacchaeus had a change of heart and life. This is an incredible story of the love of Jesus for sinners and His passion to save those who are lost.

Bible passage:

Luke 19: 1-10

The story:

Zacchaeus the Tax Collector

There was a rich tax collector by the name of Zacchaeus. He was a notorious sinner and short in stature. He heard Jesus was passing through Jericho and desired to see Him. Since he was short and could not see Jesus in the crowd, he ran ahead and climbed a sycamore tree hoping to see Jesus. When Jesus came to the tree, he looked up and said, "Zacchaeus, hurry and come down! I must stay at your house today."

Jesus Visits Him

Zacchaeus came down quickly and was glad to welcome Him into his home. But this did not go well with the people who were watching this. They began to complain: "Jesus is going to be the guest of a sinner!" Jesus dined and fellowshipped with Zacchaeus.

Zacchaeus Transformed

During Jesus' visit Zacchaeus had a change of heart and stood up and announced, "Lord, I'll give half of my possessions to the poor. I'll pay four times as much as I owe if I have cheated anyone in any way." Then Jesus said to him, "Today salvation has come to this home, because this man is also a descendant of Abraham, for the Son of Man has come to seek and to save the lost."

Group discussion questions:

1. What might be Zacchaeus' social status and acceptance?
2. How did Jesus respond to the need of Zacchaeus?
3. What might have been the pressure on Jesus as He went to the house of a sinner such as Zacchaeus?
4. What transformation did Zacchaeus undergo?
5. What does it mean to have a change of heart and life?

Activities:

1. What has been the transformation of life you had when you underwent a change of heart?
2. What are the areas of your life that still need change? Make an action plan.

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Lesson 22: Blind Bartimaeus

Introduction:

Jesus healed all those who came to Him. If you expected Jesus to do something for you, you needed faith. This is a story of a man with extraordinary faith.

Bible passages:

Matthew 20:29-34, Mark 10:46-50, Luke 18:35-43

The story:

Bartimaeus Calls Out

Jesus and His disciples were leaving Jericho and a large crowd was following Him. A blind beggar named Bartimaeus was sitting by the road. When he heard that Jesus of Nazareth was there, he began to shout, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!" But the people around told him to be quite. This did not dishearten Bartimaeus; he started shouting even louder, "Son of David, have mercy on me!"

Jesus Heals Him

Jesus stopped and asked for the man to be brought to him. So they brought the blind man and told him, "Have courage! Get up. He's calling you." Bartimaeus was excited and jumped up, threw off his coat, and went to Jesus. Jesus asked him, "What do you want me to do for you?" The blind man said to Him, "Master, I want to see again." Jesus told him, "Go. Your faith has made you well." At once the man could see again, and he began to follow Jesus.

Group discussion questions:

1. Why did Bartimaeus insist on calling out to Jesus? What does this tell you about his faith?
2. Why did the people around him tell him to be quite?
3. What relationship did Bartimaeus' faith have to his healing?

Activities:

1. Share with the group of students an instance when you believed and asked for something and then received it.
2. Share with the group of students an instance when you believed and asked and did not receive.
3. How can you grow in faith? Have a group discussion.

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Lesson 23: The Triumphant Entry

Introduction:

It is the first day of the week. The road to Jerusalem is filled with people on their way to celebrate the Passover feast of the Jews. At Jesus' request His disciples bring Him a lowly beast of burden. He mounts it and joins the multitude of pilgrims. Eagerly they make way for Him, waving palm branches and carpeting His path with their garments. While they escort Him triumphantly up the road and into the city, the sound of their praises fills the air: "Hosanna! Blessed is the king that cometh in the name of the Lord!"

Bible passages:

Matthew 21:1-17, Mark 11:1-11, Luke 19: 29–44, John 12:12-19

The story:

Jesus Instructs His Disciples to Bring Him a Donkey

Jesus sent two of His disciples to find a donkey. He told them to go into the village and they would find a donkey tied, to untie her and bring her to Him. If anyone asked about or refused the animal, they were to say that the master had need of it. And what unfolded after that was in accordance to what the prophet had said: "Tell ye the daughter of Zion, 'Behold, thy King cometh unto thee, Meek, and riding upon an ass, And upon a colt the foal of an ass.'" The disciples went, and did just as Jesus had asked them and brought the donkey to Him.

Jesus Rides the Donkey

They put their garments on the animal and Jesus sat on it. Jesus rode on the donkey into Jerusalem and people flanked the sides of the road. They spread their garments on the way, others cut branches and spread them on the way and they that followed cried out saying, "Hosanna to the son of David: blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord; Hosanna in the highest!" As Jesus rode into Jerusalem the city was greatly stirred and they began to ask "Who is this?" And the people following them said, "This is the prophet, Jesus, from Nazareth of Galilee."

Jesus Weeps for Jerusalem

As Jesus drew near to Jerusalem, He saw the city and wept over it, saying "If you had only known today what could have brought you peace! But now it is hidden from your eyes. The days shall come upon you when your enemies will attack you and dash you to the ground and they will not leave you one stone upon another." Jesus taught every day in the temple. The chief priests and the scribes sought to destroy Him: and they could not find what they might do; for the people all hung upon His every word, listening.

Group discussion questions:

1. How did Jesus enter Jerusalem?
2. Why did Jesus choose to enter Jerusalem in such a manner?
3. How did the Pharisees react to Jesus' entry into Jerusalem?
4. What is the significance of this incident in the life of Jesus?

Activity:

Do a study on the subject of "The challenge in the minds of the disciples as they wrestle between the ideas of the Kingdom of God, in the context of the triumphant entry?" Write down your thoughts.

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Lesson 24: The Upper Room

Introduction:

After Judas Iscariot, the traitor, leaves, Jesus picks up a piece of bread, thanks God for it, breaks it, and gives it to His disciples, saying, “This is my body.” When they have eaten the bread, He offers them a cup. Jesus makes a new covenant between God and men. As men take the bread and wine in the name of Jesus they are reminded that God, through His Son, has delivered them from the slavery of sin. Share in this beautiful story of the breaking of the bread and contemplate the significance it has on our faith and salvation.

Bible passages:

Luke 22: 17-20, John 13:33-38, Matthew 26:30, 36-56

The story:

Preparation for the Passover

It was the day of unleavened bread, on which the Passover must be sacrificed, and Jesus asked Peter and John to go and make ready the Passover meal, that they might all eat. They asked Jesus where they should make it ready. Jesus told them that as they entered the city they would meet a man bearing a pitcher of water. They were to follow him into the house where he would go and to ask the master of the house for the guest chamber, where Jesus would eat the Passover with His disciples. They would be shown a large furnished upper room and they should make the room ready. Peter and John found everything as Jesus had said it would be and they made ready the Passover meal.

The Passover

In the evening Jesus sat with His disciples and celebrated the Passover with them. He told them “I have desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer: for I say unto you, I shall not eat it, until it be fulfilled in the kingdom of God.” Jesus received a cup, and when He had given thanks, He said, “Take this, and divide it among yourselves:” Jesus then took the bread, and when He had given thanks, He broke it, and gave it to them, saying, “This is My body which is given for you: this do in remembrance of Me.” And He took the cup in like manner after supper, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in My blood, even that which is poured out for you.”

Group discussion questions:

1. What did Jesus do after He broke the bread and the wine?
2. What did Jesus say about the bread and the wine?
3. Why do we share in the Holy Communion even today?
4. What is its significance on your life?

Activity:

Do a study of the “institution of the Passover” as found in Exodus 12. Study it in the light of God’s plan of redemption of mankind. Write down your thoughts from your study.

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Lesson 25: The Arrest and Trial of Jesus

Introduction:

While Jesus is praying in the garden of Gethsemane, Judas leads a band of men into the garden. According to his agreement he identifies Jesus with a kiss. At an officer's command, the soldiers bind Jesus and take Him back to Jerusalem, the city into which He had ridden so triumphantly only a few days before. Following His arrest, Jesus is brought to the palace of the high priest. False witnesses boldly accuse Him of many things, but they can prove nothing. Finally the High Priest questions the prisoner. Instantly the guards turn on Jesus, spitting on Him, covering His face and demanding that He prove His power by identifying those who strike Him.

Bible passages:

Matthew 26: 57-75, John 18:28-38, Luke 23:6-12

The story:

Jesus is Arrested in the Garden of Gethsemane

Jesus was praying with His disciples in the garden of Gethsemane. Judas, one of the Twelve, came, and with him a great multitude with swords and staves, from the Chief Priest and elders of the people. Judas had said that the sign would be that whoever he kissed, Him they should take. Judas walked up to Jesus and kissed Him and they came and arrested Him.

The Trial of Jesus

The Chief Priest and the whole Council sought false witness against Jesus so that they could put Him to death. Many witnessed came forward but they could not find any fault against Him. But in the end two came forward and falsely witnessed. The Chief Priest accused Jesus of blasphemy and declared that Jesus was worthy of death.

Jesus Before Pilate

Pilate heard the accusations made against Jesus and asked Him if He thought He was the king of the Jews. Jesus answered "Yes." Now at the feast the governor would release unto the multitude one prisoner, and Pilate asked if they wanted Jesus or Barabbas. The multitude asked for Barabbas to be released and for Jesus to be crucified. Pilate realised that Jesus was innocent, washed his hands of the blood of Jesus and gave Him to be crucified.

They placed a crown of thorns upon His head, and a reed in His right hand; and they kneeled down before Him, and mocked Him, saying, "Hail, King of the Jews!"

Peter Betrays Jesus Three Times

Peter followed Jesus as He was led into the courts after His arrest. In the court, three people identified him and said that they had seen him with Jesus. Peter strongly denied knowing Jesus and said, "I don't know what you're talking about." Later he declared, "I know not the man" and (he cursed and swore), "I know not the man." And straightway the cock crew, just as Jesus had said, "Before the cock crows, you will deny me thrice." And Peter went out, and wept bitterly.

Group discussion questions:

1. What was Jesus doing in the garden of Gethsemane with His disciples?
2. How did Judas betray Jesus?
3. What did the disciples do when Jesus was being betrayed in the garden?
4. How did Jesus' trial go?
5. How did Jesus respond to the allegations put on Him?

Activity:

What is the state of prayer in your life? What times of the day do you pray, read the Bible, and spend time with Jesus? Can you remember one serious prayer request you had prayed for that was answered or you got an answer from God?

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Lesson 26: The Cross

Introduction:

The Jewish leaders have charged Jesus with treason against Rome. Pilate does not believe Jesus is guilty, but is afraid of the anger of the Jews. The crowds shout out "Crucify Him, crucify Him!" He suddenly sees a way out. He lets the people decide whether or not Jesus should die. Not willing to endanger his position further, he surrenders Jesus to be crucified. As he does so he writes an inscription to be placed on Jesus' cross. It is about nine o'clock when Jesus and two robbers, who are to be crucified with Him, reach Calvary and there the Son of God is nailed to a cross. Above His head is fastened a sign, "Jesus of Nazareth, the king of the Jews."

Bible passages:

John 18:39–19:16, Matthew 27:3-10, Luke 23:26-46, John 19:25-27

The story:

Golgotha

The soldiers spat on Jesus, mocked Him, stripped off His robe and led Him away to be crucified. On the way they found a man of Cyrene, Simon by name, and ordered him to assist with the carrying of the cross. When they arrived at Golgotha, they crucified Jesus.

The Robbers

Two robbers were crucified on each side, one on the right and the other on the left. One of the robbers said to Jesus, "Are you not the Christ? Save thyself and us." But the other answered, and rebuked him. He said, "Do you not even fear God, seeing you are in the same condemnation? And we have been punished justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds: but this man hath done nothing wrong." The robber said to Jesus, "Remember me when you come into your kingdom." Jesus replied to him, "Today you will be with Me in Paradise."

The Seven Last Sayings of Jesus on the Cross are listed below in their traditional order:

1. "Father forgive them, for they know not what they do" (Luke 23:34).
2. "Truly, I say to you, today you will be with me in paradise" (Luke 23:43).
3. "Woman, behold your son: behold your mother" (John 19:26-27).
4. "My God, My God, why have you forsaken me" (Matthew 27:46 and Mark 15:34)?
5. "I thirst" (John 19:28)!
6. "It is finished" (John 19:30)!
7. "Father, into your hands I commit my spirit" (Luke 23:46).

The Veil of the Temple Torn

There was darkness on the earth from the sixth to the ninth hour. The sun was darkened and the curtain of the temple was torn in two. The curtain covered the sanctuary, which was the Holy of the Holies and only the temple priest could enter it. But with the curtain being torn into two, it was God's sign that He chose to dwell in the hearts of men and not in the sanctuary.

His Death

Jesus cried out "Father, into thy hands I commit my spirit!" and He died on the cross. The Centurion saw it, and glorified God, saying, "Surely this was a righteous man."

Group discussion questions:

1. How did the High Priest and the crowd ask Pilate to crucify Jesus?
2. How was the journey of Jesus to Calvary?
3. What were the last hours of Jesus like?
4. What suffering did Jesus take upon Himself for us?
5. What does the torn veil mean to our faith today?

Activity:

Study the seven words of Jesus on the cross and the message it has for us today.

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Lesson 27: His Burial

Introduction:

It is noon; slowly a strange shadow covers the land. For three hours there is darkness, then Jesus cries out to God, “Father into your hand I commit My spirit.” And having done so, He dies. In Jerusalem Joseph of Arimathea, a secret follower of Jesus, goes to Pilate and asks to bury the body of Jesus before the Sabbath. Joseph takes the body of Jesus from the cross, wraps it in linen cloth, and places it in Joseph’s garden tomb. The tomb is sealed, and Roman soldiers are placed on guard.

Bible passages:

Mark 15:38-39, Luke 23:48-49, John 19:38-42, Matthew 27: 62-66

The story:

The Burial

Joseph of Arimathea, asked Pilate that he might take away the body of Jesus to be buried and Pilate gave his consent. Joseph and Nicodemus laid to rest the body of Jesus, wound it in linen clothes with the spices of myrrh and aloes, in a tomb where no one was laid before.

Sealing of the Tomb

The Chief Priest and Pharisees were given permission by Pilate to seal the stone that covered the tomb, setting guards to watch the place, making sure that the body of Jesus could not be stolen. Jesus had said that He would rise from the dead and they were afraid His disciples would come by night, steal Him away and say to the people that He had risen from the dead.

Group discussion questions:

1. Who buried Jesus?
2. What do you know about Joseph?
3. How was Jesus’ body protected?

Activity:

What might be the thoughts and feelings of those who were dear to Jesus?

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Lesson 28: The Lord is Risen

Introduction:

On the morning of the third day the earth trembles. An angel of the Lord descends and rolls the heavy stone aside. Terrified, the soldiers fall to the ground. When they can get to their feet they rush back to the city. That same morning Mary Magdalene and other friends of Jesus hurry to the tomb with spices to anoint His body. On the way, they worry about how they will get the stone rolled away. But when they reach the garden, the tomb is open.

Bible passages:

Mark 16:1-8, John 20:1-18, Matthew 28:11-15, Luke 24:13–32

The story:

Easter Morning

It was Sunday morning and the Sabbath was over. Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices to go and anoint Jesus. As they walked along they discussed among themselves how they would roll the heavy stone away. It was a very large stone. When they arrived at the tomb they found the stone already rolled away! When they went into the tomb, they found a young man dressed in a white robe, and they were very surprised. But he told them not to be afraid, that Jesus who was crucified had been raised from the dead. He asked them to go and tell the disciples that Jesus was going to meet them in Galilee just as He had told them. They left the tomb and ran away, overwhelmed by shock and astonishment. They didn't say a thing to anyone, because they were afraid.

Mary Magdalene First to See Jesus

Mary Magdalene, out of whom seven demons had been cast out, stayed on crying outside the tomb. Two angels sitting in the tomb asked her why she was crying. She replied, “Because they have taken away my Lord.” As she continued to cry, she saw Jesus standing there, mistaking Him for the gardener. Jesus asked her, "Dear lady, why are you crying? Who are you looking for?" She replied, thinking He was the gardener, "Sir, if you have carried Him away, tell me where you have put Him, and I will take Him away." Jesus said to her, "Mary!" Turning around she called to Jesus, “Teacher.” She went back and told the disciples all that had happened, but they did not believe her.

Peter and John

Peter and John ran up to the tomb to see for themselves. John overtook Peter and got there first. They found the stone rolled away, and the clothes that had wrapped the body, lying there. John went into the tomb, and seeing the body not there believed that Jesus was risen from the dead.

The Guards Spread Lies

The guards had witnessed the powerful earthquake, and had witnessed the stone being rolled away by the angel from heaven. The angel sat on the stone and his appearance was bright as lightning. Some of the guards went back and told the High Priest what had happened. The High Priests met with the elders and agreed on a plan to bribe the guards with a large amount of money into spreading a lie. They were ordered to say that Jesus’ disciples came at night and stole Him away. The guards took the money and spread this lie, which is among the Jews to this day.

Group discussion questions:

1. What happened when Mary went to the tomb?
2. What was Peter’s experience as he went in search of Jesus?
3. How did the soldiers try to cover up the truth that Jesus rose from the dead?

Activity:

Tell a friend what the impact of Jesus’ rising from the dead is in your life.

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Lesson 29: Forty Days After the Resurrection

Introduction:

Jesus joins two of His followers on the way to Emmaus. They talk with Him but do not know who He is. That evening as they dine in Emmaus, Jesus blesses the bread and when He hands it to them, they suddenly recognise Him. Jesus' disciples are afraid they might be arrested so they lock the doors in the upper room where they have gathered. Suddenly Jesus appears in the room, but the disciples think they are seeing a spirit. One evening the disciples go fishing. They fish all night but catch nothing. At daybreak they see the figure of a man standing on the shore. He tells them to cast their net on the right side of the boat. They obey and suddenly the net is so fill of fish they cannot pull it in. The disciples realise that it is Jesus. Jesus gives Peter a great assignment, "Take care of my sheep."

Bible passages:

Luke 24:33-43, John 20:19–21:6

The story:

On the Road to Emmaus

Two followers of Jesus were walking to Emmaus and were discussing what had happened to Jesus. They had been with the disciples through the death of Jesus and had heard that Jesus' body was not present in the tomb. They had also heard from the women that the angels had told them that Jesus had risen from the dead.

On their way Jesus appeared to them and asked what they were discussing. They looked really sad. They told Him they were talking about Jesus, whom the High Priest and leaders had crucified. But as they described all the events of the last three days, they did not know it was Jesus; their eyes were prevented from recognising Him.

Jesus explained to them how the Messiah was to be crucified, but on the third day He would rise from the dead. When Jesus broke bread with them later that evening their eyes were opened and they suddenly knew who He was. At that moment He vanished from them. Then they asked each other, "Our hearts kept burning within us as He was talking to us on the road and explaining the Scriptures to us, didn't they?" They went to Jerusalem and told the disciples what had happened.

Jesus Appears to His Disciples

While the disciples where talking, Jesus Himself stood in their midst and said to them, "Peace be with you." The disciples where terrified. They mistook Him for a ghost. Jesus asked them why they were afraid and why they doubted. He asked them to look at His feet and to touch Him. Jesus showed them His hands and feet, the marks where He was nailed. They were yet doubtful. Then Jesus asked them if there was anything to eat. They gave Him a fish and He took it and ate it. Jesus explained to them how He had taught them about His resurrection. He opened their minds to the Scripture, "This is how it is written: the Messiah was to suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, and then repentance and forgiveness of sins is to be proclaimed in His name to all the nations, beginning at Jerusalem."

Doubting Thomas

Thomas was not with the other disciples when Jesus appeared to them. He had heard how Jesus had appeared to them, but told them, "Unless I see the nail marks in His hands, put my finger into them, and put my hand into His side, I will never believe!"

A week later, when Thomas was with them, Jesus appeared again to the disciples. Jesus said to Thomas, "Put your finger here, and look at my hands. Take your hand, and put it into my side. Stop doubting, but believe." Thomas answered Him, "My Lord and my God!" Jesus said to him, "Is it because you have seen me that you have believed? How blessed are those who have never seen me and yet have believed!"

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Jesus at the Sea of Tiberias

Jesus again appeared to seven of His disciples by the sea of Tiberias. Peter was with six of the disciples and he told them he was going fishing. So they all went with him. But they laboured all night and did not catch any fish.

When it was early morning Jesus stood by the shore, but the disciples did not realise it was Him. Jesus asked them to cast their net to the other side for a catch. So they did so and had a full catch. John said to the disciples, “It is the Lord.” Peter jumped into the water and went to meet Jesus.

When they reached the shore Jesus had cooked some fish and shared bread with them. After breakfast Jesus asked Peter, “Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these?" He replied “Yes.” Jesus told him “Feed my lambs.” Jesus asked him again and then a third time. Peter was deeply hurt that He had asked him a third time. So he said to Him, "Lord, you know everything. You know that I love You!" Jesus told him, "Feed my sheep.”

Group discussion questions:

1. What happened on the road to Emmaus?
2. How did Thomas believe it was Jesus?
3. What did Jesus tell His disciples when they were gathered together in the room?
4. What do you learn from the discussion between Jesus and Peter?

Activity:

Write down the names of the people and places that Jesus showed Himself to during His forty days on this earth after He rose from the dead.

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Lesson 30: His Ascension

Introduction:

A few days later Jesus appears to five hundred of His followers, gathered at His command, on a mountain near the Sea of Galilee. He gives them the Great Commission, found in Matthew 28:19, 20. On the fortieth day after His resurrection Jesus takes His disciples to the Mount of Olives and while He is blessing them, He ascends into heaven.

Bible passages:

Matthew 28:16-20, Luke 24:44-51, Acts 1:9-11

The story:

The Great Commission

The eleven disciples met with Jesus at the hillside just as He had directed them. Jesus came up and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore, as you go, disciple people in all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to obey everything that I've commanded you. And remember, I am with you each and every day until the end of the age."

The Promise of the Holy Spirit

Jesus asked His disciples not to leave Jerusalem, but to wait for what the Father had promised. Jesus told them, “John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit a few days from now." They asked Jesus "Lord, is this the time when you will restore the kingdom to Israel?" He answered them, "It is not for you to know what times or seasons come on you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

Jesus Goes Up to Heaven

Jesus was taken up while those who had gathered together were watching, and a cloud took Him out of their sight. While He was going and they were gazing up toward heaven, two men in white robes stood right beside them. They asked, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking up toward heaven? This same Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you saw Him go up into heaven.”

Group discussion questions:

1. What did Jesus tell His disciples, according to Acts 1:8?
2. How many people were there as Jesus rose into the clouds?
3. What did the angel tell the people gathered there, as in Acts 1?
4. What is said about Jesus coming back?

Activity:

Write on a piece of paper where your personal “Judea, Samaria and the ends of the world” are in your quest to share the Gospel, according to Acts 1:8.

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