



DISCOVERY TEACHER'S GUIDE

Matthew, Hebrews, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1 & 2 Thessalonians



Birth of the King

Matthew 1:1-4:11

Proclamation and Proof of Kingship

Matthew 4:12 — 11:1

Instructions of the King

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An Exhortation to Faith

Hebrews 11:1—13:25

Paul's Letter to the Ephesians

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Paul's Letter to the Philippians

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Paul's First Letter to the Thessalonians

1 Thessalonians 1:1—5:28

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2 Thessalonians 1:1—3:18

Discovery is a Bible study course for the high school and adult levels. Bible references are taken from the King James Version. The companion to these Sunday school lessons is Daybreak, a daily devotional and personal Bible study continuum. All of the material is available on our website, as well as in printed form. The print version is designed to be stored in a binder; subsequent modules can then be easily inserted. Discovery is an official publication of the Apostolic Faith Church. All rights are reserved.

tion of Jesus Christ as the Son of God, and the temptation of Christ in the wilderness. These both led to the

beginning of His public ministry.

Teacher's Guide



Birth of the King

COURCE FOR OUTSTIONS	ODENED
Matthew 1:1 through 4:11	OPENER
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KEY VERSE FOR MEMORIZATION	
"And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name Jesus: for he shall save his people from their sins." (Matthew 1:21)	
BACKGROUND	
Some twenty or thirty years after Jesus ascended to Heaven, one of His chosen disciples, Matthew, was inspired by the Holy Spirit to write a book that would introduce the New Testament. The special emphasis of Matthew was that Jesus was indeed the Messiah ("anointed one") and King who had been foretold by the Old Testament prophets centuries before. Matthew quoted often from the Old Testament. In this Gospel, there are about sixty references to the Jewish prophecies and about forty quotations from the Old Testament, a clear indication that Matthew had a Jewish audience in mind. Christ's mission to the Jews was especially emphasized. Matthew (also called Levi) never spoke of himself, so we have little personal information about him. We know that he was once a despised publican [tax collector] who made a great feast for Christ and then followed Him. From that moment on, his life was changed. We know that Matthew was a companion of Jesus, so he would have seen firsthand the wonderful miracles and heard with his own ears the teachings of the Son of God. He is named as being one of the disciples in the upper room before Pentecost. Being accustomed to keeping systematic records, Matthew gave a beautifully organized account of the Lord's life and ministry. The book opens with a careful record of the birth of Jesus Christ and the events	
that accompanied it. In chapter 1 of Matthew, we find	
the genealogy of Christ (Joseph's line; Luke's genealogy gives Mary's line). Chapter 2 details three key	
points about Jesus as King: the homage paid to the	
King (the visit of the Wise Men), the hostility against the King (Herod's anger and attempt to destroy Him), and the humility of the King (the circumstances of His	
humble birth).	
Some thirty years pass between the events of	
chapter 2, and the beginning of chapter 3 of Matthew. Chapters 3 and 4 detail John the Baptist's proclama-	

SUGGESTED RESPONSE TO QUESTIONS **NOTES 1.** What was Joseph's concern in Matthew 1:18-19? What is revealed about Joseph's character in how he handled the situation? Mary was found with child before she and Joseph were married. The Child was conceived of the Holy Ghost, but Joseph did not know that at first. God's truth had not yet been revealed to Joseph. Discuss what this portion of text reveals about Joseph's character. While he did not understand what was happening, he did not want to make Mary a public example or expose her. He was searching for a way to begin the divorcement process privately, for Mary's sake—a process that normally would be expected and was allowed by law in this circumstance. One can imagine the weight of the situation upon him, and no doubt he experienced a great range of emotions. Yet, from Scripture, we can conclude he was very careful and considerate as to how he would handle this situation, all the while caring for Mary's reputation. 2. According to verses 20-25, how did Joseph respond to the message from the angel in his dream? What did his action reveal about his character? Joseph was immediate in his obedience. This was no small thing, as this was the first and last time a virgin woman would be selected by God to bear His only Son, and conceive of the Holy Ghost. There could have been many questions, fears, and uncertainties. Joseph could have felt he needed answers or proof. Ask your class to consider what could have gone through his mind. Possibly there were questions like: Why was Mary chosen? Why didn't anyone ask me first, since I am to be her husband? Why is God's Son coming now? Can I really be sure this is true? How will one Man save all people from their sins? Joseph could have offered any number of responses, but he not only willingly, but also immediately obeyed. Take some time to reflect on the certainty God puts in our hearts when He calls us to a task. He calls in such a way that many times He answers our questions before we can ask them. After his dream, instead of having fear and doubts, Joseph must have felt honored at being chosen to be the earthly father of God's Son. Verse 25 reveals Joseph's respect for the holy process that was taking place. How wonderful it is to be in a position to willingly answer God's call! **3.** The Wise Men who went in search of the Holy Child may have been from the Parthian Empire, located in present day northern Iran. These religious leaders, called Magi, had great power over their realm, even to choosing their own king. Why would these men of influence travel over 2000 miles from their homeland to bring gifts and to worship a Child? They had seen His star in the east. The Bible does

not say how they knew it was Jesus' star. They would

never have traveled so far to worship a king of Rome, for the Romans and the Parthians had been enemies for generations. Their worship was appropriate for the Son of God, who had come to save a dying world.

The point of this question is that God reaches out to all, and He may find someone far away who will appreciate the truth when others much nearer the truth never see it. Most of the Jewish people failed to see Christ as their Savior, yet these men from another nation, with no prophet of their own to reveal God's truth, came to worship the Son of God. The Jewish people, who had the Law and the prophets of God in their history, had missed the greatest revelation of all.

4. From verses 9-11, we can see that the Lord very carefully led the Wise Men to Christ, where they worshiped Him. What method did He use to lead them? Perhaps there have been times when you stepped out to follow the Lord, only to wonder if He was still leading you. How did He encourage you?

God used a star to guide the Wise Men on their journey. That star was apparently the reason they had set out in the first place (Matthew 2:2). It not only led them to the town and general neighborhood where the Child would be found, but to the exact location where they "saw the young child with Mary his mother."

As you discuss the second question, bring out that when we start out to follow God, He will be faithful to lead us specifically, and not leave us to our own understanding. The Wise Men were dependant upon the star to guide them. When King Herod had no answer as to where Christ was, their only hope was the star. The Lord provided specific guidance for them, and they rejoiced when they saw the star again after talking with Herod. We can learn from this that all we must do is take the step the Lord shows us and then He will reveal the next step. Give your own example.

5. In our Matthew text, several Old Testament prophecies are mentioned as being fulfilled. (See Matthew 1:23, 2:6, 15, 17-18, 23.) Think of the years of waiting that took place before those prophecies were fulfilled! While we may be tempted to help God work out His plan for our lives, what can we do to stay focused and to ensure success in the Gospel?

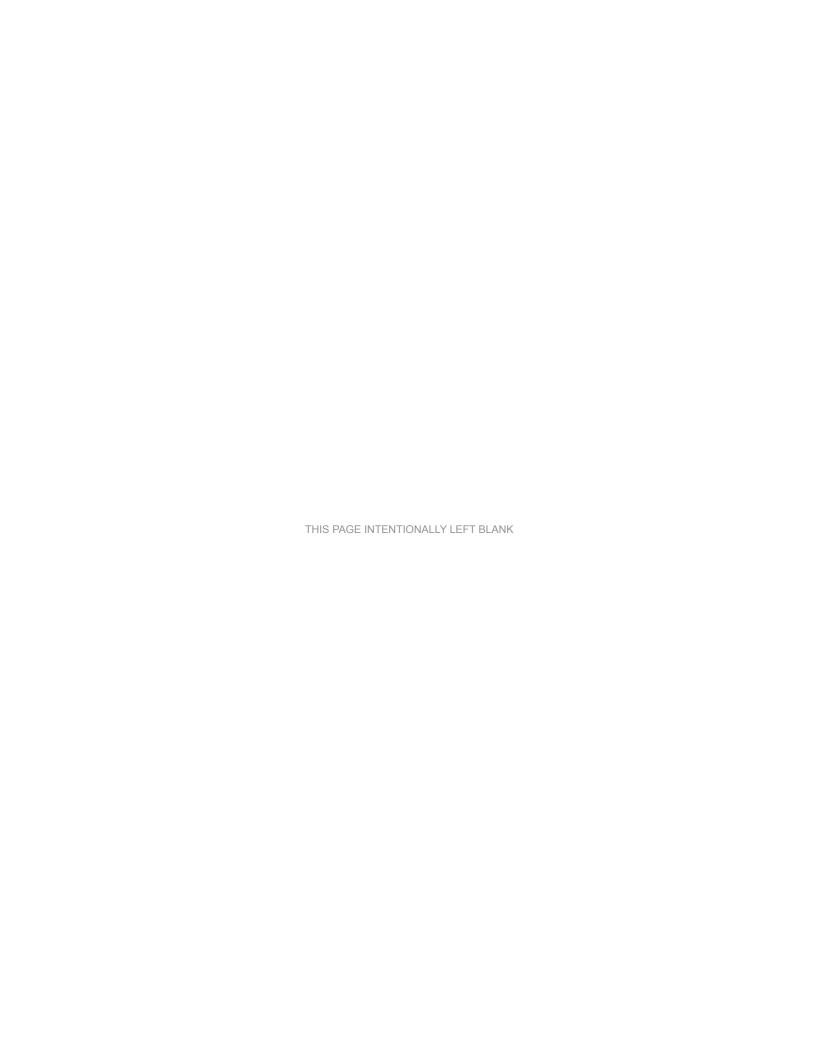
God's plan for us will not come about any sooner by our trying to help things along or by forcing what we feel God may have in mind. We can actually make matters worse and ruin God's plan for us by interfering. Discuss the difference between forcing open a door and letting God open the door for us. How does it feel? What is the result? Share some examples.

We must simply take action when God speaks, just as Mary and Joseph did. Our focus must be on Christ, and not on ourselves. We must realize that God is the only One who really knows what He wants to do with us, and He will open doors when the timing is right. By worrying about how God will instigate his plan, we

can lose sight of the sweet daily fellowship with Him, and miss many blessings along the way. The best part of our journey towards Heaven is the sweet day-by-day fellowship with our Savior. By focusing daily on Him and surrendering our hearts, we will find that we are following His perfect plan for our lives, and wonderful doors will open up for us along the way. **6.** What was John the Baptist's main purpose in life? What can we learn from this regarding our purpose? See Matthew 3:2-3. John's purpose was to prepare the way for Jesus Christ. John was not at all concerned about his reputation from his preaching, nor caught up with selfimportance regarding his unique calling of being the forerunner of Jesus Christ. He was content to be "a voice crying in the wilderness," his only passion that of proclaiming Christ's truth, and preparing hearts to receive Him. We are not called to be important in the Gospel, but faithful. We are not called to make a name for ourselves, but to make Christ's name known. Discuss the importance of losing ourselves in Christ so that others might see only Him through our lives. There is a joy that can be found no other way than by laying ourselves down and being committed to the cause of the Gospel. 7. Matthew 4:1-11 describes Jesus' temptation in the wilderness. Why is it important to us that Jesus was tempted as a man? Christ became flesh and accepted all the weaknesses of it, which meant that He could be tempted as we are. That is the reason He is able to understand our feelings, concerns, and weaknesses. That is the reason He is able to succor and strengthen us when we are tempted—because He has been tempted as we are tempted, and knows from experience exactly what we are going through. Discuss how everything would be different if Christ had not taken on the flesh and walked through life as we do. **8.** What can we learn about the devil's tactics from this account? What can we learn from Christ's exam-ple about how to withstand temptation? *In response to the second question, discussion* should bring out that Satan is sly. He did not directly tell Jesus He wasn't the Son of God. Twice he said, "if you are the Son of God," thereby tempting Him not only to satisfy His hunger, but to stoop to following the devil's suggestion in order to prove that He was God's Son. Satan will challenge us in the same way. He will say, "if" God answered your prayer . . . or, "if" you are saved . . . Discuss several ways the devil slyly puts questions into our minds, bringing out that his point is always to inject doubt. It is important to realize that we

don't need to prove anything to him, nor do we need anything that he promises to give us. We must remember that he is a liar and the father of lies (see John 8:44). Would he really have given all the kingdoms

of the world to Christ? Were they really his to give?	
The devil may tempt us with things that he cannot	
possibly give, such as peace, joy, or satisfaction.	
In each temptation, Jesus used Scripture to defeat	
Satan. He did not engage in an argument with the	
devil, but appealed to the commands and promises of	
God. The Word of God is sufficient to overcome any tactic of the enemy, and as we stand on God's Word	
faithfully, there will be comfort and rest coming to us	
from Heaven (Matthew 4:11).	
CONCLUSION	
Because Jesus came as a man, suffered, and tri-	
umphed over temptation, we have Someone to go to who understands us. He is a comforting Friend who	
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feels our pain, weaknesses, and joys. Even more im-	
portantly, He is able to give us strength and help, so	
that we too can have real victory in any circumstance.	
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about murder and anger, temptation, divorce, oaths, forgiveness, loving one's enemies, giving, praying, fasting, obtaining treasures in Heaven, and worrying.

Teacher's Guide



Proclamation and Proof of Kingship

SOURCE FOR QUESTIONS	OPENER
Matthew 4:12 through 11:1	
KEY VERSE FOR MEMORIZATION	
"And it came to pass, when Jesus had ended these sayings, the people were astonished at his doctrine: for he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes." (Matthew 7:28-29)	
BACKGROUND	
After hearing of the imprisonment of John the Baptist, Jesus left Nazareth and went to the area of Galilee. He made His residence in Capernaum—a city located on the northwestern end of the Sea of Galilee, a large lake that was also at times called the Lake of Gennesaret, Lake of Tiberias, and the Sea of Tiberias.	
It was at this time that Jesus began to preach the message of repentance. Along the shoreline of Galilee, He called four fishermen, Andrew, Peter, James, and John to be His disciples. He healed the sick,	
preached the Gospel, and taught in the synagogues. The word <i>synagogue</i> comes from the Greek words <i>syn</i> which means "together" and <i>ago</i> , which means	
"to collect." During the time of Jesus' ministry, there were numerous synagogues in Israel; the number in	
Jerusalem alone was thought to be as high as 480. It was on a hillside rather than in a synagogue that	
Jesus gave the Sermon on the Mount to His disciples and the multitude. The fame of Jesus' miracles had	
spread throughout the area and great numbers of peo-	
ple followed Him from Galilee, Decapolis, Jerusalem, Judea, and beyond Jordan. Decapolis was a region	
east of Jordan, containing ten cities, primarily inhabited by Greek settlers. People from Perea inhabited the	
area "beyond Jordan." Jesus used this opportunity to teach on a mountain by the Sea of Galilee. The topog-	
raphy of the region provided a natural amphitheater, so His voice would have projected well. Tradition	
maintains that a sixty-foot hill once called the Horns	
of Hattin, square-shaped with two tops, is the location of the Sermon on the Mount. The location is now	
commonly called the Mount of the Beatitudes. Jesus' discourse began with the Beatitudes: nine	
blessings that result from proper attitudes of the heart.	
Next, He used salt and light to illustrate the effect His disciples should have in the world. He then taught	

He concluded the sermon by encouraging His listeners not to judge others, and instructing them on how to ask and receive from God. Jesus described the way to Heaven as a "strait [narrow] gate" and the way to destruction as a "wide gate." After warning about false prophets, He closed the sermon by describing people who would build on rock or sand, using this visualization to illustrate the importance of not merely hearing, but hearing and then obeying.

Chapters 8 and 9 record several of Jesus' miracles: healing a leper, calming a stormy sea, casting the devils out of two men, and restoring sight and speech.

Jesus then called twelve men to be His disciples, giving them power to cast out unclean spirits and to heal every type of disease and illness. It was at this time that they began to be called Apostles.

SUGGESTED RESPONSE TO QUESTIONS

1. After John the Baptist was imprisoned, Jesus began to preach, saying, "Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matthew 4:17). What do you think He meant by this phrase?

The Jewish people had expected that when the Messiah came, He would set up an earthly kingdom and deliver them from bondage, but that was not the kingdom of heaven that Jesus spoke of. To an oppressed world under the dominion of Satan, God's kingdom, and the plan of salvation, was about to unfold. The Greek word engidzo, which is translated "at hand," means, "to make near." Soon Christ would be crucified and mankind would have access to redemption through His sacrifice, thus beginning the dispensation of Grace. Jesus began His first message of this Good News with the key to that kingdom—repent.

Ask your students to share ways that people today are made aware of the "kingdom of heaven." They will possibly bring out that Holy Ghost conviction, an invitation to church, personal testimonies, and printed Gospel literature are some of the ways God uses.

2. What was the profession of the first four men that Jesus asked to follow Him? Why do you suppose He singled out these four men?

The first four disciples—Peter, Andrew, James, and John—had been fishermen. They appeared to be industrious, hard-working men. However, it was not these character attributes alone that caused Jesus to call them. He knew it was in their hearts to forsake their livelihood and to become His disciples.

As a class exercise, you could ask for a list of things that we may need to leave in order to be followers of Christ. Suggestions may include: businesses, family, friends, hobbies, jobs, material possessions, and personal ambitions.

3. The word *beatitude* comes from the Latin *beatus*, which is translated "blessed." In your own words, describe how each of the Beatitudes applies to us today.

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Encourage your students to share their answers and consider everyday situations where we may have an opportunity to demonstrate these qualities.

"Poor in spirit" refers to a person who is humble and recognizes his spiritual poverty. This is the condition we were in at the point of repentance. We were humbled by our inability to overcome our failure before God and the inability within ourselves to do anything about it. Humility should continue in our Christian walk.

Those who mourn have godly sorrow because they recognize their morally bankrupt condition before God. They recognize the depth of their sinful state, their indebtedness to God, and the judgment they deserve for their guilt, and their mourning leads to repentance and conversion. Mourning, however, does not stop there. Sincere Christians mourn over any area where they fall short of perfect Christlikeness. Only a shallow Christian can feel complacent.

The meek are those who have a true attitude of humility. Being meek is not being weak. The world believes that the way to win is to aggressively promote oneself, but the meek recognize the necessity of putting down pride and self.

Those who hunger and thirst after righteousness are those who crave God's Word and close communion with Him. These are the sincere and diligent seekers who depend daily on God for spiritual sustenance.

The merciful are those who have received mercy from Christ, and thus are conscious of the necessity to freely forgive and pardon their fellowman. Forgiving one who has wronged us is a powerful testimony, and it is indicative of a nature that is like Christ's.

The pure in heart are those who have their minds, motives, and principles sanctified by God. The experience of sanctification gives us the ability to live in a holy manner and be pure in heart.

The peacemakers are those who strive to prevent contention and strife. Out of God-given love for our fellowman, we will have a desire to foster unity where Satan sows strife.

The persecuted for righteousness' sake are the ones who suffer mental and physical abuse for upholding the truths found in God's Word. We may be subject to threats, vandalism, and physical abuse for taking our stand for God.

The reviled, persecuted, and falsely accused are those who have evil things spoken against them both in their presence and absence. People may ridicule our Christian views, make fun of us, and accuse us falsely in an effort to discredit us.

4. Jesus used two symbols to describe the influence that Christians have on a non-Christian society. What were these two symbols, and how can we exhibit attributes of these in our daily lives? Matthew 5:13-16

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The two symbols Jesus used were salt and light. In the ancient world, salt was used both as a flavor enhancer and a food preservative. Insipid foods are unpalatable without salt; life without Jesus is insipid. The students should be encouraged to consider ways that they can "flavor" the world through their Christian testimony and example. In order to slow the decay of meat, people would rub salt into it. Class discussion should bring out ways we can help others to resist the "decaying" effects of sin.

Jesus once referred to Himself as the "light of the world" (John 8:12). Here, He tells His disciples that they are the light of the world. Just as the moon reflects the light of the sun, Christ's followers are to reflect the light from the "Sun of righteousness" (Malachi 4:2) to a world darkened by sin.

5. What did Jesus mean when He said, in Matthew 5:17, that He had not come to destroy, but to fulfill the law and prophets?

The word fulfill means "to accomplish, complete, execute, or perform." The ceremonial law that Moses gave contained many rituals and sacrifices that pointed forward to Jesus Christ. They were types and shadows of the Messiah who would come, and these were fulfilled when Jesus offered Himself as a sacrifice to God for the sins of mankind. Thus, these laws were no longer necessary after Jesus' death and resurrection.

The prophets made predictions of His coming and death, which were fulfilled when Jesus was born and ultimately died on the Cross.

6. How is it possible for us to love our enemies? Matthew 5:44

While we may not love the actions of our enemies, Jesus would have us pray for them and love their souls. The Lord said that the love we show those who curse, hate, despitefully use, and persecute us would be what distinguishes us from the world. By doing this, we overcome evil with good.

Ask your students for some present-day examples of "enemies," and have them come up with a list of ways that we can show them our love. Possibilities may include: classmates, co-workers, customers, employers, family members, neighbors, students, and teachers. Some suggestions for showing love could be: by avoiding strife, being compliant, engaging in kind conversation, performing courteous acts, apologizing quickly for real or perceived misunderstandings, and praying for the individuals who oppose us.

7. What was the crowd's reaction to Jesus' teachings? Matthew 7:28-29

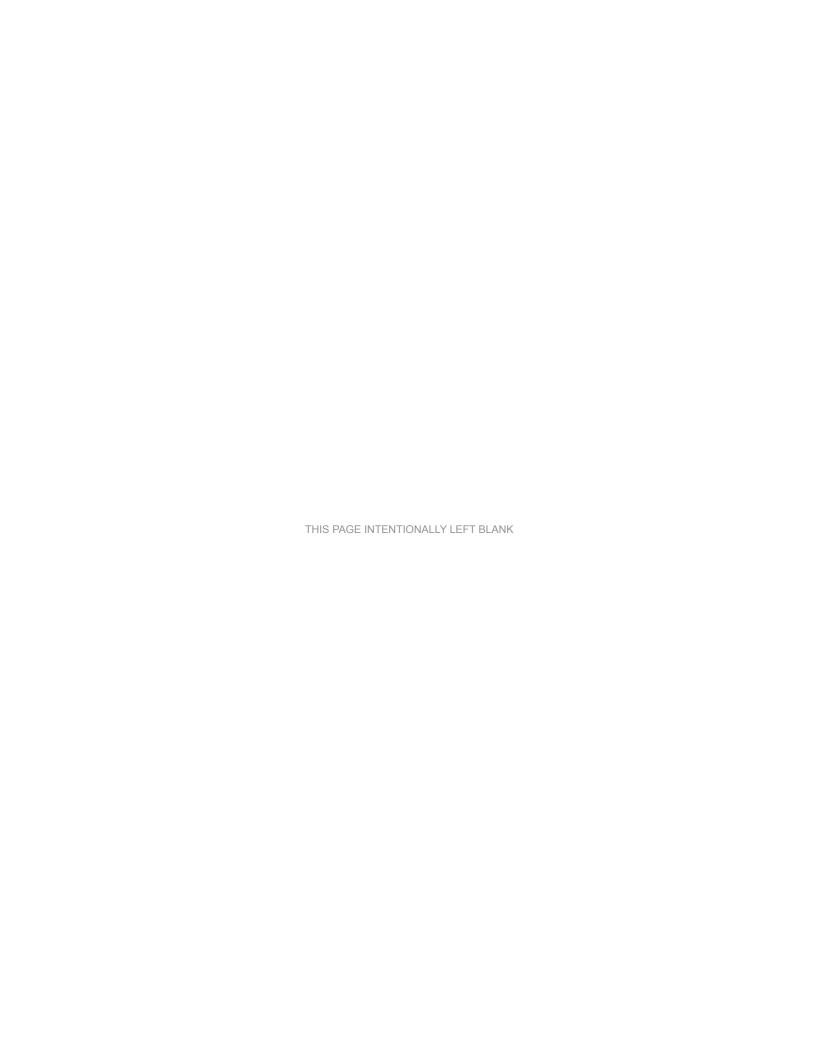
They were astonished (amazed) at His doctrine. He taught with authority and not in the manner of the religious leaders.

Ask your students why they think the people were astonished. What type of teaching were they used to?

The students should conclude that rather than rituals, rules, and regulations, Jesus taught them principles by which they could live. For the first time, they heard how true godly character flowed from within. Jesus spoke with divine authority, which came directly from God, the highest Authority. **8.** In Matthew 8:23-27, Jesus and His disciples were in a ship when a storm struck. Jesus was awakened from sleep and when He rebuked the winds and the sea, there was a great calm. Consider a time when the Lord calmed a troubling situation in your life. What was your reaction to your situation? How did you solicit the Lord's help and what was the result? You may want to have one or two students share personal testimonies. The point should be made that it is easy to become overwhelmed by a problem. We may try to figure it out on our own. However, it is through prayer that we get "self" out of the way and receive answers and peace from God. Bring out that the Lord is just as aware of our situations as He was of the storm blowing around the disciples who were in the ship with Him. We can have confidence and faith that the Lord knows our needs and hears us when we ask Him for help.

CONCLUSION

The Lord desires for us to build our lives on the foundation of His Word. As we apply the Word in daily living, we will exhibit the true Christian character that will draw others to Christ.



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Instructions of the King

invitation?

SOURCE FOR OUTSTIONS	OPENER
SOURCE FOR QUESTIONS Motthey: 11:2 through 20:24	OPENER
Matthew 11:2 through 20:34	
KEY VERSE FOR MEMORIZATION	
"And when he was come into his own country, he	
taught them in their synagogue, insomuch that they	
were astonished, and said, Whence hath this man this	
wisdom, and these mighty works?" (Matthew 13:54)	
BACKGROUND	
Chapter 11 begins with John the Baptist seeking	
to have his belief in Christ confirmed. As he was lan-	
guishing in prison, John was evidently tempted to be	
discouraged and disillusioned. He sent two of his dis-	
ciples to ask Jesus if He was really the Messiah or if	
they should look for another. Instead of giving a direct	
answer, Jesus told the disciples to go back to John and	
report what they had seen and heard. His healing of	
the blind and lame, and the preaching of the Gospel to the poor were a fulfillment of the Messianic role that	
was prophesied in Isaiah 35:5-6 and 61:1.	
Chapters 12 through 20 center on Jesus' ministry	
and teachings. Despite growing antagonism from the	
Pharisees and others in the religious world, Jesus con-	
tinued to teach concerning the Kingdom of Heaven,	
and explained the consequences of rejecting Him.	
Jesus was the Master Teacher, instructing His	
hearers with authority and reaching people at their	
point of need. He taught the people through parables,	
sermons, picture illustrations, and personal examples.	
Through these teachings, Jesus revealed the true ingredients of faith, how to be fruitful, how to guard	
against hypocrisy, and how to prepare for Heaven.	
The authority with which He taught was validated	
by the miracles that He performed: He fed the multi-	
tude with a few loaves and fishes, walked on water,	
cast out demons, and healed all who came to Him. He	
sent out his disciples to present His claims—they had	
gone into the highways and byways until they covered	
all the cities of Israel.	
During this period, Jesus for the first time spoke	
with His disciples about His coming death and resur-	
rection. He was transfigured on the mountain before Peter, James, and John, and continued His instruc-	
tions to His followers, even though public animosity	
against Him was increasing.	
SUGGESTED RESPONSE TO QUESTIONS	NOTES
	NOTES
1. What invitation is given to sinners in Matthew	
11:28-30? What good can come from accepting this	

This invitation refers to Jesus' promise to give rest to those who are exhausted and burdened down by the weight of guilt and sin. The point should be made that this invitation is for all.

When we submit fully to Christ's authority, we are yoked to Him, and our futile labor becomes spiritual creativity—we have purpose and peace.

2. In Matthew 12:31, Jesus stated that all manner of sin and blasphemy would be forgiven, except blasphemy against the Holy Ghost. Sometimes, such blasphemy is referred to as "the unpardonable sin." Because a person can only be saved through the Holy Spirit's work, the person who rejects the Holy Spirit removes himself from the only One who can lead him to repentance. Who was Jesus talking to in this passage, and why do you suppose He addressed this subject with them? Matthew 12:24-25

Jesus was talking to the Pharisees, and He addressed the subject with them because He knew their thoughts. While you may wish to begin with the fact that Jesus also knows our hearts, the key here is to make sure your students understand what the "unpardonable sin" actually is. Sometimes people worry that they have committed the unpardonable sin. However, the very existence of concern shows that they have not rejected the Holy Spirit. The sin of rejecting the Holy Ghost is unforgivable because the one who commits it will never ask for forgiveness.

3. The parable of the fishing net has the same meaning as the parable of the wheat and the tares. In Matthew 13:47-49, explain the meaning of the following elements of this parable.

The sea—The world is the sea.

The fishes of the sea—Men in their natural state are like the "fishes of the sea."

Casting the net into the sea—The preaching of the Gospel is the casting of a net into the sea.

The fishermen—Those who are employed in laboring for the souls of men—casting and drawing in the net—are the fishermen.

4. Review Matthew 14:22-33. Christ told His disciples to get into the ship and go to the other side. While He went to pray, a storm arose, and the disciples were alone in the ship. Compare the disciples' experience to your own experience when facing a trial. What should we do when going through storms in our own lives?

Class discussion may bring out that God does not always prevent storms in our lives. In this case, not only were the disciples in a storm, but it took place in the darkest point of the night. How often the storms we endure bring their own form of darkness! Jesus knew the disciples' circumstances, as He does ours. He brought peace to the troubled waters, and He will bring peace to the turmoil in our hearts also.

5. It is not clean hands but a clean heart that matters to God (Matthew 15:18-20). What does "defile" mean, and what things defile a man? Defile means "to corrupt or contaminate the purity of something." Defilement occurs because of harboring sinful thoughts, attitudes, and actions. The point should be made that evil actions begin in a person's heart, for evil thoughts are the precursors to evil actions. Things that defile a person include: murder, adultery, fornication, theft, false witness, and slander, and all of these begin with wrong thoughts in the heart. Discuss with your students the vital necessity of having the heart cleansed through sanctification, and then guarding our thoughts in order to keep our hearts clean. 6. The Pharisees and Sadducees demanded a sign from Heaven (16:1-4). They tried to explain away Jesus' other miracles as coincidence or a use of evil power, as they believed only God could put a sign in the sky. This, they were sure, would be a feat beyond Jesus' power. Why did Jesus refuse to show them such a sign? Although Jesus could have easily impressed them by doing as they asked, He refused because He knew that even a miracle in the sky would not convince them He was the Messiah. They had already decided not to believe Him, discounting the many miracles He was performing in their midst. Bring out that even in our day, many say they must have some sort of physical evidence before they will believe. However, miracles do not convince the skeptical. We have the miracles recorded in God's Word, 2000 years of church history, and the testimonies of thousands of people whose lives have been changed by the power of God. Those who refuse to believe are willfully disregarding the evidence that is clearly there. **7.** When Jesus' disciples failed to cure the boy who was a lunatic, Jesus informed them that it was because of their unbelief. (Matthew 17:20) Why is it so important to have faith, even though it may be as small as a mustard seed? Faith is necessary to receive an answer to our prayers. The mustard seed was the smallest seed known, but it grew into a large plant (Matthew 13:31-32). There is great power in even a little faith—faith is the strongest power in the world, for it brings divine omnipotence to bear on human problems. God rewards faith, even weak faith, and God loves our trust of Him, even beginning trust. Where faith is alive and growing, God is present and active.

8. In Matthew 18:21, Peter questioned Jesus regarding how often a person was required to forgive. Peter took

for granted that he must forgive, and since the rabbis taught that people should forgive three times, he probably thought he was being especially generous by suggesting that perhaps seven times was enough. What response did Jesus give, and what was the significance of His response?

Christ told Peter that he should forgive, "until seventy times seven." The large number was not a precise guideline; rather, it indicated that unlimited forgiveness is expected from those whom God has forgiven. Discuss with your class some of the excuses people offer for not forgiving. "He doesn't deserve it." "He didn't ask for forgiveness." "I was hurt too badly." Note that Jesus did not say that there were any extenuating circumstances. The requirement is simple and direct: we should always forgive.

9. A rich young man asked Jesus how he might gain eternal life. Jesus told him to keep the Ten Commandments, and listed six of them, which related to relationships with others. When the young man replied that he had kept all of them, Jesus told him that he needed to do one more thing. What was that final requirement, and why did Jesus ask it of the man? Matthew 19:16-22

Jesus required the man to sell everything and give his money to the poor. Jesus knew the man's heart, and this requirement revealed his weakness: his wealth was his god, and he would not give it up. By refusing to do so, he violated the first and greatest commandment (Exodus 20:3).

Discussion could revolve around the fact that God also sees what is deep inside our hearts. He knows if we are holding something back from Him, and at some point in time, He will address that very point with us. We cannot love God with all of our hearts and still cling to our own way in certain areas. As the songwriter says, "If He's not Lord of everything, then He's not Lord at all."

10. In the parable of the laborers in the vineyard, recorded in Matthew 20:1-16, the householder is God, the vineyard is the kingdom of Christ, and the laborers are His followers. What lesson for our day can we find in this parable?

God's gracious salvation and the rewards of serving Him are offered to all, no matter what era they live in, nor how long they serve Him. Our focus should be on serving God to the best of our abilities, rather than on what we might receive from Him in comparison to what another receives.

CONCLUSION

We can know the way God wants us to live by carefully heeding what Jesus taught. His teachings show us how to live for Him in our day, and how to prepare for life eternal.

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resurrection because it is not directly mentioned in the Pentateuch. In His response (Matthew 22:32), Jesus quoted from Exodus, chapter 3, verse 6. He used this



Rejection and Prophecies of the King

SOURCE FOR OUTSTIONS	OPENED
SOURCE FOR QUESTIONS Matthew 21:1 through 25:46	OPENER
KEY VERSE FOR MEMORIZATION	
"And whosoever shall fall on this stone shall be bro- ken: but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder." (Matthew 21:44)	
BACKGROUND	
These chapters describe Jesus' presentation as King, His instruction regarding end-time events, and His rejection by the Jewish people. Near the end of His earthly ministry, when Jesus entered Jerusalem on what we now commemorate as Palm Sunday, Jesus rode into Jerusalem on a donkey,	
as was part of the coronation custom of the Israel-	
ites each time a new king was appointed. The people	
cheered him with shouts of "Hosanna" and laid gar-	
ments and branches on the road. Conquering men and	
royalty were honored in this manner at that time. Yet,	
in less than a week, when asked by Pilate what should	
be done with Jesus, the crowd roared, "Crucify him!"	
After entering Jerusalem, Jesus went to the Temple and removed those who had brought merchandise	
to be sold for the sacrifices and overturned the tables	
of the moneychangers. The merchandise would have	
consisted of doves, oxen, sheep, and other sacrificial	
items. The moneychangers furnished the Jews and	-
proselytes who came from other countries, with the	
current coin of Judea, in exchange for their own.	
Despite mounting opposition, Jesus continued to	
teach His followers. Many parables in today's lesson	
have to do with true worship as opposed to hypocrisy.	
During this time, Jesus' jealous critics approached	
Him with many questions that were not honest inqui-	
ries, but rather were designed to incriminate Him. The	
Pharisees (a religious group) and the Herodians (a political group) were enemies, and yet, they united at	
this time against Jesus. They asked Jesus about pay-	
ing Roman taxes. They had reasoned that if Jesus said	
they should, the Pharisees could accuse Him of be-	
ing against God. If He said taxes should not be paid,	
the Herodians would have Him arrested for rebellion	
against Herod. His answer exposed their evil motives.	
Jesus then silenced an attempt by another religious	
group—the Sadduces. Sadducees accepted only the	
Pentateuch, the first five books of the Old Testament,	
as sources of law. This group did not believe in the	

verse and its tense to illustrate to them that the men referred to in the verse, who had once died, were alive.

Jesus cautioned His disciples and the multitude that greatness is not measured by how much honor and prestige one has from people. Rather, He said, "he that is greatest among you shall be your servant" (Matthew 23:11). Addressing the false religious leaders, He condemned them, saying, "Ye blind guides, which strain at a gnat, and swallow a camel." The Pharisees strained their water to avoid accidentally swallowing a gnat or any small unclean thing forbidden by the Law. They took such care in the details of ceremonial cleanliness, yet they made no effort of avoiding the much greater issues of hypocrisy, lust, and deceit.

Chapter 24 is a sobering series of warnings concerning the last days—the days in which we now live. Jesus prophesied that in the last days, many would fall away and be lost; however, those who endured to the end would make their heavenly goal.

In Chapter 25, Jesus gave three parables to illustrate how we should be prepared when He returns. The parable of the ten virgins warns of the need to be responsible for our spiritual condition and readiness. The parable of the talents shows the rewards for faithful service and the eternal consequences of neglect. The last parable calls us to demonstrate our faith by personal involvement in acts of love and mercy.

SUGGESTED RESPONSE TO QUESTIONS

1. Imagine yourself among the crowd of people who witnessed Jesus' Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem, recorded in Matthew 21:1-11. Now, contemplate the fact that within the week, those who shouted "Hosanna" were possibly among those who cried for Jesus' crucifixion. What conclusions can we draw from this?

Class discussion may bring out that it is easy to stand up for Christ when surrounded by those who believe as we do, but it takes courage to take a stand for Him when it is not "politically correct." Discuss times when this might be difficult. For example, some have a hard time bowing their head over their meal when eating with non-Christian co-workers or in a public place. Some find it difficult to speak up for the Lord in a classroom where the teacher ridicules those who are Christians. Have your class list some ways we can gain courage to take a stand for Christ.

2. In Matthew 21:12-17, we read of Jesus cleansing the Temple. What had occurred within those sacred walls that so displeased Him? What principle does this teach us regarding our attitude toward God's House?

Merchants and moneychangers had set up their booths in the courtyard of the Temple and were conducting business, crowding out the Gentiles who had come from all over the civilized world to worship God.

While most of us would agree that we should not conduct secular business within the walls of the church, the point of this question is to emphasize that

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God's House must always be treated with utmost honor and respect. Ask your class to share ways we can demonstrate that type of attitude. Thoughts brought out could include: avoiding prolonged conversations about things of no spiritual value, making sure that we make the church a house of prayer, being attentive in the services, keeping the church facility clean, being careful about the church property and equipment, being quiet and respectful in the sanctuary area.

3. Jesus caused the fig tree to wither away because of its lack of fruit. One lesson from this acted-out parable was a vivid warning against hypocrisy—having the "leaves" of a false profession, but no fruit of God's grace. What are examples of fruit in the lives of Christians? Matthew 21:18-22

Based on the word "fruit," your students may refer to the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23). The point should be made that a real Christian acts at all times like a Christian. He shows by his words and actions that love is the motivation for all he says and does. He is faithful in the Christian disciplines: he reads his Bible, prays, attends church regularly, and witnesses to others about the Lord. He is ready to serve others as the opportunities arise.

4. In the parable of the wicked husbandmen, Jesus is compared to the cornerstone of a great building. Jesus told the chief priests and Pharisees that "whosoever shall fall on this stone shall be broken: but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder." What do you think He meant, and how does this apply to us in our day? Matthew 21:33-46

Jesus used the picture of a cornerstone to show that different people would respond to Him in different ways. Ideally, people would build on the "Stone." However, many would stumble over Him instead. In the judgment, God's enemies will be crushed by it. Today, if an unsaved person will willingly come to the Lord in true repentance (brokenness), they will be saved and go on to experience life in Christ. If however they fail to do this, then at the end of their time on earth they will be ground to powder (judged by God himself), when it is too late to change anything.

5. In the parable of the wedding feast, Jesus described one who came into the wedding ceremony without having put on the wedding garment. What was his excuse? What do you think the wedding garment symbolized? Matthew 22:11-14

The guest without the wedding garment had no excuse—he was speechless. It was customary for wedding guests of that day to be given a garment to wear to the festivities. To refuse to wear it was an insult to the host. The wedding garment is symbolic of the "garment of righteousness" that is necessary for one to enter God's Kingdom.

Class discussion may bring out that many people today offer excuses for not giving their lives to the

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Lord. However, at the final judgment, they will be able to see with stunning clarity that there was no excuse for their rejection. Then they, too, will be speechless. **6.** Matthew 23 records Jesus' scathing denunciation of religious hypocrisy, and includes in Matthew 23:11 a foundational principle of Christian living. Explain that principle in your own words, and offer four specific examples of how this attitude can be demonstrated in daily life. Responses should bring out that Jesus said true greatness was based on serving—on giving of ourselves to help God and others. It might be interesting to note that the word servant was used in classical *Greek for persons such as waiters on table; that is* the attitude conveved here. Serving others fits closely with Christ's admonition to love the Lord with all our heart, soul, and mind, and our neighbors as ourselves (Matthew 22:37-39). Examples of ways we can serve others might include: helping out with church projects, volunteering in a service-based organization, running errands for an elderly or shut-in person, and sending a note or card to someone who is ill. 7. Jesus' rebuke of the Pharisees in Matthew 23:23-24 was related to their emphasis on some parts of the Law while they ignored other basic principles. What does it teach us with regards to tithing? Jesus' remarks show us that He approved of the tithing principle. He rebuked the Pharisees for not

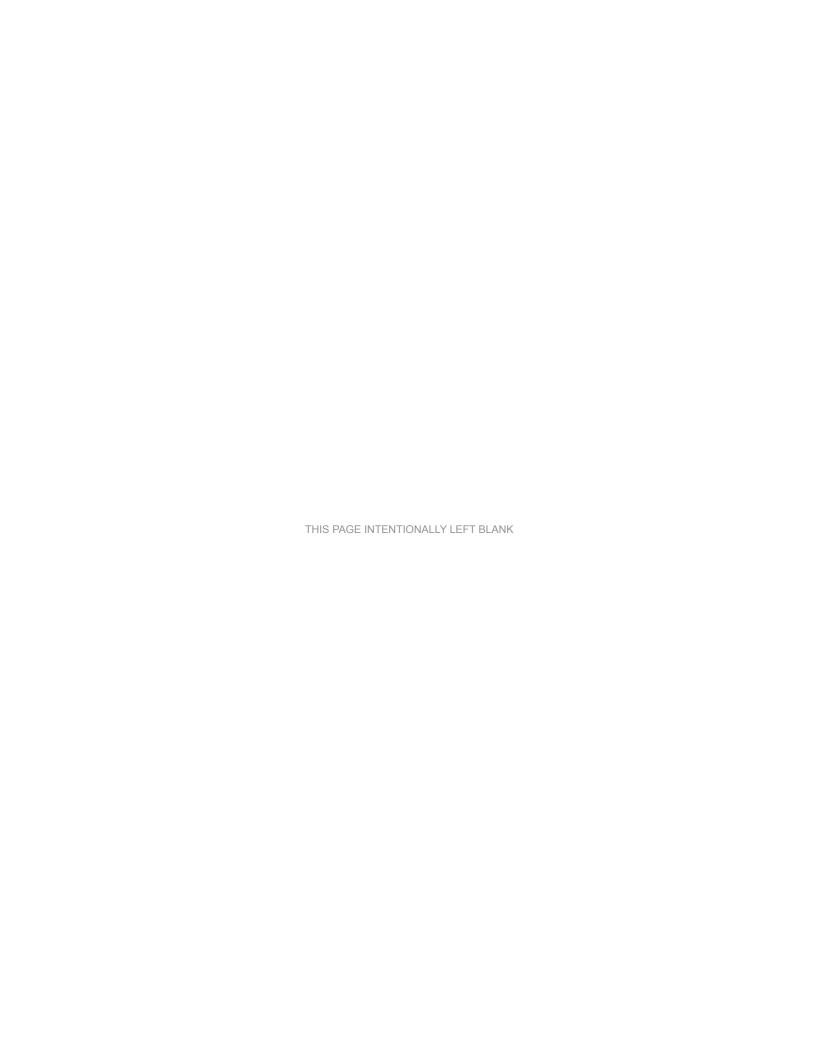
Jesus' remarks show us that He approved of the tithing principle. He rebuked the Pharisees for not practicing judgment, mercy, and faith, even though they were paying the tithe. Then He stated clearly, "These ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other [the paying of the tithe] undone."

8. In chapter 24, Jesus begins what is sometimes called His "Olivet Discourse," in which He predicts events that will occur in the end-times. Verse 12 states that because iniquity (literally, "lawlessness") will abound, the love of many will "wax cold." What proof of these verses do we see in our day? What can we do to prevent our love for Christ from growing cold? Matthew 24:12-13

Responses to the first question may include: rising crime and divorce rates, the fascination with evil and sexual promiscuity that prevails in the media, the growing numbers of people addicted to drugs, alcohol, tobacco, gambling, and pornography.

Your students may mention specific disciplines as a safeguard to prevent our love for Christ from growing cold. The point should be made that whatever we do in our Christian walk—reading our Bible, praying, attending church, talking with others about the Lord—should be done with all our hearts. We must never allow these activities to become dull or commonplace. The advice of a Gospel veteran applies here: "When you feel like praying, pray with all your

heart. And when you don't feel like praying [because feelings are fickle] then pray all the harder!"	
9. In Jesus' warning about the need to be ready for His soon coming, He compared those living in the last days to those in the days of Noah. What was so bad about the things they were doing in those days (i.e., eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage)? Matthew 24:36-51	
Eating, drinking (of non-alcoholic beverages), marrying and giving in marriage are all normal and legitimate activities. The point was that people were so complacent and secure with their lives that no thought or consideration was given to the most important point	
of all—their eternal soul's salvation.	
CONCLUSION	
As opposition to Jesus mounted, He knew that His death was near. So He taught His disciples about the future—what they could expect before His return, and how they should live until then. As sincere Christians, we must pay careful heed to His teachings so that we are prepared at every moment for His imminent return.	



were forced to carry their own crosses, but Jesus, weak from the terrible scourging which had been inflicted

Teacher's Guide



Suffering, Death, and Resurrection of the King

SOURCE FOR QUESTIONS	OPENER
Matthew 26:1 through 28:20	O. LIVLIX
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KEY VERSE FOR MEMORIZATION	
"For this is my blood of the new testament,	
which is shed for many for the remission of sins."	
(Matthew 26:28)	
BACKGROUND	
At this time in history, the Roman government	
appointed the political as well as religious leaders	
for Israel. Caiaphas was chosen as high priest, being	
son-in-law to Annas, a former high priest. It appears	
that Caiaphas worked well with the Romans, as he re-	
mained high priest longer than most—eighteen years.	
It was Caiaphas who first recommended that Jesus	
should die, and he, along with the other chief priests,	
scribes, and elders, conspired to arrest Jesus.	
Matthew wrote his book primarily for Jewish	
Christians; therefore he emphasized Jesus' kingly role	
and presented a portrayal of the Kingdom of God.	
Matthew strove to show that Christ's Kingdom was in	
the hearts of men, and not in the politics of the time.	
As world-shaping events were being plotted in	
Jerusalem, in a small corner in Bethany, Mary, sister	
to Martha and Lazarus, anointed Jesus with precious	
ointment from an alabaster box as a memorial for His	
burial. This was a small picture of what the Kingdom	
of God was really about—His love.	
After partaking of the last supper, Jesus went to	
the Garden of Gethsemane, where He fought the su-	
preme battle of all time. Jesus' agony was because	
He would bear the sins of all mankind, and would be	
rejected for a time by His Father. Jesus' human flesh	
struggled with the physical agony before Him, but as	
His spirit and will were completely subjected to God, He won the battle and accepted His "cup" with peace.	
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After being apprehended in the Garden, the next	
morning Jesus was sentenced to death by the chief	
priests and elders. They bound Jesus and sent Him to	
Pontius Pilate, the Roman governor of Judaea who	
was known for his cruelty. Rome had taken away the	
Jew's authority to perform capital punishment; there-	
fore Roman leaders had to do the sentencing and ex-	
ecution. The Jews knew that a charge of blasphemy	
would carry no weight in a Roman court, so they ac-	
cused Jesus of claiming to be superior to Caesar when	
He said He was the Son of God.	
Those who were condemned to die by crucifixion	

upon Him, was unable to do so. Simon, a man from Cyrene in northern Africa, was compelled to carry it for Him.

Jesus was crucified at nine o'clock in the morning. At three o'clock in the afternoon, He cried out and then died. Suddenly there was an earthquake and many graves of the saints opened. At the same time the heavy curtain in the Temple tore down the middle from the top to the bottom, opening the Holy of Holies to the common people, and thus signifying man's ability to approach God personally. Joseph of Arimathaea, a wealthy man, an honored member of the Sanhedrin, and a secret follower of Jesus, asked for Jesus' body and put it in his own new tomb. The chief priest and Pharisees sealed the tomb securely and set a watch of soldiers around it.

At dawn on the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and another Mary (possibly the wife of Cleopas, or the mother of James and John) were coming to the sepulchre when there was a huge earthquake, and an angel came and rolled back the stone from the door. As the women approached, the angel told them that Jesus had risen from the dead.

Matthew's account does not speak of the forty days Jesus spent on earth after His resurrection. Instead he moves directly to Jesus' commission to His disciples. Before this time, the field of missionary work had been only to the Jews. Now Jesus expanded that field to the whole world. Before His ascension, Jesus promised He would be with His people always, even to the end of the world.

SUGGESTED RESPONSE TO QUESTIONS

1. In Matthew 26:6-13, we read how Mary broke the alabaster box and anointed Jesus with its contents. Some who observed her actions condemned her, suggesting the money could have been better spent on the poor. What was Jesus' response, and what lessons can we learn from Mary's example of devotion?

Jesus defended Mary's action, saying, "Why trouble ye the woman? for she hath wrought a good work upon me" (Matthew 26:10). Class discussion of the second part of the question may bring out:

- Because Mary spent time listening to Jesus' words, she had an understanding of what was about to occur to Him.
- An act of devotion to God is never wasted.
- Deeds of love and worship make an impact on those who observe them.
- We may be misunderstood when we do something for God, but He understands.
- Selfless devotion to Christ will be a lasting memorial.
- **2.** Judas was eager to make a deal with the chief priests for money (Matthew 26:14-16), but later deeply regretted this and wanted to reverse it (Matthew 27:3-10). What can we learn from Judas' actions?

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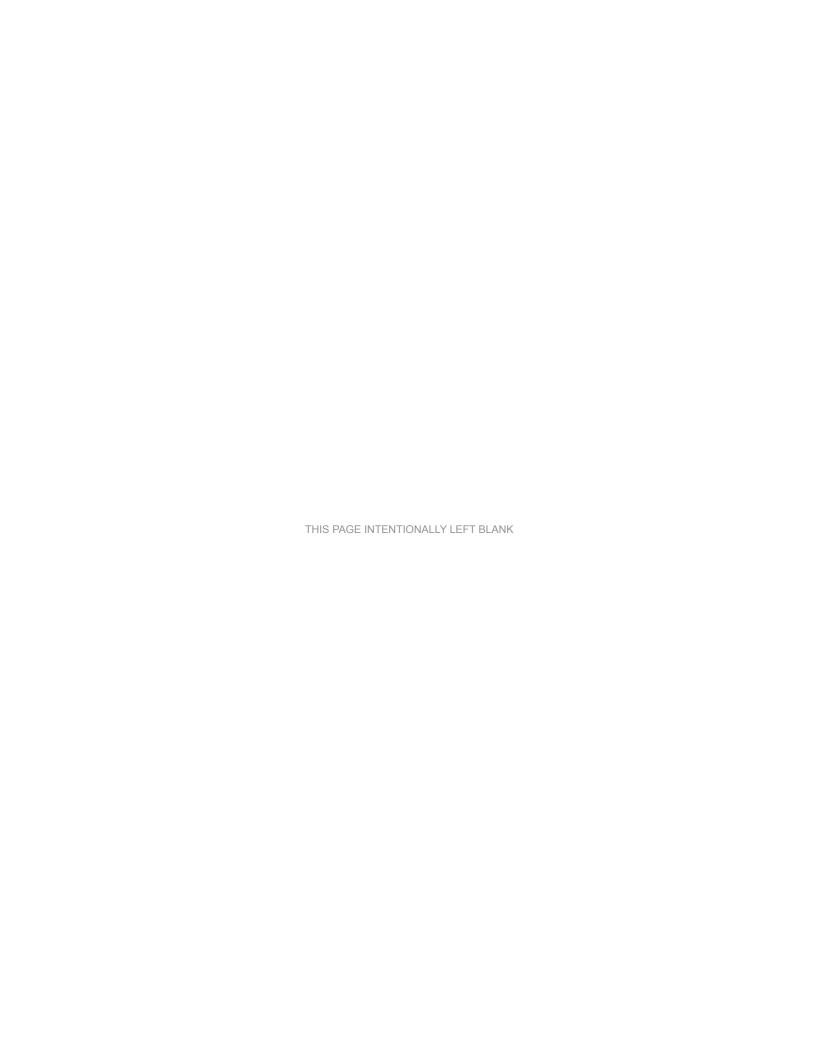
Your students may respond with thoughts such as: • It is vital to weigh the consequences of actions. • Greed can lead to tragedy. • To fail in loyalty to Christ brings eternal death. • Guard against becoming a tool of Satan. • Wrongly directed ambition can lead to trouble. The point should be made that while we might think we would never betray Jesus, we must learn from the failure of Judas to guard against making choices that could weaken our devotion or loyalty to Christ. **3.** At His last supper with His disciples, Jesus took two elements from the Passover feast—the unleavened bread and the cup—and used these to depict His coming death (Matthew 26:26-29). When Jesus broke the bread, He said, "Take, eat; this is my body." How did Jesus identify the contents of the cup? What did it symbolize? When He took the cup, Jesus said, "For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins." Up until this time, forgiveness of sins was obtained by sacrificing animals. At the point of Jesus' death, resurrection, and presentation of His Blood to the Father, a new covenant would begin. Jesus' Blood would now be the perfect and complete atonement for man's sins. You may want to note that Scripture does not indicate that anything mysterious happened to these two elements. They were still simply bread and the "fruit of the vine." However, from that time on they conveyed a deep symbolic meaning: they represented the body and Blood of Jesus Christ, the Redeemer of mankind. **4.** Jesus and His disciples went to a private garden at the Mount of Olives. Describe the nature of the great struggle that He faced there alone. No doubt, as a man, He had a fear of the physical abuse He was soon to suffer. Yet, Jesus alone faced the overwhelming agony of knowing He must bear the sins of the world. Jesus alone experienced being made sin and a curse for mankind (2 Corinthians 5:21 and Galatians 3:13). As One who was absolutely holy, His righteous soul was repelled by the awful burden of sin He would carry. Jesus wrestled as He looked ahead, but He yielded Himself to God's will. **5.** At Jesus' arrest, Peter sliced off the ear of a servant of the high priest. In his zeal to defend Christ, he got ahead of God's plan. What application from this can we make to our lives? As finite individuals, we cannot see the perfect plan of God. Based on his own thinking about what should happen, Peter tried to step in and defend Christ, but the fact that the soldiers had not arrested Jesus in the Temple indicates that there was a divine timetable controlling His life. These events were not happening by accident, but by appointment. We may

decide how God should answer our prayers or work

out events in our lives; however, it takes discipline and submission to let go and let God have His way. **6.** Why do you think Peter was seemingly very brave when he cut off the servant's ear, yet was later afraid when questioned by two young women and others? How might we face similar circumstances? Peter was impulsive. He likely acted without thinking it through, expecting Jesus to back him up. When Jesus gave in to His captor and was separated from Peter, Peter likely felt alone and vulnerable. We might face similar circumstances. When we are surrounded by other Christians and are strongly aware of God's presence, we may feel as though we could conquer the world. The real test comes when those around us are antagonistic toward Christianity, or when we are standing alone and there is no conscious awareness of Christ's presence for the moment. What is in our hearts will come out then. **7.** Possibly some in the crowd who clamored for Jesus' death (Matthew 27:20-23) were the same people who only a few days earlier had hailed Him as their king. What conclusion can we draw from this? People often like to do the popular thing. Sometimes being a "Christian" may seem to be the thing to do for social or political reasons. But at the first hint of persecution, usually those who are following the crowd will fall away and only those who are truly committed will stand. You might also bring out that many of the people had been looking for an earthly king who would deliver them from Roman oppression. They had thought Jesus was the One who would do this, and were disillusioned when it seemed obvious that He would not. **8.** What did Jesus endure on Golgotha in addition to physical suffering? Why did He stay on the Cross when it was within His power to free Himself? At Golgotha, Jesus endured not only the physical torment of this excruciating form of execution, but He endured the fact that God the Father, unable to look upon the sin hanging there in the form of Jesus upon the Cross, turned away from Him. The physical darkness that shrouded Golgotha was symbolic of the darkness that He endured when He became sin for us. In His dying hours, He cried out, "My God, My God, why hast thou forsaken Me?" Jesus knew why He was suffering and it was the joy of redeeming mankind that kept Him on the Cross. **9.** Why is the Resurrection of Jesus (Matthew 28:1-7) such a fundamental element of the Gospel? If Jesus had died without power to return to life, He would have been no different than any other person who claimed to be God. Jesus' resurrection power proves His divinity. It also shows that God has the power to keep His promise that we all will be resur-

rected one day.

10. At the time of the Great Commission (Matthew 28:19-20) Jesus promised to be with us always. How does He accomplish this?	
Jesus has sent the Holy Spirit to be in our midst and to comfort us. At salvation we have a measure of His Spirit. At sanctification He comes to us in a	
greater measure and at the baptism of the Holy Ghost, His presence fills us and overflows in our lives. What a treasure this is!	
CONCLUSION	
God had a perfect plan when He sent Jesus to die for our sins. Jesus was faithful and fulfilled God's plan in every aspect. The challenge that faces us is this: What will we do with Jesus?	





Preeminence of Christ

SOURCE FOR QUESTIONS	OPENER
Hebrews 1:1 through 4:13	
KEY VERSE FOR MEMORIZATION	
But unto the Son he saith, Thy throne, O God, is for	
ever and ever: a sceptre of righteousness is the scep-	
tre of thy kingdom. Thou hast loved righteousness,	
and hated iniquity; therefore God, even thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fel-	
lows." (Hebrews 1:8-9)	
BACKGROUND	
The author of Hebrews, generally presumed to	
be Paul, pointed his readers in these four chapters to the superiority of Jesus Christ. Although the Jewish	
people had anticipated the coming of their Messiah for	
centuries, they had established their own form of wor-	
ship at the expense of the Word of God. The author	
addressed this confusion by establishing in the first	
three verses that both the old (Judaism) and the new	
(Christianity) were religions "revealed" by God. Then	
he systematically detailed how Christ was:	
• Superior to the angels (Hebrews 1:4–2:18),	
• Greater than Moses (Hebrews 3:1–19), and	
• Provided a better rest (Hebrews 4:1-13), because Christ was supreme and completely sufficient	
for salvation.	
The theme of <i>better</i> ; a word used thirteen times in	
this book, was introduced in verse 4 of the first chap-	
ter. The writer contrasted the Old Testament system	
with the New Testament ministry of grace, bringing	
out that the Old was the "shadow" and the New was	
the "substance." Christ had come to fulfill the Law	
and the prophets, conquering sin and freely providing eternal life for all who would come to Him.	
Angels had been very important in the Jewish	
religion, mainly because angels assisted in the giving	
of the Law at Mount Sinai. False teachers of the day	
taught that God could only be approached through	
angels, and that these heavenly beings should be wor-	
shipped. It was critical that the writer of this book de-	
nounce such teaching; for that reason, he opened with	
a lengthy passage concerning Christ's superiority to	
the angels. This passage is divided into three sections:	
 First, the writer affirmed the superiority of Christ. 	
Second, he exhorted the readers to pay earnest	
heed to the Word God gave through His Son.	
• Finally, he explained how Christ, with a human	
body, was still superior to angels who are spirits.	

SUGGESTED RESPONSE TO QUESTIONS **NOTES** 1. Why do you think the author makes such a point of Christ's deity to these Hebrew Christians? It was important that the Jewish readers understood Jesus to be the incarnate Son of God, who alone had power to purge sins (Hebrews 1:3). His incarnation, atonement, and glorification spoken of in Chapter 1 lay the groundwork for describing a better way than the Mosaic system of worship, which foreshadowed Christ. Discuss with your class: In what ways does the deity of Christ come under attack in our day? Why is it important for us to hold firmly to our belief in His divinity? 2. The writer, in beautifully poetic language, described Jesus Christ in the opening verses of our text. Review the facts, attributes, and actions detailed in Hebrews 1:2-3, and write your own description of Christ based on your findings. As your class shares their thoughts, the picture should emerge that Christ is the Son of God, the Heir of the universe, the Creator, Radiance of divine glory, Sustainer of the universe, Redeemer from sin and the Exalted one. What other descriptive phrases could they add about Christ that would expand the picture? (Healer, Friend, Guide, Living Word, Good Shepherd, Bread of Life, Living Water, Alpha and Omega, etc.) **3.** Angels are heavenly beings, and many times in Scripture we find where God used them. In what seven ways did the writer show that Jesus was superior to the angels? Hebrews 1:3-14 Your class should come up with the following thoughts: • He has a more excellent name—the Son of God (verse 4) • He is the firstborn, that the angels were to worship Him (verse 6) • *He has an eternal throne and position (verse 8)* • He has been anointed above His fellows (verse 9) • *He is the Creator (verse 10)* • *He is eternal (verses 11-12)* • He sits at the right hand of the Father (*verse* 13) **4.** In the first four verses of chapter 2, the writer set forth a strong warning against spiritual neglect. Why did he stress the danger of neglect? How might we tend to drift away or fail to pay full attention to what Jesus has said? Jesus' message was interwoven with His person. One could not reject any portion of His message without rejecting Him—so it was a life and death issue! As your students discuss the second question, they

may bring up that we could drift away by neglecting

our personal devotions or regular church attendance, by not really understanding what we believe and why, by growing complacent in our Christian walk, by undervaluing the great spiritual heritage we have been given, etc. After your students have developed these danger areas, ask what restorative steps they would advise for those who have drifted away from God or have failed to pay attention to His Word.

5. In Hebrews 2:3-4, how did each Person of the Trinity participate in the delivery and confirmation of the salvation message?

Eyewitnesses to Jesus' ministry recorded His words and passed on His teachings. God the Father affirmed that Jesus' words were true by sending signs and wonders, along with gifts of the Holy Ghost.

6. To the Jewish people, Moses was a great hero. He had brought their ancestors out of bondage in Egypt, received the Law from God himself on Mount Sinai, and written the first five books of the Old Testament. Still, in chapter 3, the writer points out the fact that Christ was superior to Moses. What points can be made about both in order to prove this?

Moses was a mere man called to be a prophet and leader, while Jesus is the Son of God sent by the Father. Moses was called and commissioned by God, but Jesus was sent as God's own Son to sinful man. Moses was a prophet; Jesus is the High Priest. Moses was not born sinless, but Jesus was. It can be said that both were faithful in the work God gave them to do.

7. The writer warned the Hebrew Christians to "hear his [God's] voice" and take heed lest their hearts become hardened and like their fathers. What lessons could be learned from the ancestors of the Hebrews? How can we "hear his voice" today? (Hebrews 3:7-11).

Though God delivered the Children of Israel from Egypt, their hearts wandered from God and His Word. They had evil hearts of unbelief in spite of the provision and guidance He gave them. When they arrived at their destination, fear and disbelief made them reluctant to proceed and take possession of the land God had promised them.

Class discussion of the second question may bring out that we can "hear his voice" by studying and applying His words in the Bible, by listening and learning from the spiritual leaders God has given us, by never neglecting the quiet nudges of the Spirit, and by asking Him to help us stay tuned in and alert to His slightest whisper.

8. Why is it so important for the Christian today to heed the Word and maintain true confidence in Christ? (Hebrews 4:1-3)

Talk about the blessings that come with faith in God and the spiritual rest we find in Christ when we

surrender to Him; in addition, there is a Heaven to gain. It can also be relayed that when a person has an erring heart and a disbelieving heart, the result will be the opposite.	
9. We read in Hebrews 4:12 that the Word of God is quick, powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword. Explain what you think this means.	
The emphasis is on the power of the Word to penetrate and expose the inner heart of man. God sees our hearts (Hebrews 4:13) but we do not always know (or want to acknowledge) what is there. God uses His Word to reveal what is in our hearts.	
CONCLUSION	
What the Law could not do because it was weak through the flesh, Jesus has accomplished by the merits of His death and resurrection. The Law could never	

completely reveal God, but Jesus Christ can. He is the perfect reflection of God.

people as his role included offering sacrifices to God on behalf of the entire Jewish nation. The primary duty

Teacher's Guide



Christ Our Mediator

Hebrews 4:14 through 10:39
KEY VERSE FOR MEMORIZATION
"For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us." (Hebrews 9:24)
BACKGROUND
The Book of Hebrews has been regarded by the Church through the ages as a wonderful portrait of Christ as prophet, priest, and king of the New Covenant that was foreshadowed by the Old Covenant (Old Testament Law). The Hebrew believers were under severe persecution, apparently by non-Christian Jews. After accepting and enduring this persecution, it seems they had weakened. While never renouncing Christ, they were at risk of drifting back to the Jewish teachings and customs, many of which had supplanted the Old Covenant. In this portion of text, the writer emphasized the priestly role of Christ, comparing it with that of the Old Testament priest/king Melchizedek and contrasting it with the Levitical priesthood established in the Old Testament Law. The Jews were well aware that the priestly offices could only be held by descendents of Levi, the great-grandson of Abraham. Christ was descended from the tribe of Judah, making Him ineligible to minister as a priest under the Old Covenant. The writer emphasized that there was an earlier precedent for both priesthood and also the combination of priesthood and kingship. (These two roles were always separated in Israel after they were given a king.) Melchizedek was both king of Salem (Jerusalem) and a priest of God, although the Old Testament presents no record of birth, death or genealogy for him. He blessed Abram, and Abram acknowledged his position by paying him tithes. The Greek word for mediator is mes-ee-tace and means "one who intervenes between two, either in order to make or restore peace and friendship, or form a compact, or for ratifying a covenant."
SUGGESTED RESPONSE TO QUESTIONS
1. What was the role of the high priest? What were the priests' duties? Hebrews 5:1
The high priest was the ultimate mediator for the

of the priests was to offer gifts and sacrifices on behalf of the people. They stood between the person bringing the sacrifice and the receiver of the sacrifice (God) as mediators. These sacrifices were offered for sin, for worship, and for thanksgiving; thus, the sacrificial duties were performed over and over again.

To broaden your students understanding, you may want to briefly summarize the duties of the priests as outlined in Leviticus. God chose Aaron as the first high priest. His descendents were ordained to fulfill the role and duties of the priesthood. Annually, on the Day of Atonement, the high priest would enter the Holiest of All behind a thick veil that separated it from the Holy Place. There he would sprinkle blood on the Mercy Seat that was above the Ark of the covenant. This offering was for his own sins and also for the sins of the entire Jewish nation.

2. Verses 4:15 and 5:2, 8 show that our High Priest, Jesus, can be touched by our infirmities. Why is this important to us?

These verses point out the fact that, in His humanity, Christ lived, suffered, and died as a man. Because of this, we understand that He can sympathize with us, identify completely with what we are going through, and carry us in our suffering. Knowing we have a sympathetic and understanding High Priest, we can "come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need" (Hebrews 4:16). Lead your students to conclude that under the New Covenant, God is striving to have His people come close to Him rather than stay at a distance. Christ is approachable. He offers us grace and mercy in abundance according to our need.

3. The writer had begun to develop the priesthood of Christ, but in 5:11, he seemingly felt compelled to insert another warning before continuing. What difficulty did he mention in this verse, and what problems had grown because of it?

The writer refers to the readers as being "dull of hearing." This phrase is a translation from a compound Greek word which means "sluggish, slow, lazy, or numb." Dull hearing is marked by apathy or indifference toward the Word, a lack of spiritual discernment, and an inability to teach others. The writer's desire was that his readers mature in their faith. The time was past for them to be spoon-fed with the basic teachings which they had heard over and over, yet not applied to their lives. Create a list with your class of things that might make people of our day "dull of hearing" concerning God's Word.

4. Hebrews 6:4-8 contains one of the sternest warnings set forth in the Word of God. What danger is the author describing?

This is a warning against apostasy, which implies an entire renunciation of Christianity. Explain to your class that there is a significant difference between

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backsliding and what is described in these verses. The Bible draws a distinction between backsliding and falling away from God. For the backslider, there is every hope of his restoration if he will repent and renew his vows to the Lord. The Greek phrase translated in verse 6, "if they shall fall away," would more accurately be rendered, "having fallen away." For the man who has fallen away from God and has reached the final stage that is depicted in these verses, there is no hope. The word that is translated "fall away" means to "apostatize from," and implies an entire renunciation of Christianity. The one who has fallen away into a state of apostasy has rejected his only means of access to God and is cut off by the position he has taken.

5. Why is our hope in Christ identified in verse 6:19

5. Why is our hope in Christ identified in verse 6:19 as an "anchor of the soul"? Why do we need such an anchor?

Our hope as Christians is anchored first in the nature of God himself and His promises, and secondly in the very presence of God, which is now made accessible to all of us through Jesus, our High Priest and the perfect Sacrifice for sin. Have your class share actual storms they have faced in which the hope of the Gospel has proved a secure anchor.

6. Chapters 7, 8, 9, and 10 each emphasize something "better" or superior in New Covenant over the Old Testament shadow examples. List and give a short explanation for each.

Chapter 7—Priesthood of Christ (after order of Melchizedek) better than priesthood of Aaron. The priesthood of Christ is superior because He ministers in Heaven rather than on earth and the very order of it is compared to that of Melchizedek, the priest of Salem (Genesis 14:17-24, Psalm 110:4). Abraham paid homage to God through Melchizedek long before the Law was given and hence the Levitical priesthood (Levi being a great-grandson of Abraham) was inferior to that of Melchizedek, and thus, by comparison, to Christ.

Chapter 8—Covenant of Christ better than covenant with Abraham. A new covenant is alluded to throughout the Old Testament and the author of Hebrews simply reminds his readers of that fact and that this new covenant finds it's fulfillment in the person of Christ. The first covenant was temporary, written on tables of stone, and sealed with the blood of animals. The New Covenant is eternal, written on our hearts, and sealed with the Blood of Jesus.

Chapter 9—Sanctuary in Heaven better than earthy sanctuary (Tabernacle/Temple). The Tabernacle in the wilderness and later, the Temple in Jerusalem, were both constructed as places where people could approach God in worship. They were only shadows of the "real" sanctuary that is in Heaven. Jesus emphasized that God was looking for people to worship Him in spirit and truth from their hearts and that this was more important than the location.

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Chapter 10—Sacrifice of Christ better than sacrifices offered under Jewish Law. The sacrifice of Christ was far superior to the animal sacrifices of the Law because it was offered once and for all. There was no need of continuing sacrifices which could not take away sin when the Perfect Sacrifice was given. Help your class to understand that though these four chapters are full of details, the basic premise is always that in Christ we have a better priesthood, covenant, sanctuary, and sacrifice than those of the Old Testament laws. Christ is the fulfillment of the shadowy examples (vs. 8:5) of the Old Testament laws and there is no need to return to them when we have Him.

7. Hebrews 10:19-21 summarizes the access we have to God through the superior priesthood of Christ. Verses 22-25 give us three actions we are to take. List them and describe their importance.

Draw near—God expects and invites us to draw near to Him; this is possible now that the veil of separation has been removed by the death of Christ.

Hold fast—We need to hang on to our faith and our confession of Christ without wavering. We must not go back to empty rituals and shadowy examples when we have experienced the reality and fulfillment of Christ. He is faithful to keep us to the end.

Consider one another—While salvation is an individual experience between a person and God, the Gospel happens in community with other believers. We must look beyond ourselves and our needs and encourage others in our families and churches to be examples of Christ's love. Our actions should be a mirror of His actions in the world, full of love and compassion to the lost.

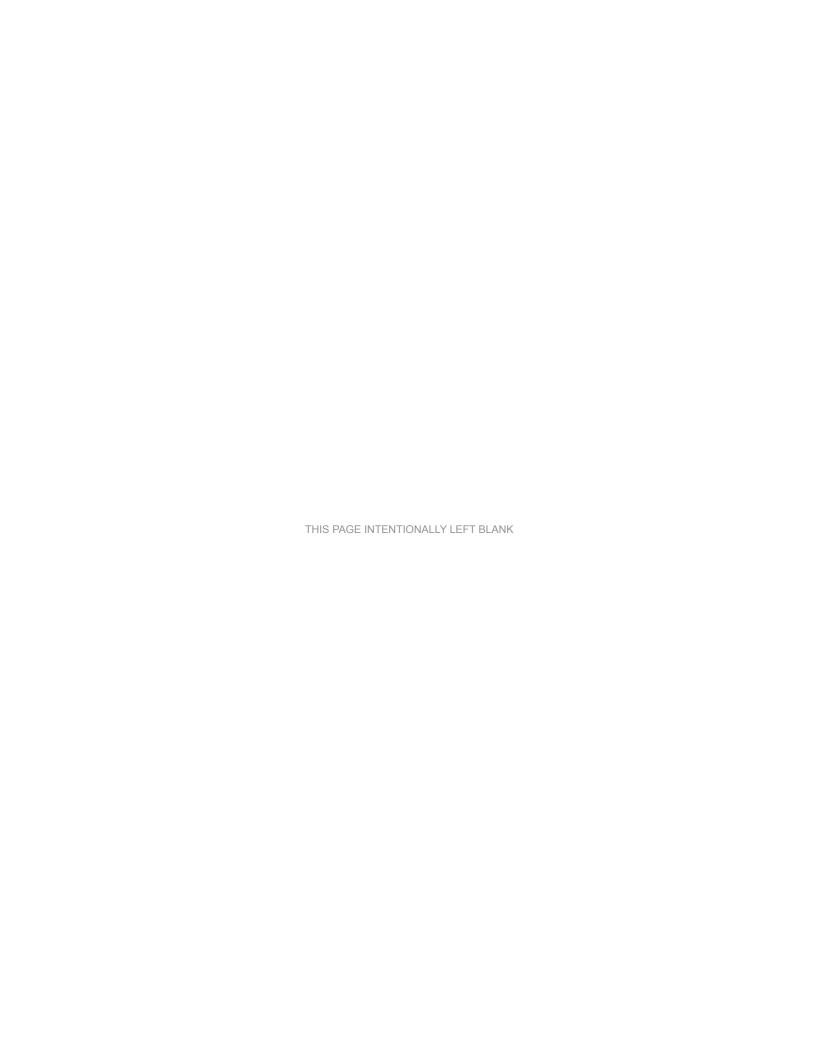
Hand a piece of paper to each person and ask them to write one way in which they can draw near, hold fast, and consider one another. Have them take this paper and post it in a prominent place at home or in their wallet or purse, so they will be reminded to follow God's instructions.

8. Our confidence should be in the only One that is truly secure—Christ. Verses 10:35-37 instruct us to keep our confidence, patiently do God's will, and wait in faith for God's promises to be fulfilled on our behalf. Name specific ways we can follow these instructions.

People are tempted to put their confidence in many things today, money, health, family, government, etc. The Jews were tempted to return their confidence to the rituals and shadowy examples of their Jewish roots rather than continuing in Christ. We can also be tempted to look back rather than to look forward. Students should be encouraged to understand that knowing the supremacy of Christ and His covenant to meet every human need is foundational to keeping our confidence. Obedience in doing God's will is an

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important second step. Patiently waiting in faith for God to fulfill His promises is how we should live on a daily basis. Have your class consider some examples of how God has always come through. Have them consider why sometimes it may seem that God isn't	
answering or coming through.	
CONCLUSION	
We are privileged to have a great High Priest and	
Mediator standing between us and God. Since we now	
have access to God through Christ, we enjoy a close,	
intimate relationship with Him. We can have confi-	
dence that our hope in Christ is an anchor that will	
hold steadfast and secure through the storms of life	
and deliver us from this life to an eternity in Heaven	
with our great High Priest, Christ.	



Teacher's Guide



An Exhortation to Faith

It would be interesting to list on a board some things we can see and/or do that indicate trust in

things we cannot see. Some examples might include the following: • Flipping a light switch = trust in electricity • *Turning the key in a car ignition = trust that the* car will start • Flying in an airplane = trust in air currents, the powerful engines, or the pilot • *Riding in an elevator = trust in the hydraulic* svstem. Although we cannot see God, He has given us ample evidence that He is alive and can work in our lives. You could generate another list on the board with such examples as: instant deliverance from drugs at salvation, a healing, the wonders of nature showing the Creator. **2.** Hebrews 11:2 lets us know that by faith "the elders obtained a good report." The word elders refers to the many believing individuals cited in this chapter. How did these people demonstrate their faith? They demonstrated their faith through action. Each one of these heroes had to act in order to get a response from God. Bring out the difference between a faith that "talks" and a faith that "acts." Discuss a few examples from the chapter, and show how they acted because they were convinced. For example, Noah took action by building the ark according to God's instruction, and the result was deliverance from the Flood for him and his family. Obedience to God may mean stepping out and taking a risk, but if we have a faith that is fixed on God's promises, He rewards that action. Ask your class to suggest currentday situations where a seemingly "risky" step of faith brings God's reward. **3.** Where do "spiritual giants" come from? Consider those who have influenced you in your spiritual walk. What steps can we take to gain more faith and stability in our own lives? Remind the students that those we might call "spiritual giants" did not start out that way. They are simply people, like all of us, who wanted results from God. They stepped out based on His promises, pursued the faith that would bring results, and acted on that faith. Point out that all of us can gain that

"spiritual giants" did not start out that way. They are simply people, like all of us, who wanted results from God. They stepped out based on His promises, pursued the faith that would bring results, and acted on that faith. Point out that all of us can gain that same faith and be an encouragement to others. We must want results from God, and we must be faithful and obedient. Steps we can take might include being more sensitive to the Holy Spirit with regard to our own lives, hobbies, actions, priorities, loves, etc. Sometimes steps that need to be taken may seem difficult. That is where spiritual giants come from—with God's help, they take those steps anyway, because they want God's approval and blessing. Sometimes it is much easier not to act when God speaks, but if we want God's results, we must do what is right, not what is easier.

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and obey, for He alone knows the way to eternal life. Discuss ways to develop and maintain sensitivity to

the Spirit.

7. Chapter 13 includes a number of practical applications. List three instructions the writer gives these Christians. How can we apply these in our day?	
Making a list on the board would be beneficial. Thoughts may include:	
Verse 1—Love other Christians.	
Verse 2—Be hospitable.	
Verse 3—Help the suffering.	
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Verse 4—Be true to your mate. Verse 5—Be content.	
Verse 6—Trust God to help you.	
Verse 7—Follow your leaders.	
After making the list, discuss how these apply to our daily lives.	
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8. The writer warns of being carried away with "div-	
ers and strange doctrines" (Hebrews 13:9). In the world today, what might be some doctrines that would	
threaten the pure message of the Gospel?	
There are several false doctrines that could be	
listed and discussed—evolution, that we all sin every	
day, allowance for adultery and for gay marriages,	
etc. Encourage discussion of the writer's admonition	
to be "established with grace." If we know the true	
doctrine, and are established in it, we can avoid being	
carried away with new, strange doctrines that might	
even sound reasonable on the surface. We could study hard and long to know all the false doctrines in order	
to be aware of them, but the best way to spot the coun-	
terfeit is to be completely familiar with the genuine	
article. If we are established with God's grace, it will	
eliminate questions in our own minds of what is of	
God, and what is not.	
CONCLUSION	
Those who lived under the Old Testament dispen-	
sation caught glimpses of the age in which we live,	
but they died in faith, not having received the fullness	
of the Gospel because Jesus had not yet come. We	
have received the Gospel in its entirety. Their testi-	
monies and examples of faith need to cause us to be	
complete and entire representatives of this dispensa-	
tion of grace. We must "carry the torch" down the	
final stretch of God's perfect plan for mankind to our	

Home in Heaven.



Paul's Letter to the Ephesians

in Ephesus continued to grow. Paul and his team spent more than two and a half years in Ephesus gaining

converts and training leaders.

COURCE FOR OUTCETIONS	ODENED
SOURCE FOR QUESTIONS Ephesians 1:1 through 6:24	OPENER
KEY VERSE FOR MEMORIZATION	
"I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called." (Ephesians 4:1)	
BACKGROUND	
Ephesus was a strategic seaport, ranking in impor-	
tance with Alexandria in Egypt, and Antioch in Syria.	
It was located on the western edge of Asia Minor	
(which is now Turkey) near the present-day city of	
Izmir, and was the most important Aegean Sea port on	
the main route from Rome to the East. Ephesus was a	
religious center as well, and was famous for its mag-	
nificent temple of Diana (the Roman goddess), also	
known to the Greeks as Artemis. The temple was a	
structure considered to be one of the seven wonders of	
the ancient world. Ephesus was a large international tourist center, and so profitable that its leaders opened	
the first world bank. Its population at that time was	
about 300,000, making it one of the largest cities in	
the Roman Empire.	
Paul had been a missionary for about seventeen	
years before he reached Ephesus. After two of his fel-	
low missionaries had gone for several months and laid	
the groundwork, Paul arrived and set up his custom-	
ary headquarters for evangelism in one of the prov-	
inces. Along with the colleagues he had brought with	
him and some Christians already in Ephesus, he began	
a network of home churches. This network eventually	
spread to other areas of Asia.	
Paul's first converts were probably Jews and	
"God-fearers." <i>God-fearer</i> was the Jewish term for a	
Gentile who wanted to follow the worship of the Lord but did not want to formally renounce his culture or	
undergo circumcision. The new converts were usu-	
ally from the middle-class, looking for truth and se-	
curity but not quite ready to completely change their	
lifestyles and attitudes. If the head of a household de-	
cided to follow Christ, his children, wife, slaves, and	
clients usually followed too. So the young church was	
built of individual households, meeting in the home	
of one of the more prosperous members. As a church	
outgrew the house, some households broke off and be-	
gan to meet in another house. Thus, the early church	

This letter to the Ephesians was written while Paul was in prison in Rome from A.D. 60-62 and sent to the Ephesian church with Tychicus. Unlike other letters he wrote, this letter was not written to address any particular problem in the church. It was written to strengthen and encourage the Ephesian church. It was also possibly circulated around other churches in the area for the same purpose. In it, Paul described the nature and appearance of the church. He challenged believers to function as a living body of Christ on earth.

The Book of Ephesians can be broken down into two major sections. The first three chapters deal with doctrine (the calling of the church), and the last three deal with application (the conduct of the church). The overall theme of the book is the unity of believers.

In chapter 1, Paul began with a prayer that the church may have wisdom and revelation. In chapters 2 and 3 he discussed the believers' positions individually and corporately before God, and the mystery of their calling. He ended with a prayer that their faith might be strengthened through the love of God.

Chapter 4 is a pivotal point in the book. Paul admonished the believers to walk worthy of their calling in Christ. In the last three chapters alone, there are thirty-five directives that speak of the believer's responsibility to conduct himself according to his individual calling. Throughout chapters 4 and 5, Paul discussed the Christian's walk in unity, holiness, love, light, and wisdom. In chapter 6, he concluded the book by instructing believers regarding how to endure spiritual warfare.

Like the Ephesian church, we are called to know Biblical doctrine and then live it out before the watching world. A loving, unified church is a strong church that unbelievers will be drawn to.

SUGGESTED RESPONSE TO QUESTIONS

1. In the first verse of chapter 1, Paul refers to "the faithful in Christ Jesus." What would it take for others to characterize you as faithful in Christ Jesus?

Faithful—what an excellent reputation! Such a label would be an honor to any believer. A response might include: being strong in your commitment one day at a time; trusting God in the hard times of life as well as in the good times; and being consistent in the "little things." Expand this list to adapt to the age, spiritual maturity, etc. of your class.

2. In Ephesians 1:3, Paul wrote that God had blessed the believers with all spiritual blessings. List some of the spiritual blessings God has bestowed upon you. What is the greatest spiritual blessing? After compiling your list, take a moment to thank God for these blessings.

With your class, make a list of the blessings Paul mentioned in chapter 1. Your list should include: The believer is chosen and called of God. We are redeemed through Christ's Blood, which gives us eternal

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life. The Holy Spirit gives us spiritual wisdom. Discuss how these blessings are an integral part of the life of the believer. **3.** What do Ephesians 1:7 and Ephesians 2:13 tell us about how we are brought closer to God? Ephesians 1:7 says we are redeemed through the Blood of Christ; Ephesians 2:13 says we are drawn nigh (near) by the Blood of Christ. Bring out that sin is a barrier that separates us from God. Only the Blood of Christ can break down that barrier, provide redemption from sin, and draw us closer to God. What is meant by the phrase, "Pleading the Blood," and how do we do that? You may wish to ask your class to share personal examples of times when the Blood availed in their lives. **4.** In Ephesians 2:14, we read that Christ has "broken down the middle wall of partition between us." The Temple had a wall separating the Jews and the Gentiles, but Paul was indicating that the Gospel is for all. What "walls" might we build today that God might want broken down? God does not want any barriers that prevent true unity in the Body of Christ. Some walls might be physical, racial, socio-economical, political, age, gender, appearance, etc. They may even be walls of division due to hurt feelings or other offences that occur. Christians have the responsibility to search their hearts and make sure they have clear consciences with both God and man. If there are any barriers, they can be removed by asking God for forgiveness, which then provides the peace that Jesus gives. They also have the responsibility of going to their brother or sister and making any offences right. **5.** Give the progression in Ephesians 3:20 from the first thought in the believer's mind to God's full purpose achieved in our lives. What is the power that works within us? We think, we ask, we receive, then we use what we receive according to the power of the Holy Spirit working in our lives. Bring out ways that God is able to do more for our spiritual lives than we could ever ask him for or even think possible. Develop the word "able" as an acrostic: almighty, boundless, limitless, everlasting. It is up to us to ask for these things and to seek His will in our lives. Then the power of the Holy Spirit can work more fully in us. **6.** In chapter 4, what instruction does Paul give about how we should walk worthy of our calling? Class response should bring out that one key element to unity in the Body of Christ is humility (verse 2). Christ taught this throughout His time on earth. The other key element to unity is endeavoring (verse 3). The Greek word for endeavor (spoudazoô), means

"to use speed, to make an effort, to be earnest (do or

give diligence), labor." The point should be made that unity doesn't just happen. It takes a concerted effort among believers, with the help of the Spirit of God.

- **7.** Ephesians 4:11 lists a number of gifts (callings) that are given to different believers by God. Write down each of them, then alongside each one, note how that gift benefits the Body of Christ. Why does God give these gifts?
 - Apostles: To establish churches
 - Prophets: speaking God's Word to the Church
 - Evangelists: do mission work to gain converts
 - Pastors: to lead the converts
 - Teachers: to instruct the converts

Discuss with the students how these gifts apply today and why God gives them. He gives these gifts for the perfecting (bringing to spiritual maturity) of the saints, for the work of the ministry, and for the edifying (building up) of the body of Christ, until we all come to the unity of faith and are not carried about with every wind of doctrine (verses 12-16).

8. In Ephesians 5:1, Paul instructs his readers to be followers of God, "as dear children." Explain what you think he meant by this.

Just as children imitate their parents, we should imitate Christ. In verse 2, we read that Christ's great love for us led Him to sacrifice Himself so that we might live. Our love for others should be the same—a love that goes beyond affection and leads to self-sacrificing service. What are some ways this type of love will be evidenced in our daily lives?

9. In Ephesians 6:18, we read that we are to pray always, with all prayer and supplication (petitioning) in the Spirit, and with perseverance and supplication for all saints. Review your prayer time this week. How have you prayed for others? How have you persevered in prayer for them? What steps can you take to improve this aspect of your prayer time?

This would be a good time to bring out the importance of praying without ceasing and earnestly interceding for others. Obviously one cannot physically close his eyes and pray at all times, but to be in an attitude of prayer throughout the day is important. Praying for others is important because it helps us to think less of our own needs and more about the needs of others. We find that when we are praying for another brother or sister, not only does it help them but it also helps us. We benefit because we are privileged to share in their victories and blessings. There is also a sense of renewed unity among the believers when they pray one for another. Steps that can be taken to improve this area in our lives might be a prayer journal, note cards, or a prayer list, and should include a time set aside each day to pray for others.

CONCLUSION	

It is a great privilege and encouragement to be a part of the family of God. As we walk together with other believers, we must be faithful in our individual walk with God, consistent in our prayer lives, and strive for unity among the believers. If we do this, we will experience the many spiritual blessings God has in store for us.



Paul's Letter to the Philippians

been forgotten. Then Epaphroditus, a member of the Philippian church, arrived in Rome with gifts and messages from the church. Epaphroditus found Paul in need of his encouragement, and stayed in Rome to help him for a time. When he became ill, apparently to the point of death, he extended his stay even longer

SOURCE FOR QUESTIONS	OPENER
Philippians 1:1 through 4:23	OI LINEIX
KEY VERSE FOR MEMORIZATION	
"Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." (Philippians 3:13-14)	
BACKGROUND	
The Book of Philippians is a letter written by the Apostle Paul to the church at Philippi. Philippi was a city located in Macedonia, in the northern part of what is now Greece. It was located on the northern highway that connected the east with the west. Noted for its gold mines, it was an important Roman city and military port during Paul's lifetime. The church at Philippi was Paul's first European church. It was founded by Paul around A.D. 51 with the help of Timothy, Silas, and Luke. Paul and his fellow workers went to Philippi during Paul's second missionary journey after God showed them in a vision that they were to go to Macedonia. It is believed that Luke, the Gentile physician who wrote the Book of Acts and the Book of Luke, was its pastor for the first six years of its existence. The account of the church's establishment can be found in Acts 16. Paul wrote the letter to the Philippians from Rome, where he was in prison. It was written about ten years after the church had been founded, and three years after Paul had last visited there. The personal, affectionate tone of the letter reveals his close rela-	
tionship with the church and its members. Out of all	
of the many churches that Paul founded and encouraged, Philippi was the only one that is recorded to	
have supported Paul financially. They sent several	
gifts of money to Paul for his ministry, and also had	
contributed to his collection for the poorer saints in	
Jerusalem. This reflects the trust and friendship that	
must have existed between the apostle and the people	-
of the Philippian congregation.	
Paul wrote this letter in thanks for a gift that the Philippians had sent to him. He had been out of con-	
tact with them, and may have believed that he had	

than planned. Once he was well again, Paul sent him home with this letter of thanksgiving and a commendation for his helpfulness.

In addition to making very personal statements about his own faith, Paul encouraged the church at Philippi to keep the faith, be joyful, develop humility, and remain unified under Christ. Paul also took this opportunity to address two issues in the church that had come to his attention.

Apparently, there was a faction in the church that was causing strife over issues relating to the law and circumcision. Paul told the church to beware of these "evil workers" and to seek to have humility like Jesus. Also, he exhorted two women, Euodias and Syntyche, who were leaders of house churches in Philippi, to "be of the same mind in the Lord" instead of allowing a personal argument to cause division in the church.

He ended the letter by encouraging the church (and ultimately us) to rejoice, pray, be thankful, and keep their minds on the things of God.

SUGGESTED RESPONSE TO QUESTIONS

1. Like most of Paul's letters, the greeting in the letter to the Philippians includes some words of encouragement, and Paul's prayers and spiritual desires for the church. What were some of the things that Paul wanted for the Philippians? Why do you think he might have included some of these in his greeting to them?

Paul prayed that the Philippian christians would grow in Christ's love, and he told them that God would continually help them to grow. He hoped that the Philippians would grow in knowledge, judgment, righteousness, and sincerity, and he wanted them to be mature Christians: people with good judgment and a genuine love for Christ and the church. He also told them of his love for them, and how he had missed them. The students may conclude that Paul included these things in his letter to encourage the saints at Philippi to continue to grow in Christ. He painted a mental picture for them of what a mature Christian is like so that they would have an example after which they could model their own lives.

2. At the time Paul wrote this letter, he was imprisoned in Rome. This may seem like a dire circumstance to us, but Paul had an interesting perspective about his situation. In Philippians 1:12-18, what did Paul say about how God used his imprisonment?

Paul wanted the Philippians to understand that God was using his imprisonment to further the Gospel. Paul's status as a prisoner opened doors for him to witness to people he would not have otherwise met. He was able to influence people from the palace, and it seems that other Christians were emboldened by his example to preach as well. The Word of God was being preached throughout the city of Rome due to Paul's imprisonment there.

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3. How can we apply to our own lives Paul's perspective on difficult circumstances?	
God uses difficult circumstances to establish His lordship into our lives, and into the lives of others.	
Our attitudes during times of trial will have an effect on the people around us. If we apply Paul's positive attitude to our own circumstances, we are in a posi-	
tion to bring glory to God and to draw us and the people around us into a closer relationship with Him.	
Note: While it is not covered in these questions, Paul also expressed a related dilemma in verses	
19-26 of chapter 1. He wanted to go to Heaven to be with Jesus, but he also knew that he still had work to	
do on earth. He decided that it was "more needful" for him to abide in the flesh. His willingness to delay	
his own reward in Heaven in order to stay and serve on earth is another example of his humility and com- mitment to lead others to Christ.	
4. In chapter 2, Paul encouraged the Philippians to be	
humble and obedient, and to strive for unity. He point-	
ed to Christ as the ultimate example of this kind of attitude. List the qualities found in verses 2-15. How	
can we cultivate this attitude in ourselves? According	
to verse 15, what is the spiritual reward for such an attitude?	
Some of the qualities listed might include: humil-	
ity, obedience, a unified spirit, putting others ahead of ourselves, love, a sanctified life, caring and empa-	
thy toward others, service toward others, doing what	-
needs to be done without complaining, and not arguing. We can cultivate a Christ-like attitude through	
prayer, vigilance, and obedience to God. The reward	
is that we will stand out from others in our competi- tive, "me-first" culture. Paul told the Philippians that	
they would "shine as lights in the world."	
5. In chapter 2, verses 19-30, Paul lamented the lack of selfless, committed workers, and praised Timothy	
and Epaphroditus for their faithfulness. What are	
some of the qualities needed in an effective Christian worker?	
There are many things the students might mention	
as this question is discussed. A few that come to mind are: Fully committed to Christ, a person of prayer,	
faithful in things such as Bible reading and church	
attendance, reliable and faithful in keeping commit-	
ments, disciplined, willing, obedient to God, lives a Christian example.	
6. In chapter 3, Paul warned the Philippians against	
false prophets. Today, as in Paul's time, there are false teachers and spiritual leaders who are more interested	
in power, money, and oppressing those under their	
care than in truly following Christ. How can we identify and guard against leaders such as this?	
We should know the truth of the Bible so well that	
· -J	

we will recognize a lie when we hear it. We need to

listen to the discernment that the Holy Spirit gives us. Also, we need to evaluate what we hear from teachers and spiritual leaders, comparing it to what we know of God and His nature. If it doesn't sound right, or we feel troubled about something we see or hear, we need to investigate further, and ask God to show us the truth.

7. In verses 9-21 of chapter 3, Paul recorded his own personal statement of faith, and reminded his readers that they were seeking the "prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." He encouraged them to copy his attitude, and promised that God would be faithful to show them if they did not have the right attitude. How can you "press toward the mark?"

Students can "press toward the mark" by opening their hearts in prayer, and by listening for and recognizing the Voice of God. He will be faithful to reveal His will for each individual life. Many times, God may call us to relinquish some seemingly difficult things, but once we do, He is able to bless us more abundantly than before. Make sure students understand that the things of value on earth are worth nothing compared to the treasure waiting for us in Heaven.

8. In chapter 4, Paul challenged the Philippians to "rejoice in the Lord." What are some ways of ensuring this joy?

Class discussion should bring out: keeping a continual attitude of rejoicing (v. 4), being considerate to "all" – saved or unsaved (v.5), praying instead of worrying (v.6), keeping God's peace in our hearts and minds (v.7), keeping our minds on positive things (v.8), following the faithful ones who have lived Christian lives before us (v.9), learning to be content (v. 11).

9. In verse 13 of chapter 4, Paul gives us the ultimate answer on how to cultivate humility and obedience, serve God, press toward the mark, and keep the joy of the Lord in our hearts. What is his conclusion?

"I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me." In our own strength, living the Christian life can seem like an insurmountable task. However, when we allow Jesus to be our strength, He gives us the ability to do what we need to do. Ask your class to share personal examples from their own knowledge or experience.

CONCLUSION

Paul remained faithful and kept drawing closer to Christ until the end of his life. We can learn much from his example. He kept a positive attitude in hard times, faithfully followed and obeyed God, prayed regularly, kept himself humble, and shared his joy in the Lord with others.

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Paul's Letter to the Colossians

this prompted Paul to write the letter to the Colossians. Epaphras is also mentioned in Philemon 1:23.

SOURCE FOR QUESTIONS	OPENER
Colossians 1:1 through 4:18	
KEY VERSE FOR MEMORIZATION	
As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him: rooted and built up in him, and stablished in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding	
therein with thanksgiving. (Colossians 2:6-7)	
BACKGROUND	
Colosse was a city of Phrygia Pacatiana, now a part of Turkey in Asia Minor. Not much is known about this ancient city, which was situated between Laodicea and Hierapolis and about one hundred miles east of Ephesus. Colosse has been extinct for well	
over eighteen hundred years and it is believed that an earthquake destroyed Colosse, as well as Laodicea and Hierapolis. The city that was raised in the place of	
Colosse was called Konos, a name it bears today. The Book of Colossians is one of the epistles Paul	
wrote during his imprisonment in Rome, around A.D. 60, about the same time as the epistle to the Ephesians was written.	
The church at Colosse was probably started dur-	
ing Paul's third missionary journey. It is not known whether or not Paul ever personally visited the church.	
Whether the Colossians, whom the apostle addressed in this epistle, were Jews or Gentiles, cannot	
be absolutely determined. It is most probable that they were a mixture of both.	
The problem Paul was combating in the Colossian church was the early stages of Gnosticism, a heresy	
that attacked Christianity in several basic ways. Gnostics taught that: (1) Christ was a created being, greater	
than man but less than God, thus stripping Him of His deity, which negated His propitiatory work at Calvary;	
(2) salvation was obtained through knowledge; and (3) the body was evil.	
SUGGESTED RESPONSE TO QUESTIONS	NOTES
1. Who was the pastor of the Colossian church, and how did Paul describe him? What qualities are suggested by Paul's words regarding him? Colossians 1.7	
gested by Paul's words regarding him? Colossians 1:7 Paul described Epaphras (the pastor) as a dear	
fellowservant and faithful minister. Discuss with your class that the meaning of the word "faithful" in this	
passage is "trustworthy, true, sure." Epaphras visited Rome and, while there, told Paul about the problem with the heresy impacting the Colossian church, and	

2. Though Paul had never met the Colossian believers, he faithfully prayed for them. What are some specific areas of prayer support we should weave into our prayers for others, based upon Paul's prayer in Colossians 1:9-12? *Answers may include: that the ones for whom* we pray will understand the will of God, gain wisdom and spiritual understanding, please and honor God, do good things for others, know God better, be strengthened by God, have grace to endure, retain the joy of God in their hearts, always be thankful. **3.** The Colossian church seemingly had several misconceptions about Christ, and Paul addressed their concerns in this epistle. Summarize how Paul refuted each of the following false beliefs. Allow time for your students to share their summaries of the verses that refute the heresies Paul was addressing. You may wish to include these points. Christ could not be both human and divine. Colossians 1:15 Christ had more than a resemblance to the Father; He was a manifestation of Him. In the incarnation, the Son of God, part of the triune Godhead, became visible in Christ; deity was now clothed with humanity. Christ was the first-born, not the first created. Christ did not create the world. Colossians 1:16-17 The preposition "by" indicates that Christ was the divine agent of creation. The preposition "for" indicates that all things were created for God's use and for His glory. The tense of the Greek word "created" indicates that creation was a definite, historical, and completed work. Christ was not the unique Son of God. Colossians 1:18-20 The word "he" in verse 18 is emphatic. Representing the Godhead, Christ controls, guides, and governs the Church, which is His body. He is its head and its life. Christ is not the source of salvation. Colossians 1:20-22 Christ's death made a way for all people to come to God. The only way to become blameless in the sight of God is through trusting Him to forgive our sins. **4.** In verse 24 of the first chapter, Paul indicated his willingness to endure suffering in order to further the Gospel. List ways in which you might be called on to "suffer" for Christ's cause. What are the benefits of

Your discussion should bring out that in some countries, persecution and death await some believers. However, Christians may suffer ridicule even in

enduring?

peaceful environments. Ask for class participation in developing a list of the benefits of enduring. Suggestions might include: strengthened faith, a witness to unbelievers, an encouragement to others who are also suffering, and an eternal reward. Focus on the thought that an unwavering and strong stand in our Christian convictions may be very persuasive. Even if results are not seen immediately, it does not mean there will not be results later.

5. Having established the significance and preeminence of Christ, Paul moves on in chapter 2 to give a warning. What did Paul caution the Colossians about? (See verses 4, 8 and 18.) How might his warning apply in our day?

He warned them of the danger of being misled by false teachings or by worldly philosophies that might sound good, but that were rooted in something other than Christ's Gospel. While the particular false teachings that were impacting the Colossians may be different than the ones we face today, the principle remains the same: we must guard against being influenced by religious trends or teachings that direct our attention away from Christ, and toward man's philosophies or efforts, as the answer to man's problems.

6. Chapter 2 addresses the dangers of the legalistic teachings of the Gnostic teachers in Colosse. Paul referred to the distinction of meats and drinks—foods that had been classified as clean or unclean under the law—and the requirement of observing certain holy days or festivals, such as those relating to the new moons and particular sabbaths. He let the Colossians know that Christ had released them from delusive and oppressive rules, and that there was no need for them to submit themselves to Jewish traditions which served to supplant God's Word. All these had been taken out of the way when Jesus was nailed to the Cross, and they were no longer of moral obligation. How might such regulations have deceived these believers?

The Colossians could have been led to believe that practicing religious routines would make them righteous in God's eyes, and cause them to feel content in their own righteousness. However, the Gospel makes clear that salvation from sin is only through the Person and work of Jesus Christ.

7. Having laid a doctrinal and theological foundation in the first two chapters, Paul proceeds in chapter 3, to lay out principles for the Colossians to put into practice the message they had just heard. What are some specific ways we can put into practice Paul's admonition found in Colossians 3:2?

Generate a list with your class. Thoughts that could be brought out include:

 Become more informed and alert to those in need.

 Respond to the needs you observe. 	-
Sacrifice for others.	
 Develop the perspective that material posses- sions and wealth are secondary to spiritual things. 	
8. In Colossians 4:5-6, Paul addressed how Christians are to act toward unbelievers. What do you think Paul meant by the following phrases?	
Thoughts brought out in class discussion may include:	
Walk in wisdom	
The word "walk" refers to behavior. The point is that it takes wise behavior as well as wise words to win the lost to Christ.	
Redeeming the time	
Making wise and sacred use of every opportunity to let our lights shine.	
Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt	
Our words should be gracious, pleasant, and full of sensitivity and tact, but not flat, dull, or tasteless. Christians are to have an edge of liveliness, and to be marked by purity, wholesomeness, and pungency when appropriate.	
Know how ye ought to answer	
We should be able to adapt the message to the situation and speak appropriately to everyone.	
CONCLUSION	
Paul's epistle appears to have provided not only the most complete description of Christ in any of the letters to the members of the Early Church, but it also contains excellent and timeless instructions to Christians of every era. As you read Colossians, you can acquire a new appreciation for Christ as "the fullness of the Godhead bodily," and the only source for living the Christian life.	

Teacher's Guide



Paul's First Letter to the Thessalonians

Paul also wrote to the new church a personal message: the Book of 1 Thessalonians. He started out by

SOURCE FOR QUESTIONS	OPENER
1 Thessalonians 1:1 through 5:28	OFLINER
KEY VERSE FOR MEMORIZATION	
"For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with	
a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the	
trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first:	
then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up	
together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in	
the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord."	
(1 Thessalonians 4:16-17)	
BACKGROUND	
Paul wrote the Book of 1 Thessalonians while he	
was in Corinth in A.D. 50 or 51, a couple of years af-	
ter he had established the church at Thessalonica. It is	
believed to be the first of the Pauline Epistles (with the	
possible exception of Galatians), and in fact was likely the first book of the New Testament to be written.	
Paul established the church at Thessalonica dur-	
ing his second missionary journey in A.D. 49, follow-	
ing his night vision of the Macedonian man calling for	
him to come to them. He responded to the call, and	
traveled across the Aegean Sea to Neapolis, Philippi,	
and then to Thessalonica where he preached in the	
Jewish synagogue for several weeks. The church sub-	
sequently established there became the second major	
church on the European continent. While Paul's base of operation was the synagogue (Acts 17:2), not only	
did some Jews accept the Gospel message, but num-	
bers of Gentiles did also.	
As the faith of the new believers in Thessalonica	
became known, this upset the Jewish leaders and they	
sought to arrest Paul and his co-worker, Silas. The	
two men fled under cover of darkness to Berea in the	
southwest, but the authorities arrested Jason, who had	
been host to Paul and Silas in Thessalonica. When these Jewish authorities heard Paul was preaching in	
Berea, they went to that city and attempted to incite	
riots against him. Paul escaped, and went on to Athens	
where he waited for his companions, Timothy and	
Silas.	
Because Paul had left Thessalonica in such a	
hurry, he no doubt felt concerned that he had not been	
able to tell the new believers in that city all they need-	
ed to know. He sent Timothy back to Thessalonica to	
see how the young church was doing, and Timothy returned with a good report.	

affirming and encouraging the believers in their faith, he exhorted them to live a holy life, and finally he instructed them about the second coming of the Lord. SUGGESTED RESPONSE TO QUESTIONS **1.** What was the response of the Thessalonians to the Word of God preached by Paul and Silas? In what

ways were those in the Thessalonian church a model for other believers?

Verses 6-8 tell us they became followers of Paul and the Lord with joy, despite much affliction. In response to the second question, your class may bring out that the Thessalonians gave evidence of works of faith, labors of love, and patient hope (verse 3). They had suffered persecution (verse 6) but they still had joy in the Holy Ghost. They were examples to others (verse 8). They had welcomed the missionaries into the Thessalonian community in spite of persecution, and had turned from idolatry to follow God (verse 9). They were waiting for and anticipating the coming of the Lord (verse 10).

You may wish to bring out that the word wait, in verse 10, comes from the Greek word anameno, which means more than just enduring, but rather an expectant, confident, and active attempt to live for God's glory in the meantime. It portrays an attitude of faith toward the complete fulfillment of the messianic promises of the Old Testament in the second coming of Christ.

2. In 1 Thessalonians 1:5 we read that the Gospel came to the Thessalonians "in power, and in the Holy Ghost." In other words, the Gospel had a powerful effect on their lives. List four specific effects that the Gospel has had on your life since you were first saved.

Encourage your students to list or verbally testify about specific changes in their lives. Bring out that whenever the Gospel crosses a person's path, it has some type of effect on them that cannot be denied. The person either accepts or rejects what they have heard. When the Word of God is heard and obeyed, lives are changed! Refer also to 1 Thessalonians 2:13.

3. In 1 Thessalonians 2:4, Paul wrote that he had been "allowed of God to be put in trust with the gospel." What did he mean by this phrase?

Paul had originally been a great persecutor of those who promoted the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Given his background, Paul felt he was privileged to have been entrusted with the responsibility of proclaiming the Gospel. He saw himself as a steward, for the Gospel he preached was not his own, but God's. Thus, his purpose was to please God and not men.

4. In chapter 3, what three reasons did Paul give for sending Timothy back to Thessalonica? In what ways do ministers of the Gospel today accomplish the same purpose?

OTES		

The reasons were: • To establish the Thessalonians (verse 2). The word establish means "to stabilize" or to support an already existing structure. • To comfort the believers (verse 2). The word

comfort had the sense of "to encourage" rather than to minister to the grieving.

• To make sure that the Thessalonians were surviving the temptations of Satan and that Paul's work in Thessalonica had not been in vain (verse 5).

Ministers of the Gospel today also have the responsibility of stabilizing and supporting believers, encouraging them in the faith, and helping them to withstand the temptations of Satan. The ministers do this by preaching to, praying for, and ministering to the members of their congregations.

5. What did Paul mean in 1 Thessalonians 4:15 when he said, "This we say unto you by the word of the Lord"?

This teaching was revealed to Paul either directly from God, or it was a teaching of Jesus which had been passed along orally by the Apostles and other Christians. However he received it, it was a divine revelation sent to the church by God himself. The phrase indicates that Paul intended to make an authoritative announcement.

6. One significant doctrinal concern that Paul had become aware of, led to a major theological emphasis in 1 Thessalonians. The young church clearly believed that Jesus had risen from the dead. However, several of the church members had died since Paul had been there. Since Jesus had not returned for his church yet, the church members were wondering what was to become of those who had died. In chapters 4 and 5, Paul offers hope and comfort to the believers who were grieving the loss of their loved ones. According to 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17, what will be the sequence of events of the Lord's return?

He explained that the believers who had died would arise out of their graves and would join the Lord in the air; those who were still alive and remained in the faith would then be reunited with their loved ones in the air, and together they would go to be with the Lord forever. What a comfort this offered the Early Church! It may be helpful to make a sequential list for your class of the order of these events.

7. What do you think Paul meant in 1 Thessalonians 5:5 when he referred to the church as "children of light, and children of the day?" Considering the characteristics of light and darkness, why was this an appropriate analogy?

Since being saved, the Thessalonians had walked in the spiritual light of the true Gospel, as compared

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to spiritual darkness. Jesus referred to Himself as the Light of the world, and the Thessalonians had trusted in Him for salvation. Discussion may bring out that light illuminates and makes things plain, while darkness obscures. Light is beneficial and even physically invigorating, while darkness lends itself to depression. As children of God, the newborn Thessalonians were truly "sons of light and children of the day."

8. In 1 Thessalonians 5:11, Paul encouraged those in the Thessalonian church to comfort themselves together and edify one another. In the original Greek, the word *edify* means "to build up and promote spiritual growth by teaching or example." Think back over your spiritual walk with God and note five specific ways other believers have comforted and edified you.

The point of this question is to bring out the importance of comforting and encouraging others. Note that the words comfort and edify in this verse are both in the present tense in Greek, implying a continuing obligation of believers to encourage and build up one another. This, of course, is one of the reasons for fellowship in the Church.

9. In Paul's closing comments, he gave several exhortations to the believers of Thessalonica. Paraphrase the directives given in chapter 5, verses 15 through 22, and explain how they can be followed in our day.

Verse 15: Resist revenge. Don't try to get even or retaliate for unkindness.

Verse 16: Maintain a cheerful outlook. Don't be gloomy or negative.

Verse 17: Pray continuously. This doesn't mean remaining on your knees around the clock, but rather, keeping a prayerful attitude at all times.

Verse 18: Be thankful. Express your gratitude to God for all He has done for you. It is good to express gratitude to others also!

Verse 19: Honor God's Spirit. Do not grieve or smother the workings of God's Spirit.

Verse 20: Honor those who preach and teach. Respect the ministry and their message.

Verse 21: Be judicious, and choose what is right. Examine all you hear, and accept that which is true.

Verse 22: Keep away from evil. Avoid situations where you might be subject to temptation or that might lead others astray.

CONCLUSION

How vital it is to be sure we are ready to meet our Lord in the air when He returns for those who are ready! Let us endeavor to encourage and build up each other in the faith so that none will be left behind when that great day occurs.

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DISCOVERY

ward each other. 3) Their patience was increasing, 4)

Their testimony was helping others.

Teacher's Guide



Paul's Second Letter to the Thessalonians

SOURCE FOR QUESTIONS	OPENER
2 Thessalonians 1:1 through 3:18	
KEY VERSE FOR MEMORIZATION	
"Therefore brethren, stand fast, and hold the traditions which ye have been taught, whether by word, or our epistle." (2 Thessalonians 2:15)	
BACKGROUND	
Thessalonica, the largest city of Macedonia, was an important trade city. Located on the main roadway between Rome and the Orient, it was a thriving seaport. During Paul's second missionary journey, around A.D. 50, after preaching for a short time in the synagogue in Thessalonica (Acts 17), he started the church there. Within two years or less, Paul felt the need to write a letter to the new church to encourage the believers there and counsel them in several areas, including the Second Coming of the Lord. That letter is the Book of 1 Thessalonians. A short time after writing that letter, Paul received word that some in the church had misinterpreted his teaching about Christ's second coming. Thinking the event was imminent, these people had quit working and had simply settled back to wait (2 Thessalonians 3:11). Continued persecution of the church caused some people to feel that they must be living immediately prior to the "Day of the Lord." To correct these misunderstandings, Paul wrote another letter—the Book of 2 Thessalonians. In this epistle, he explained the events that would precede Christ's return, what the believers were to avoid, and how they were to conduct themselves until the Lord's return. Paul's loving concern for the infant church is evident in his epistles. He used the endearing term "brethren" twenty-eight times in his two letters to the Thessalonians. He expressed his love in the way he greeted them, in his warm praise and thanksgiving for the progress and growth he had observed, his careful admonition on the points that had brought confusion,	
and his closing benediction. SUGGESTED RESPONSE TO QUESTIONS	NOTES
1. In the opening of his second letter to the believers	
in the Thessalonian church, what attributes did Paul commend? 2 Thessalonians 1:3-4	
He listed four commendable attributes: 1) Their faith was growing. 2) Their love was abounding to-	

Ask your class what lesson we can learn from Paul's pattern of beginning a letter with a message of commendation. How do you suppose Paul's commendation impacted the believers? Discussion should bring out that his words were an encouragement. Learning that Paul had mentioned them to others no doubt intensified the affirmation, and let the Thessalonians know that they had a reputation to live up to, thus challenging them to continued perseverance.

2. In 2 Thessalonians 1:4-10, Paul referred to persecutions and tribulations that the Thessalonians were experiencing. How did Paul encourage them regarding their sufferings, and how can we apply his message when we face persecution in our day?

Paul encouraged the Thessalonians to have patience in spite of troubles and hardship. He let them know that because God is just, He will ultimately reward His faithful followers and judge the wicked that persecute them.

Class discussion of the second question should bring out that Paul's words to the Thessalonians can help us remember that evil will not prevail. The promise of the eventual balancing of accounts in the future will not remove suffering from our lives, but it will help us put suffering in perspective and cause us to persevere. We can be comforted in knowing that our trials strengthen us and help make us ready for Christ's kingdom.

3. Following his words of encouragement in chapter 1, Paul gave some warnings in 2 Thessalonians 2:1-3. Identify these warnings and cite the reason Paul gave for people being deceived. What are some things we can do to ensure that we are not led away from the truth of the Gospel?

Paul warned the believers not to be "shaken in mind" or "troubled," and he said they were to guard against being deceived. He told them that people are deceived because they do not have a love for the truth.

Discussion could begin with identifying events and ideas in our day that could cause us to be "shaken" or led away from the truths we have been taught. We can guard against these by staying in close connection with God through regular personal devotions, filling our minds with the Word, being faithful in church attendance, and asking God to put in our hearts a love for His work, Word, and people of like mind

4. The phrase, "Day of the Lord," refers to the Second Coming of Jesus. The Second Coming encompasses two separate events: the Rapture of the Church, when Jesus comes to catch away His waiting Bride, and the Revelation of Christ, when He returns with His saints to execute judgment upon the ungodly and to set up His millennial kingdom on earth. In attempting to clarify for the Thessalonians the events of the end

time, Paul laid out three occurrences that must take place before "the day of Christ" (the Revelation of Christ). What are these occurrences? 2 Thessalonians 2:3-8

Paul said before the day of Christ, there must be:

- A great falling away—a time of rebellion or apostasy in which some desert their faith.
- A revelation of the man of sin—the Antichrist.
- The removal of the restrainer— "he who now letteth," The word let means "to hinder or restrain." When the restraining Spirit is removed, the lawless one "will be revealed" and his display of power will increase.

Encourage your students to refer to the booklet "Glimpse Into the Future" for further details regarding the Antichrist and end time chronology.

5. How did Paul describe the way the Antichrist will come in and the manner in which the Lord will defeat him? 2 Thessalonians 2:3-10

Paul said that the Antichrist will be a deceiver (verses 2-4) who will exalt himself and demand worship as God. Just as Pharaoh's magicians copied the miracles of God, the Antichrist will display satanically inspired counterfeit miracles, thus drawing many away from the truth. These miracles will look real but will exalt the Antichrist and not God. When the Lord comes on the scene, He will destroy the Antichrist with the brightness of His coming.

6. What two requests did Paul make of the believers at Thessalonica in chapter 3:1-2 regarding the spread of the Gospel? What does this teach us about how we should pray?

Paul asked the Thessalonians to pray for him and his co-workers that (1) their preaching would go forth unhindered and with power and that (2) God's protecting hand would be over them. The discussion will naturally lead toward our responsibility to pray for all those around us, and especially our spiritual leaders. Satan would like to hinder and turn our teachers, pastors, and ministers aside, so our backing for them is vital.

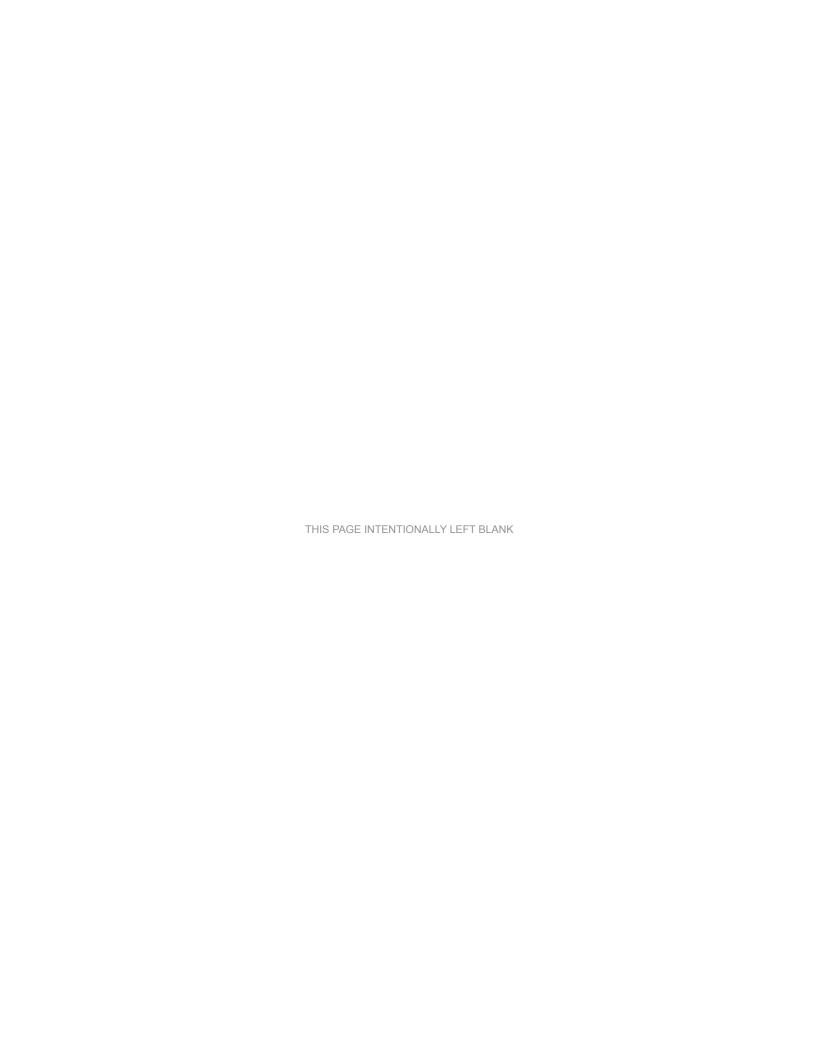
7. In 2 Thessalonians 3:5, Paul expressed his desire that God would direct the Thessalonians into two things. What were these things, and why were and are they so important?

Paul desired that the Lord would direct the hearts of the believers into the love of God and into patient waiting for His return. Class discussion about the importance of love for God may bring out that love is what will hold us steady in persecution, maintain our connection with God, and provide a witness to unbelievers. A "patient waiting for Christ" implies a strong and determined attention on His coming, and a careful aligning of our lives that we might be

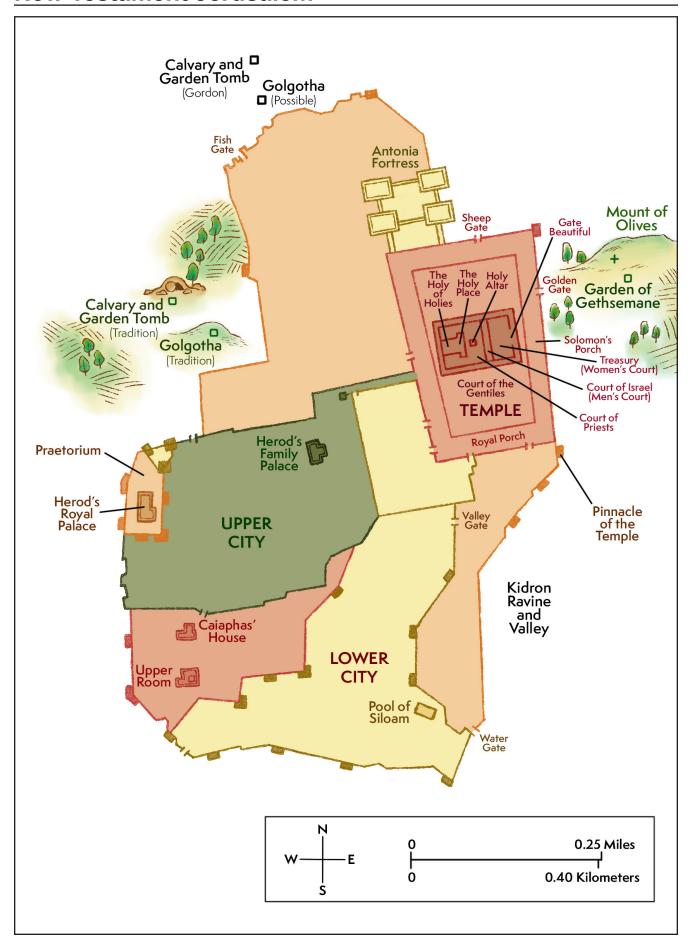
prepared. You might want to bring out that the word "wait" in this place is different from the one used in 1 Thessalonians 1:10. What Paul had in mind here is courage on the part of the Thessalonians to continue to live for God in spite of the problems facing them.	
8. What problem in the church did Paul address in verses 6-12 of Chapter 3?	
Paul addressed the fact that some members of the church were living in an idle manner. They were using their time and energy to stir up trouble, rather than being productive individuals. Paul wanted them to lead orderly lives instead of being troublemakers, so he commanded them to work "with quietness" and to provide for themselves. Ask your class what principle of godly living can be derived from this instruction of Paul. The point should be made that times of relaxation and recreation do provide a necessary and much needed balance in our lives. However, we should make the most of our talents and time, doing whatever we can to provide for ourselves and our dependents,	
and for the furtherance of the Kingdom of God.	
9. What key points did you derive from reading the Book of 2 Thessalonians? Why were they particularly meaningful?	
Use your students' responses to this question to summarize again the key points of this Book: the value of commendation, the role of suffering, the Lord's return, the Antichrist, the necessity of perseverance, and a Christian's work ethic.	
CONCLUSION	
Some day, Christ will come back to earth for those who trust in Him. If we are ready, we need not be concerned about <i>when</i> He will return. We should stand for the truth, keep working for Christ, and patiently wait and watch for Him.	

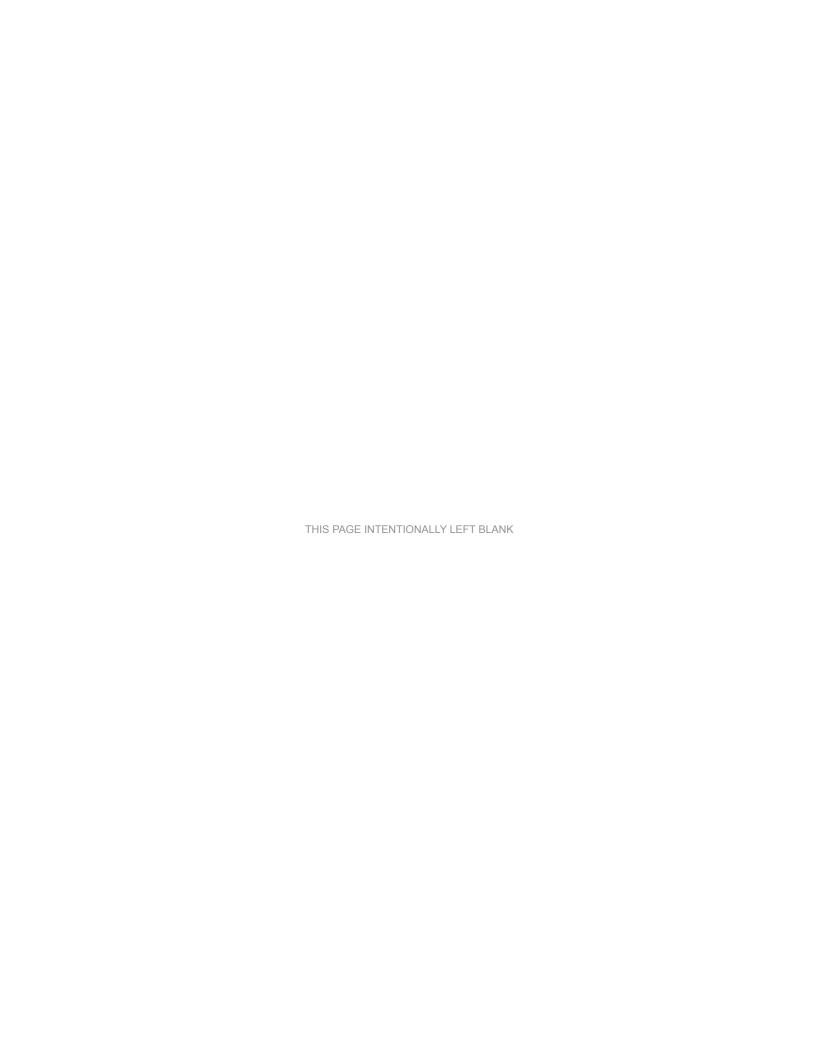
Key Locations in Matthew





New Testament Jerusalem





A Traditional View of Passion Week



PALM SUNDAY

Jesus makes His Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem on a donkey. The crowd waves branches, shouts "Hosanna," and puts garments and branches in the road. (Matthew 21:1-11)

MONDAY

Jesus cleanses the Temple, overturning the money changers' tables and declaring, "My house shall be called the house of prayer." (Matthew 21:13)



TUESDAY

Jesus teaches the disciples and Jewish leaders with parables. (Matthew 21:23)



WEDNESDAY

Judas plots to betray Jesus to the priests for thirty pieces of silver. (Matthew 26:14-16)



THURSDAY

- Jesus celebrates the Passover Feast and institutes the Lord's Supper and Foot Washing ordinances.
 - (Matthew 26:26-28 John 13:1-17)
- Jesus prays in Gethsemane. (Matthew 26:36-46)
- Judas betrays Jesus with a kiss. (Matthew 26:47-50)
- Jesus is arrested and taken to Caiaphas. (Matthew 26:57)



FRIDAY

- Early in the morning, Jesus endures a Jewish trial. (Matthew 26:59-68)
- Before daybreak, Peter denies Jesus three times. (Matthew 26:58, 69-75)
- Jesus stands before Pontius Pilate, is sent to Herod, and is sent back to Pilate. (Matthew 27:1-2 • Luke 23:6-11)
- Soldiers crown Jesus with thorns and mock Him. (Matthew 27:29-31)
- Jesus is crucified at 9:00 a.m. (Mark 15:25)

- There is darkness from noon to 3:00 p.m. (Matthew 27:45)
- The veil in the Temple is torn from top to bottom. (Matthew 27:51)
- Jesus' body is buried in a borrowed tomb. (Matthew 27:57-60)

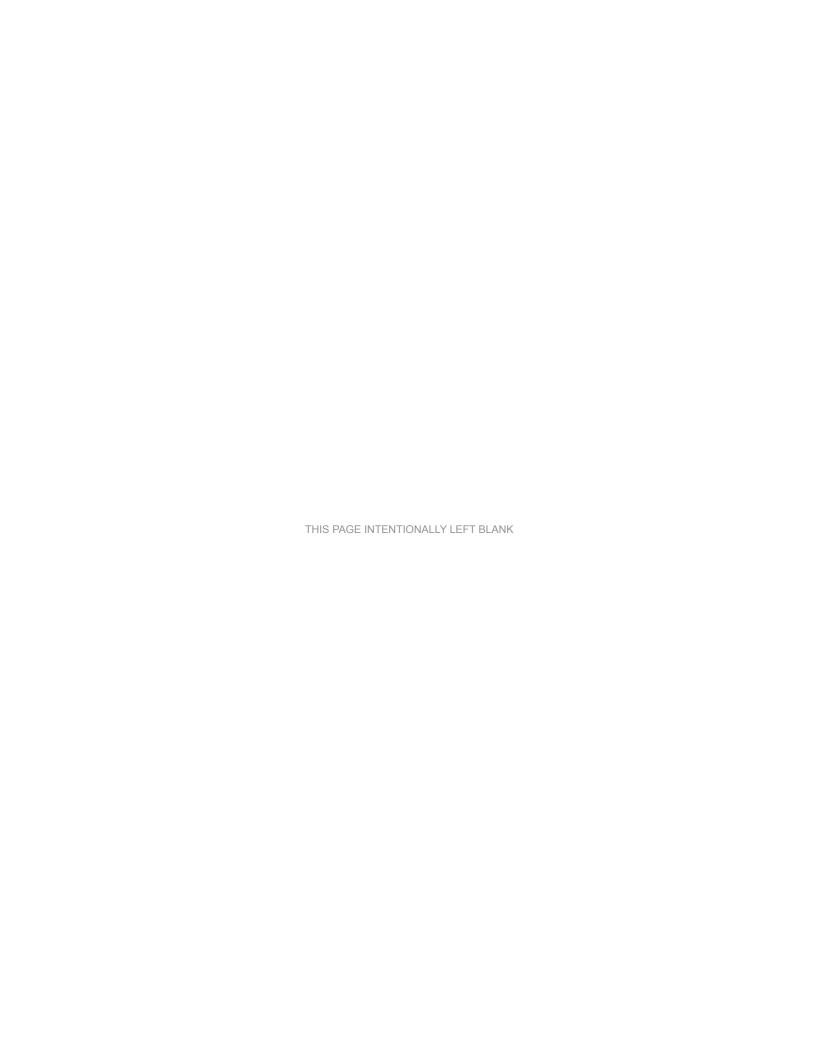
SATURDAY

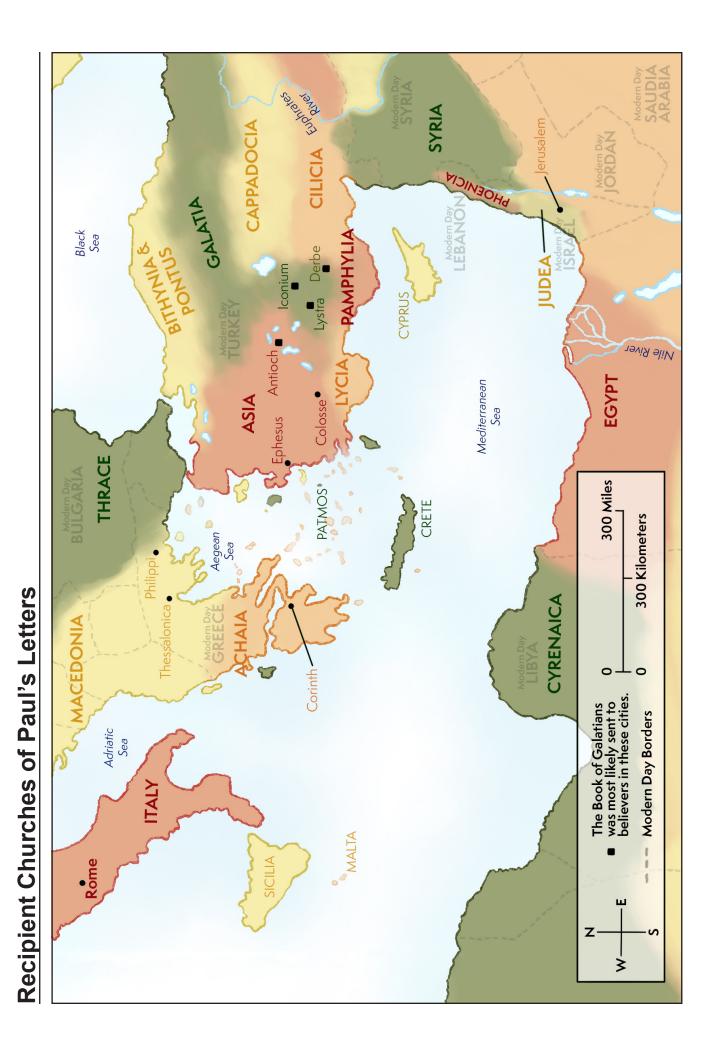
Jesus' body remains in the tomb. (Matthew 27:62-66)

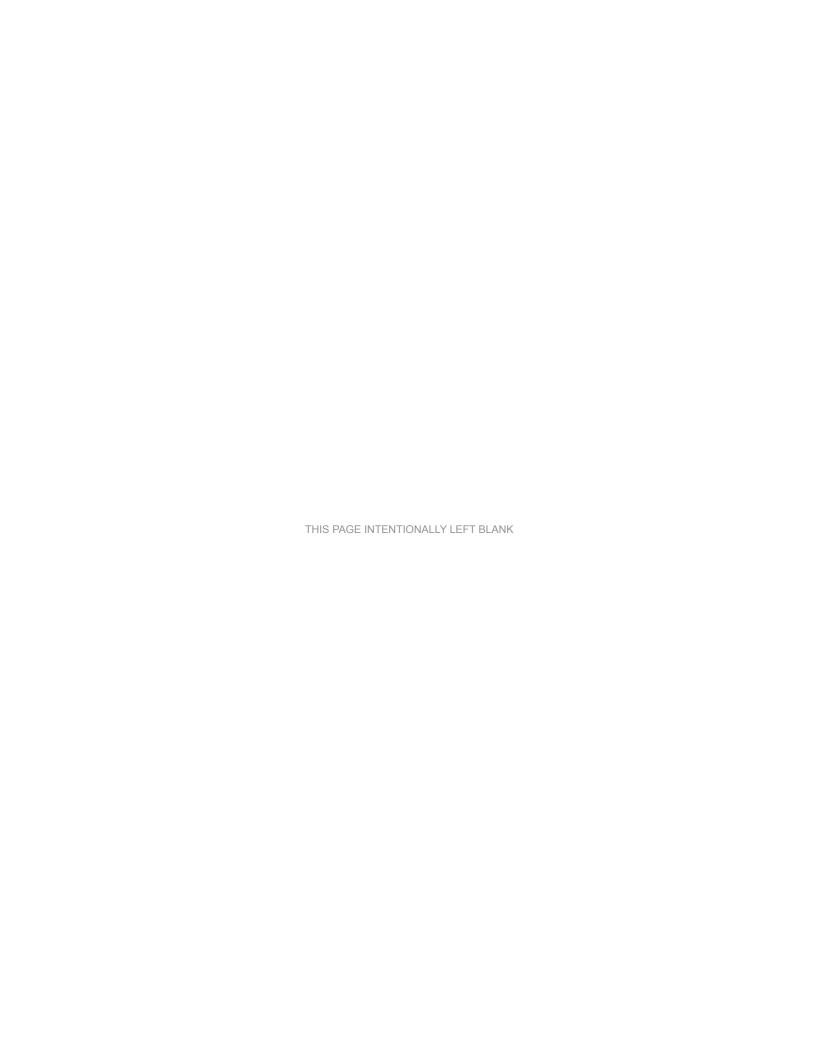
EASTER SUNDAY¹

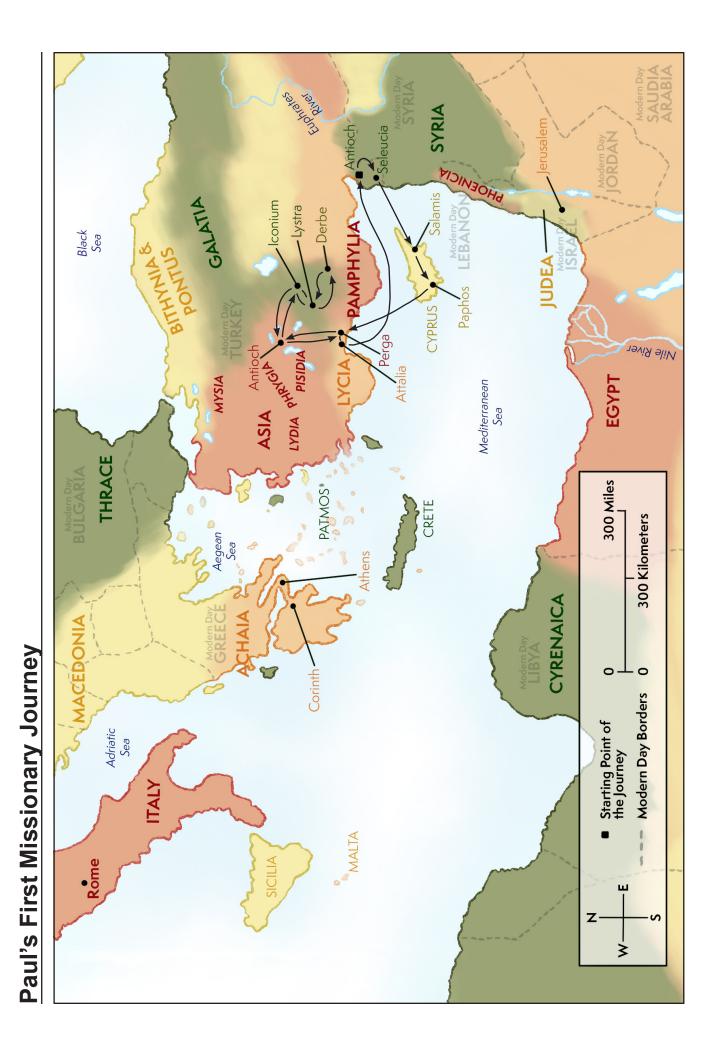
- Soldiers guarding the tomb become as dead men because of an earthquake and an angel who rolls away the tombstone. (Matthew 28:2-4)
- The women in a group (Mary Magdalene in advance of the others) approach the sepulchre. (Matthew 28:1 • Mark 16:1 • Luke 23:55-24:1 • John 20:1)
- Mary Magdalene, seeing the stone removed and hastily concluding that the body has been removed, runs for Peter and John, thus separating herself from the rest of the women. (John 20:2)
- The other women arrive at the sepulchre and see two angels. They depart to tell the disciples. (Matthew 28:5, 8 • Mark 16:5 • Luke 24:4, 9)
- While the women are gone, Peter and John run to the sepulchre, find it empty, and leave. (Luke 24:12 • John 20:2-10)
- Mary Magdalene, having followed Peter and John to the sepulchre, stands outside weeping. After they depart, she sees two angels and then Jesus. According to His command, she departs to carry His message to the disciples. (Mark 16:9-10 • John 20:11-18)
- The women on their way—before their arrival at the abode of the disciples, but after the appearance of Jesus to Mary Magdalene—see Jesus. (Matthew 28:9)
- All the women, including Mary Magdalene, unite in relating their story to the incredulous disciples. (Matthew 28:9 • Luke 24:10)
- Jesus appears to the disciples: to Peter, to Cleopas and another follower on the road to Emmaus, and then to a group of disciples in Jerusalem. (Luke 24:12-36)
- 1. D.D. Whedon, Commentary on The Gospels: Luke-John, p. 408

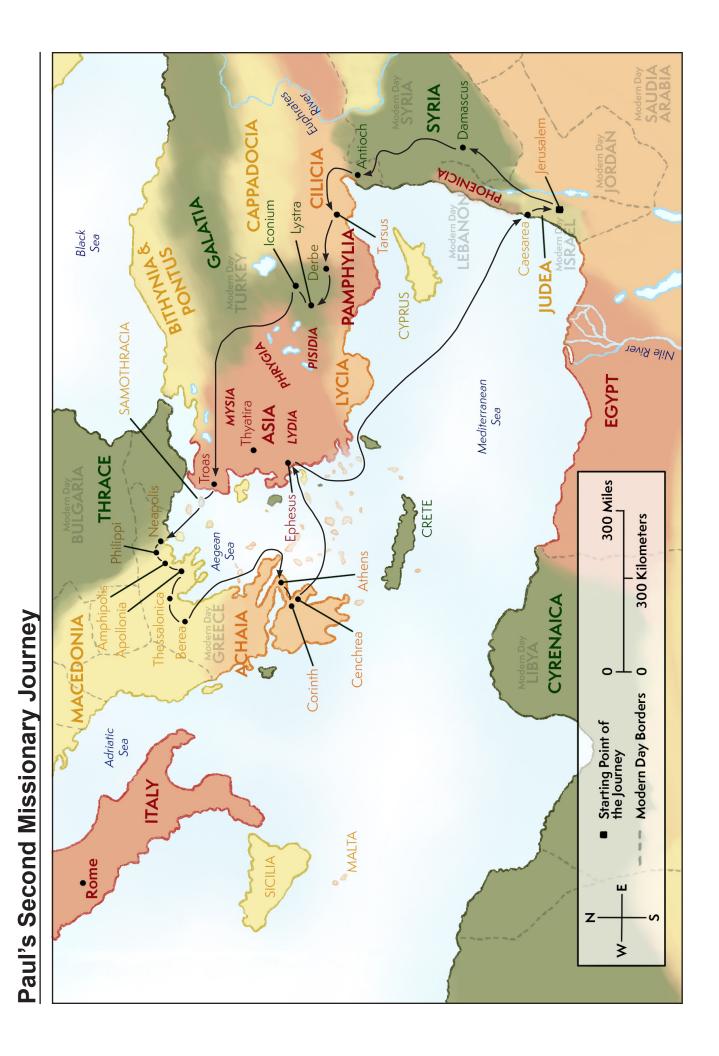


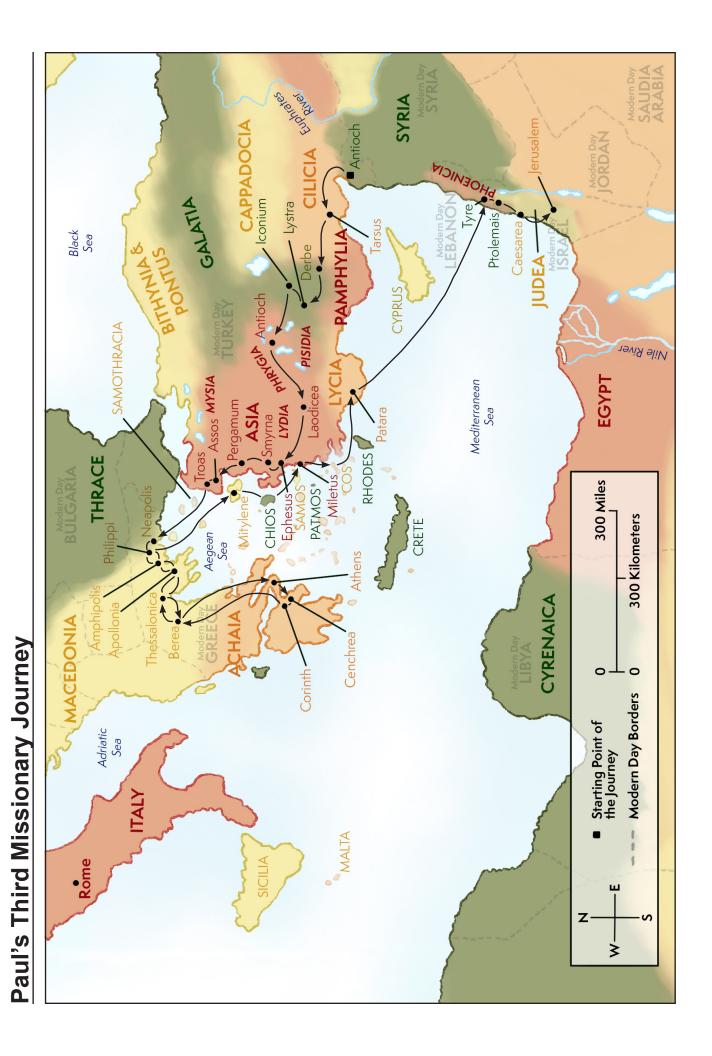












CILICIA EUPINATES **SYRIA** CAPPADOCIA Sidon PHOENICIA GALATIA BITHYNIAS
BPONTUS Caesarea Black Sea PAMPHYLIA **JUDEA**-CYPRUS PISIDIA Nile River LYDIA PHR MYSIA Mediterranean Sea **EGYPT Alexandria ASIA** Cape
Salmone THRACE Cnidus/ PATMOS 300 Miles Fair Havens Aegean Sea CRETE Lasea 300 Kilometers Phoenix CLAUDA-**CYRENAICA** MACEDONIA Modern Day Borders Starting Point of the Journey Adriatic Sea Rhegium Syracuse Puteoli Rome Forum on the Appian Way MALTA Three Taverns Z ≶

Paul's Journey to Rome