

Daniel and His Friends

DANIEL 1

Background

Babylon was a rising power in the Fertile Crescent in the seventh century BC. Nineveh, the Assyrian capital, fell to the Babylonians in 612, and the Assyrians fell back toward northern Syria. In 605, Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon defeated Pharaoh Neco at Carchemish and advanced southward to the coastal plain of Philistia.

King Jehoiakim spared Judah from attack during this campaign by pledging himself as a vassal to Nebuchadnezzar. But in 601, Jehoiakim rebelled, and Nebuchadnezzar ordered and attacked Judah. Late in 598, Nebuchadnezzar besieged Jerusalem. The campaign was swiftly concluded; Jehoiachin, son of Jehoiakim, surrendered the city to Nebuchadnezzar in 597. Jehoiachin and other government officials were deported to Babylon.

In 589, Zedekiah, Judah's last king, rebelled against Nebuchadnezzar. Early the next year the Babylonian army returned to Jerusalem. Nebuchadnezzar sealed off Jerusalem with siege works and devastated the surrounding countryside. The Book of Lamentations gives a vivid picture of the horrors of life in Jerusalem: "How lonely sits the city that was full of people!" (Lamentations 1:1) . . . "All her people groan as they search for bread; they trade their treasures for food to revive their strength." (1:11) . . . "Happier were the victims of the sword than the victims of hunger, who wasted away, pierced by lack of the fruits of the field." (4:9) The next lessons will look at the life of several of the Judeans living in exile, who were blessed by God for their faithfulness to Him.

Central Truth

God is active throughout history, guiding and caring for His people.

Objectives

- Know that God warns patiently about disobedience and does punish the unrepentant.
- Believe that though faithful believers suffer the consequences of living in a sin-filled world, God is with us and blesses us, even in the midst of difficulties.
- Pray that our faithful God will lead us to be faithful to Him.

Materials

- Hymnals and music CDs
- Web Resource 41a
- Reproducible 41

Bible Prep

Post in advance so students can bookmark references before class time.

- Luke 2:1–20
- Daniel 1
- Jeremiah 24:6–7

Devotions

How do you handle waiting? Are you patient, or do you get frustrated easily? Do you focus on what you are waiting for, or do you get distracted and lose interest?

Tom and Jason were both waiting. Their father had promised to take them to the movies to see the new science fiction epic after he came home from work. It was still early afternoon, and the boys had hours to wait. And waiting was so hard. Tom slouched on the couch as he flipped through the television channels for the third time. "There's nothing on but soap operas and talk shows," he groaned, turning off the television. "And it's only been an hour since lunch. I think the clock has stopped."

"I know," said Jason. "But I'm really looking forward to the movie. Dad will come, just like he promised." Jason looked around the messy family room. "I think I'll get busy and clean up this room while we wait—maybe even reorganize the DVD collection." "Whatever," mumbled Tom as he drifted toward the door. "I'm going out. Who knows? Dad might not even come." "Not come?" thought Jason. "Of course he'll come. And when I finish cleaning up the family room, I'll make myself a sandwich to eat before we go to the movies."

God promised Adam and Eve that He would send a Savior. For thousands of years people waited for the Savior to come. Some waited patiently, believing God would keep His promise. Others got tired of waiting and turned to other gods. Finally God kept His promise and sent His own Son, Jesus,

to save all people who believed in Him from sin, death, and the power of the devil. We are waiting too—waiting for Jesus to come again to take us to be with Him in heaven. While we wait, we are busy doing God's work here on earth—helping the poor and needy, being a friend to the lonely, bringing a smile to the sick and the sad, and telling the Good News about Jesus our Savior to everyone we know.

Sing several Advent songs, especially "The King Shall Come" (*LSB* 348; recorded on *Hymns of the Season, grade 6, Advent*). Point out the tone of yearning, waiting, and watching that fills the words and music of so many Advent hymns. What were people yearning for in Old Testament times? Speak together Luke 2:1–20 to hear about the first coming of the Messiah. We yearn today for His second coming and the eternal life in heaven He has won for us.

INTO the Lesson

God’s Promised Punishment and Mercy

Our modern culture often portrays God as a kindly grandfather who looks the other way when we disobey His rules. The Bible—particularly the Old Testament—is full of evidence that God is a God of justice. He does not tolerate sin, and He carries through on the punishment He has promised. Point out that Judah was devastated. A land that once had about 200,000 people was reduced by wars, disease, and famine. The Babylonians deported only the educated, wealthy, healthy, and strong, which was about 20,000 people. The few who were weak, sick, old, or had disabilities were left behind to fend for themselves.

God is a just God, but He is also a God of mercy. In His mercy, God provided for the people of Judah who were taken into exile in Babylon. When the people of Israel were taken into exile by Assyria in 721 BC, they were scattered throughout the vast Assyrian empire, where they vanished from history. By contrast, God directed matters so that the Babylonian officials settled the captured people of Judah in Babylon itself, mostly in villages and towns along the Chebar River (actually an irrigation canal), ensuring the survival of the Jewish people. In addition to being allowed to live together in communities, the Jewish exiles were allowed to farm and engage in other useful work. God’s mercy to His exiled people included the promise that, at the end of seventy years, “I will . . . gather you from all the nations and all the places where I have driven you . . . and I will bring you back to the place from which I sent you into exile (Jeremiah 29:14).

As the exiles waited with hope for God to keep His promise to return home, so believers waited for God to send the Savior He had promised. This promise was fulfilled in the birth, life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. We recall this time of waiting as we celebrate Advent. With your students, discuss ways in which we can make this time of waiting more meaningful during this Advent season (special devotions, Advent wreath, service projects in the congregation and community).

LESSON 41

Daniel and His Friends

God’s Promised Punishment and Mercy

Finally the time for punishment had come. In a series of deportations, about 20,000 people of Judah were exiled; but God did not forget His chosen people in far-off Babylon. The Lord gave His special promise to the faithful (see Jeremiah 24:6–7). Today we look at four of these exiled people who were blessed by God for their faithfulness to His will.

The Résumé of Four Friends

Personal Background

- Born in Judea.
- Follower of the true God.
- Relocated to Babylon in 605 BC, along with many members of the royal family and other nobility.
- Endowed by God with good appearance, wisdom, skills, and understanding.

Education

- Chosen for special training in the language and literature of the Chaldeans.
- Entered three-year course of study.
- The classmates Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah were given the Babylonian names Belteshazzar, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego.

Review

God used the Babylonian captivity to transform His people, to bring them to contrition and repentance and to a renewed faithfulness to God and His Word. And as He said, God would return the faithful to the land of Judah after 70 years; they would be a changed people who never again reverted to idol worship. These were part of the preparations, getting Judah and the people of Judah ready for the coming of the Messiah, Christ Jesus.



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INTO the Word

The Résumé of Four Friends

Be sure to explain the term *résumé* and how to pronounce it (with the emphasis on the first syllable, noting that the first *e* has a short *e* sound, and the final *e* sounds like a long *a*). Explain that a résumé gives a person’s background, including his or her personal, educational, and employment history. This is an interesting way of looking at Daniel and his friends.

Also explain that in Babylon at that time, most written materials were written on clay tablets, not paper. The clay of a tablet would be moistened and the characters etched using a stylus (a type of pointed stick). Later, the tablet could be “erased” by moistening the clay and smoothing out the etchings; or, if a permanent record of the information was wanted, the clay would be baked in a kiln, making the tablet as hard as pottery or stone. You may want to search the Internet for photos of ancient tablets retrieved from archaeological digs. Also see Web Resource 41a.

Help your students read the account from their Bibles in Daniel 1. Then focus on each point of Daniel’s résumé, discussing the ways in which God showed His mercy to Daniel and his friends.

Conditions of Service

- Trainees to receive the same food and wine served to the king.
- The food and wine were refused because they conflicted with Jewish dietary laws; even worse, the king’s food and wine usually were part of a sacrifice or offering to an idol god.
- Ten-day trial period agreed upon during which Daniel and his friends would consume only vegetables and water.
- God blessed the young men of Judah with greater health and strength than the other students, who consumed the king’s food and wine.
- God blessed the young men of Judah with learning and skill in literature and more.

Present Employment

- After completing their studies, they were named advisors to King Nebuchadnezzar or governors of his provinces.
- By God’s grace and favor, they were rated ten times higher in wisdom and understanding than all the magicians and enchanters in Nebuchadnezzar’s kingdom.

God Blesses His People

God calls us, as His justified and sanctified people, to put Him and His will first in our lives; He will take care of the rest. As Jesus stated in the Sermon on the Mount, “Therefore do not be anxious, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ . . . But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you” (Matthew 6:31, 33).

Remember

“For I know the plans I have for you, declares the LORD, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope.”

(Jeremiah 29:11)



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INTO our Lives

God Blesses His People

After reading the statement in the Student Book, continue with Reproducible 41. Discuss how God has blessed each of us in the areas of personal background, education, and service experience. Encourage students to think about God’s blessings in their future plans. Daniel and his friends didn’t sit idly and wait for the seventy-year exile to end. They understood that they were “blessed to be a blessing.” How will your students use the blessings God has given them to be a blessing to their family, their community, and their world?

’s Résumé

Directions: No clay tablets today! Résumés are most likely to be created on a computer. What would your résumé look like? Fill in the four areas, keeping in mind the many ways God has blessed you in your life so far. Also look forward to His continued blessing in the years to come, and consider ways that God might use you to serve others and give Him glory.

Personal Background:
Education:
Service Opportunities:
Future Employment:

Reproducible 41
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Name _____

Personal Background: Daniel and his three friends were born in Judah, members of God’s chosen people and of the tribe from which the promised Savior would come. They were followers of God, and their faith in God was strong enough to keep them from following the ways of the Babylonian court. They had been relocated to Babylon along with other members of the Jewish aristocracy. God had blessed them with pleasant appearance, wisdom, and understanding that were apparent even to their Babylonian captors. Why were these young men a part of the punishment through exile? We will see that God had a purpose for their lives and for His people.

Education: God blessed Daniel and his three friends, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, by giving them the opportunity for three years of special training in Babylonian language and literature. Their education probably also included mathematics and astronomy

and maybe even natural history and architecture, which were commonly studied by the very educated. These young men were “blessed to be a blessing” and would speak for God to Nebuchadnezzar and his court. We can see from this section that they were willing to immerse themselves in the culture of Babylon, and they were even willing to adopt Babylonian names. However, they refused to accept the gods and religions of Babylon, as we will see in the next section.

Conditions of Service: When Daniel and his friends were offered food and wine from the king’s table, God gave Daniel the courage to refuse food that was not in keeping with the Jewish dietary laws. An even greater problem with the food from the king’s table was that it was usually presented first before their idol gods. These four young men took a stand, refusing to accept something that was in defiance of the true God. The chief eunuch

agreed to give the men only vegetables and water for ten days. (Note that commentators say that “vegetables” would include growing plants like wheat and other grains, from which bread and the like would be made.) The ten-day experiment worked. God blessed Daniel and his friends with physical health and strength and with learning and skill.

Present Employment: At the end of the three-year training period, Daniel and his friends became advisors to King Nebuchadnezzar. By God’s grace and favor, the four men were rated ten times higher in wisdom and understanding than Nebuchadnezzar’s magicians and enchanters.



Bringing it home

The Jewish exiles in Babylon had to wait for seventy years for God to keep His promise of deliverance. In the same way, Old Testament believers waited for centuries for God to keep His promise of deliverance from sin, death, and the power of the devil—the promise that came true in the birth of Jesus. We remember this time of waiting and hope each year as we celebrate the season of Advent. Encourage students and their families to work together to plan a special Advent devotion time this year. Many excellent resources are available, from *Portals of Prayer* to the Lutheran Hour Ministries devotions available online every day. Students and parents can make or buy a simple Advent wreath and light the appropriate number of candles each day. Family members can take turns reading the devotion and Scripture, then discuss what has been read, and close with prayer and a blessing.



TEACHER TIPS

What a great hero Daniel was! And then he had the courage to face down those hungry lions! It would be easy for the children in your classroom to see Daniel as the hero of these stories. But these stories are really accounts of God's saving grace as shown to Daniel and to each of us. By God's grace, Daniel and the other Jewish exiles were preserved in Babylon. By grace, God endowed Daniel with good looks, wisdom, skills, and understanding. By grace, God had Daniel and his friends chosen by Nebuchadnezzar for special training, and by grace God preserved them in their time of testing, giving them health and strength in addition to knowledge and understanding. By grace, God gave Daniel the power to interpret dreams. Who is the hero of this story? Make sure your students understand that God is the hero of every story in the Bible. Pray that your students will also see the Lord as the hero of their own lives; He is the one who daily blesses them, and also blesses them eternally through Christ Jesus.



Ideas for the Gifted

Many of the exiles taken from Judah to Babylon viewed their captivity as God's punishment for their nation's idolatry. While many followed God's direction through the prophet Jeremiah to build houses and raise families while they waited for God's promised deliverance, others were consumed by bitterness and despair. In captivity, they mourned for their sin and its consequences. Read the words of Psalm 137:1–6. The “waters of Babylon” refer to the Chebar River—actually an irrigation canal—along which most of the Jewish exiles had been settled. The canal ran through the heart of lower Mesopotamia from Babylon to Erech, a distance of more than one hundred miles.

The real danger to the Jewish community was the temptation to be assimilated into Babylonian life. To preserve their identity, the religious Jews of Babylon faithfully observed the Sabbath and circumcised their male children—practices that set them apart from their neighbors. Daniel and his friends observed the Jewish dietary laws instead of accepting the king's food and wine. Today we are surrounded by a culture that tempts us away from our Christian values and way of life. How can we resist the forces of that culture and remain strong in our faith and practice?



Technology

Nebuchadnezzar built many beautiful buildings in his capital city of Babylon. The exiles from Judah would have marveled at the magnificent Ishtar Gate in the city's walls. This gate was discovered by archeologists and brought to Berlin, Germany, where it now stands in the Pergamum Museum. Have students search the internet for pictures of and information about the Ishtar Gate.

Nicodemus Visits Jesus

JOHN 3:1–21

Background

Nicodemus was a Jewish leader and a member of the Sanhedrin (equivalent to the Supreme Court). He visited Jesus at night, possibly because he was afraid to have anyone find out that he considered Jesus to be sent from God (John 3:2). Later, he became bolder, speaking up for Jesus in the Sanhedrin and suffering for it (7:50) and finally helping Joseph of Arimathea give Jesus' body decent burial (19:38–42).

Nicodemus struggles to understand what Jesus means by being born *anōthen* (a Greek pun; it can be translated either “born again” or “born from above,” that is, from God in heaven). We understand Jesus to be talking about the Spirit's work in Baptism, a spiritual rebirth. Emphasize that Baptism is not something we

do—it is an act of God. That is why it has power; it is efficacious through God's Word. The power in Baptism is the power of the Gospel message of salvation through Jesus' death on the cross and resurrection at Easter. It is important to emphasize that Baptism is not a “get-into-heaven ticket.” The action is God's, but we receive it by faith. Turning away from faith is also turning away from baptismal vows and promises.

(Regarding the phrase “born again,” we see this term differently than some other churches do. In some church bodies, the phrase means a conversion experience that would rely on personal thoughts and emotions. The truth is that we are born again in Baptism through *God's* action as He adopts us into His family.)

Devotions

“You were so little when your mom died. Do you remember much about her?” Dana asked, taking a bite of her pizza.

“Yeah. Pretty much everything.” Kelly's eyes were distant. “I still think about her every day.”

Dana hesitated. “Do you ever get angry that she's not here anymore?”

“Well, for a while I was angry, but now I'm more . . . just . . . sad,” said Kelly, looking down. “And I have lots of questions.”

“Like what?”

“Like why she will never get to see me play volleyball, or see the pictures I paint, or be there when I get married someday. And why do I have to wait so long to see her again?” The tears had started, and Dana looked uncomfortable.

“She has a lot of questions, doesn't she?” said Kelly's dad as he walked into the room for a moment. He put a drinking glass on the table in front of his daughter and left again. Kelly picked it up, realized it was empty, and started laughing through her tears. “What are you laughing at?” Dana asked curiously.

“My dad and I have a family thing where when one of us gets sad, the other one gets out this glass that's all fogged up—see? We weren't supposed to put it in the dishwasher because the water was too hot for it. Now the glass is clouded over, and you can't see through it anymore.” Kelly handed it to Dana. “Anyway, it reminds us of that place in the Bible where it says that now we understand or see dimly, but then someday, in heaven, we will

Central Truth

Heavenly things are beyond earthly understanding, but God reveals all we need to know about salvation through Christ Jesus.

Objectives

- Acknowledge that faith is not based on our knowledge or intellect, but on the certainty of who God is and what He says and does.
- Confess that Jesus forgives our weakness, doubts, and questioning; He leads us through the Holy Spirit, in the Word, to strengthen our faith and to trust Him unconditionally, just as He loves us unconditionally.
- Proclaim that all questions are answered and all promises are fulfilled in Jesus (2 Corinthians 1:20).

Materials

- Hymnals and music CDs
- Reproducible 53

Bible Prep

Post in advance so students can bookmark references before class time.

- Psalm 121
- Ephesians 5:8–21
- John 3:1–21
- 1 Peter 2:9
- Romans 1:16

be with God face-to-face. And even though we have questions and we can't see why God let something happen, we can trust Jesus to take care of us. *And my mom too.*”

“For sure!” Kelly replied. Then she called out, “Thanks, Dad!” “Sure, sweetheart,” Dad replied.

Let's pray together. Dear Lord, thank You so much for being my strong support when I am weak. Help me to trust in You when I don't understand what's happening in my life. In Your name I pray. Amen. Say together Psalm 121. Then sing “You Are the Way; through You Alone” (*LSB* 526; recorded as *Hymn of the Season* for grade 6, Epiphany).

A Breath of Fresh Air

Discuss the opening paragraphs of the Student Book with your class. Guide them to see what the wind can teach us about the Holy Spirit. (1) You cannot box up the wind; you cannot contain the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit brings us to faith in the salvation we have in Jesus, but He is not confined to a church building. The Holy Spirit works through the Means of Grace: God’s Word and the Sacraments (Holy Baptism and the Lord’s Supper). And as Jesus, true God, said, “Where two or three are gathered in My name, there am I among them” (Matthew 18:20). (2) The people long ago could see Jesus in person, but we cannot see the Holy Spirit. We hear Him, however, in God’s Word, His message to us. (3) The Holy Spirit comes and goes without our direction. We don’t choose Him; He chooses us and brings us to faith. “No one can say ‘Jesus is Lord’ except in the Holy Spirit” (1 Corinthians 12:3). We don’t bring other people to faith; we can only be tools, telling them about God’s Word; only the Holy Spirit works to bring people to faith. (4) Wind changes things by blowing them over or moving them. The Holy Spirit changes us—transforming our lives and enabling us to live as people of God. Through the Holy Spirit, we are something new; the old has gone away (2 Corinthians 5:17)! (5) When the troubles of this world get us down, the Holy Spirit lifts us up and refreshes us through the Word of God. “Restore to me the joy of Your salvation, and uphold me with a willing spirit” (Psalm 51:12).

While we cannot see the Holy Spirit, we can see the work He is doing as He brings people to faith, strengthens their faith, and keeps them in faith! The Spirit is active in our lives today! Have student volunteers read aloud John 3:1–9, which contains portions of the actual conversation between Nicodemus and Jesus. Ask if students learned any additional information as this was read. Especially note Nicodemus’s question, “How can these things be?” Just as we sometimes don’t understand everything in God’s Word, Nicodemus didn’t understand either. So Jesus continued to explain.

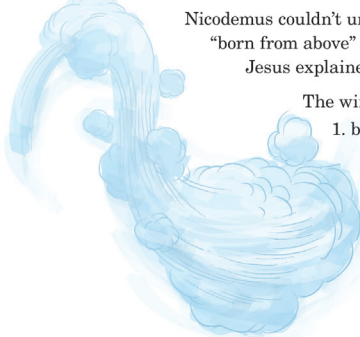
LESSON 53

Nicodemus Visits Jesus

Nicodemus was a church leader who came to visit Jesus at night. Perhaps he came at night so his Pharisee friends (who were often enemies of Jesus) would not see him. Perhaps he came at night because there were such large crowds around Jesus during the day, so this was the best time for a personal conversation. Whatever his reason, he came to Jesus with many questions. Jesus helped Nicodemus grow in understanding by picturing earthly things that had heavenly, spiritual meanings.

A Breath of Fresh Air

Nicodemus couldn’t understand what Jesus meant when He said “born from above” (or “born again”) in faith, through the Holy Spirit. Jesus explained, comparing the Spirit to the wind.



- The wind
1. blows where it wishes;
 2. is heard but not seen;
 3. comes and goes without our direction;
 4. changes things;
 5. can be refreshing and uplifting.

Discuss: In what ways is wind a good comparison to—or metaphor for—the Holy Spirit?

A Splash of Water



Works forgiveness of sins

Rescues from death and the devil

Gives eternal salvation to all who believe

God makes us new (reborn) people as the Holy Spirit brings us to faith through His message of salvation in the Word of God. This is not something we do; this is not an emotional feeling; this is not something we decide. It is a gift of God! The Lord loves us so much that He gives us that gift of faith through several means, including Holy Baptism and the Lord’s Supper, both of which have that same Word of God as an essential part of these special gifts.

List three things Baptism does. Celebrate your Baptism, your spiritual rebirthday! If you have not been baptized, the gift of faith is yours through God’s Word, and you can look forward to the day when you will be baptized! (For more information, see the Small Catechism section on Baptism in the Appendix of this book.)

Review

Covenant Connection

As John the Baptist pointed to the coming Messiah (Jesus Christ), he explained Baptism in this way: “I baptize you with water for repentance, but He who is coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire” (Matthew 3:11). John the Baptist meant that Jesus would baptize with power. We can say that the Baptism Jesus instituted is efficacious, which means it is effective and does the work. What work does it do? Through the Holy Spirit, working through God’s Word, we are brought to faith and are transformed to live as people of God!



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A Splash of Water

Discuss the very significant concepts presented in the Student Book. Each statement tells something additional about Baptism.

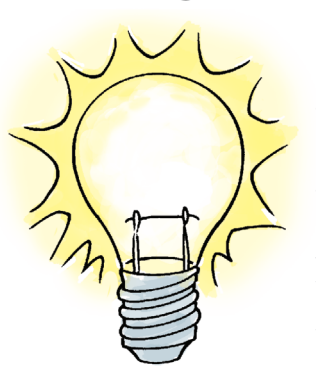
Point out that the three water drops pictured can stand for the fact that we are baptized in the name of the triune God—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. However, in this case, we want to consider three of the benefits (or blessings) that God gives to us in Baptism. Turn to the Student Book Appendix, Luther’s Small Catechism, the section on Holy Baptism. Have a volunteer read the first section, which tells what Baptism is.

Then look at the second section, where you will find three benefits of Baptism. Have students write those on the three lines on their Student Book page. Then continue by looking at the third section on the power of Baptism, which emphasizes that the Sacrament’s power does not come from the water. Also point out that a Bible verse from this section of the Catechism is given as today’s Bible verse to remember.

A Blast of Power



A Burst of Light



Jesus shines on us and leads us to walk in His light, following what is good and right and true, avoiding the darkness of sin, and praising and giving thanks to God. We are able to do this only because we are empowered by the Holy Spirit.

What is the source of all this power we are talking about? What is the source of power that brings forgiveness, life, and salvation? We read about this power source in the Gospel, where we hear about Jesus’ death on the cross and His resurrection for us. What does Romans 1:16 tell about the power of the Gospel? **“It is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes.”**

Read about the powerful love of God that Jesus spoke of to Nicodemus—and to you and me—in John 3:14–17. Then indicate that power of the Gospel by adding a black cross to the red “blast of power” on the left.

Sometimes cartoons show a character with a shining light bulb above his head to indicate that the “light came on” and he finally understands. Like Nicodemus, sometimes our earthly knowledge is not wise enough to comprehend heavenly things. In His infinite mercy, however, God shines light on our dark, sin-filled world and forgives us for these times of doubt and ignorance. He helps us place our trust in Jesus, even when we don’t fully understand.

However, John 3:19–21 goes beyond our own understanding as it talks about Jesus as the light of the world. This light shows us the way to heaven—through Him who is the light. (See 1 Peter 2:9.) Jesus calls on us to reflect His light, showing His love toward others as lights in this world, serving others and sharing the Gospel message of this light of the world. What is our life like as we live and walk in the light of the Lord? See Ephesians 5:8–21.

Remember

“He saved us . . . by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that being justified by His grace we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life. The saying is trustworthy.” (Titus 3:5–8)



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A Blast of Power

Use the “Review” section to lead into the second page of this lesson, in which we **speak about the power of Baptism, and point out that the source of all this power is in the redemptive work of Jesus as He died on the cross and arose for us at Easter. This part of the conversation (John 3:14–17) is the most important part of Jesus’ message to Nicodemus—and to the whole world!**

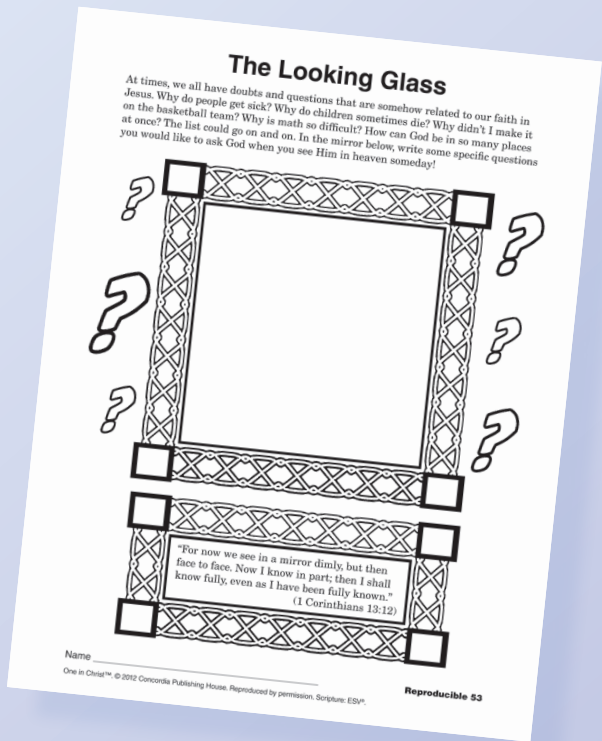
Was this Gospel message efficacious? Did these words have power to transform Nicodemus? We see him

mentioned two other places in Scripture when he boldly stood up, even before the Pharisees, the Sanhedrin (governing council of the church), and before the Roman governor, Pilate. In John 7:43–52, Nicodemus spoke up for Jesus before the chief priests and Pharisees; it also says that Nicodemus was “one of them,” meaning one of the followers of Jesus. In 19:38–42, Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea bravely aligned themselves as followers of Jesus, asking permission to bury Him; and note that they buried Him with seventy-five pounds of myrrh and aloes, which is the amount used for the burial of a king.

A Burst of Light

In Jesus’ conversation with Nicodemus, we see yet another “word picture” of Jesus, this time as the “light of the world.” As you work through this section of the Student Book, emphasize that if we try to “follow our own path,” doing what we want and following our own will, we will wander in darkness, blindly stumbling through life. There is only one true light, and that is Jesus; we are either in the light or in darkness. The Holy Spirit brings us to the light, giving us faith in Jesus; and then the Holy Spirit enables (makes us able) to walk in the light, leading us to do good deeds that manifest, or attest to, the presence of God in our lives. (See John 3:21.)

Use the concordance in the Student Book Appendix to find other key Scriptures verses that speak of light. Then sing “I Want to Walk as a Child of the Light” (LSB 411; recorded as *Hymn of the Season for grade 7, Epiphany*).





Explain to students that there are many questions for which God has not given us the answers. We may find out the answers to some, in time; others will remain a mystery until the Lord reveals them, perhaps in heaven. Distribute Reproducible 53. Ask students to write down some of their questions anonymously. Collect them in a basket on the classroom altar. Discuss that it is all right to be confused and to not have all the answers, because Jesus *does* have the answers, and He is our Good Shepherd. We can trust Him to take good care of us. *Note:* You may find that some of their questions do have answers in Scripture; enlist your pastor's help on these, perhaps having him use Skype to discuss what the Bible says about them with your class.



Reaching Every Child

Problems with students stem from many causes, but one that is often overlooked by teachers is the possibility of a medical problem. Keep a certain degree of suspicion in your mind when you are trying to figure out what is causing a student to have so many problems. For example, even students not known to be diabetic may have behavior changes when blood sugar drops too low. You may see a pattern of problems developing in the hour before lunch or on days when students have had very sugary snacks (which cause a sudden rise and then crash in blood sugar). In such cases, a protein snack may do more than discipline to solve the problem.

If you have a student who is having unusual difficulty following directions, working with others, or forming and keeping friendships, consider the possibility that there might be a medical problem involved. For example, children may experience very brief epileptic seizures ("staring spells") that go unnoticed for years because they only last a few seconds and appear to be nothing more than a brief daydream. Yet, when the child comes out of it, he will have no memory of anything that was said during that period—which may include homework instructions or other critical material. Consider this possibility if a child is consistently missing key information given orally in class, especially if he says he cannot remember you saying it.

Similarly, if a child continually disturbs her neighbors with vocal noises such as throat clearings or with distracting movements, this may be more than simple misbehavior. At some point in their childhood, up to 20 percent of children experience tics, which are repetitive vocal or physical movements over which they have little control. While they may be able to suppress a tic for a while, it will come out again, particularly under stress. This often leads to annoyance and teasing by classmates. While most children grow out of these tics eventually, the teasing can do lasting damage. A doctor can give helpful advice to the family and possibly suggest ways to minimize the impact of the tic in the classroom.



Curriculum Connection

Nicodemus's conversation with Jesus didn't go at all as he planned. He seems to have spent most of the dialogue bewildered, asking question after question in an effort to understand what Jesus was saying. This, of course, was exactly the right thing to do. Help your students learn the value of questioning for clarification using section 6.4.1.3, Summarizing and Formulating Questions upon Receiving Information. This is located in the sixth-grade Language Arts volume of the Concordia Curriculum Guide series.



Just for Fun

Nicodemus must have felt like he was wandering in a maze, trying to understand the things of God with no more to guide him than human thinking. The only reason we can understand is because we have the Holy Spirit to guide us. Bring this point home to students in a fun way by constructing a maze for them to find their way through. You might use taped-together cardboard boxes, blankets hung from clotheslines, or moveable bookcases to create the maze. (Be sure everything is stable and safe.) Be sure to provide plenty of dead ends and endless loops. Allow students to try it on their own, and then allow them to go through again, but this time with a knowledgeable guide. Which trip was faster and easier?

Stormy Seas

MATTHEW 8:23–27; 14:22–33

Background

In the previous lesson, Jesus asked the disciples what other people were saying about Him. Some people (including the guilty King Herod) thought Jesus was the murdered John the Baptist returned from the dead. Others thought that Jesus was Elijah or another Old Testament prophet. None of these theories was correct. Jesus then asked His disciples, “But who do you say that I am?” God the Father revealed the truth to Simon Peter and he answered, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God” (Matthew 16:16). Jesus was not simply a good rabbi, a prophet, or a kind man! Jesus was, and is, the Messiah of Israel, God in human flesh. He is true God and true man, the God who created all things walking the earth as a man.

Today’s Bible narrative illustrates more than Jesus’ compassion for protecting the lives of the disciples. As you look at their response in the two situations, you can see that they are growing in faith. That is the great miracle—that God condescends to save us through the redeeming power of Jesus and to bring us to faith and strengthen us through the Holy Spirit.

In this lesson, we will also review several Bible narratives, looking at the big picture of how Jesus uses His divine power to help us. With the Son of God, in whom we “find grace to help in time of need” (Hebrews 4:16), we can proclaim what the world needs to hear: the Good News of salvation in Jesus Christ.

Devotions

Kelly’s school was holding fund-raisers to help a boy in third grade. Brad had cancer and everyone in the school was trying to raise money to help his family. Kelly organized a bake sale for her brother’s baseball game. She found people who volunteered to bring cookies to sell. Kelly and her mother baked many cookies for the sale, such as peanut butter, sugar, and Kelly’s favorite, chocolate chip. On the day of the sale, Kelly and her two friends Liz and Ann went to the park early to set up a table, signs, and a cash box. Then things started to go wrong. A few people brought their baked goods, but a lot of volunteers never arrived with the items they promised. The girls had hardly anything to

sell. A few people at the game came over to the table, but most wandered away without buying anything. How would they raise any money for Brad like this? Kelly prayed silently, “Jesus, help our sale do better so we can help Brad!” As the three girls looked at their nearly empty cash box and watched the game, Kelly heard her name. “Kelly, I’m so sorry. I almost forgot the sale! I’ve brought the cookies you asked me to bake,” said Mrs. Anderson. Three more of Kelly’s volunteers came by to drop off cupcakes and brownies. Mrs. Kim brought a big container of ice cold lemonade and plastic cups. “I thought people might buy more cookies if they had something cold to drink!” she said. The people watching the

game saw all the activity by the sale table and started coming over. They bought handfuls of cookies and big cups of lemonade. Some people even donated extra money when they read the sign about Brad and his family. “We did better than I hoped,” thought Kelly. “Jesus, thank You for helping us!” This story is an example of how God can bless us in small ways or big ways. It also reminds us that God can use us to be a blessing to other people. The volunteers who came late were God’s answer to a prayer, and Kelly, Liz, and Ann were a blessing to Brad’s family. Let’s recognize God’s action in our lives and pray that He may use us to bless someone else.

Sing “Beautiful Savior” (LSB 537; recorded on *Hymns of the Month*, grade 4, September).

Central Truth

Jesus has power over all things because He is true God and Creator and Preserver of all things.

Objectives

- Repent when we have doubts about God’s power, love, or care for us.
- Trust that God always does what is best for us in the time and way He knows is best.
- Praise God that He blesses us in big ways and also in small ways, as we glorify His name.

Materials

- Web Resources 65a, 65b, 65c
- Reproducible 65a and 65b
- Hymnals and music CDs

Bible Prep

Post in advance so students can bookmark the references before class time.

- Matthew 8:23–27; 14:22–33
- Psalm 107:23–29

INTO the Word

Two Storms

Read aloud the two Bible accounts from Matthew. Then, use the chart to analyze the two events, comparing similarities and differences of the two events. Emphasize the difference in the response of the disciples. It is evident that they are growing in faith. After the first event, they wonder who this man is, and after the second event, they proclaim Jesus as true God. That is the most significant part of these stories. This also reminds us of God’s actions in our lives. **Jesus blesses us and cares for us because He has compassion on us and loves us. And above all, Jesus works in our lives to bring us to faith, to grow and strengthen that faith, and to keep us in faith. He works in many ways through the Holy Spirit, working through the Means of Grace. Jesus said, “I came that they may have life and have it abundantly” (John 10:10). Praise God for His abundant blessings!**

Continue now with Web Resource 65a, “I’m in the Same Boat with Jesus,” which is a song based on these events in Matthew. (You might want to discuss the idiom *being in the same boat*, which means that you share the same problem.) The first time, turn off the audio and have students read the words with you. Then listen to the audio recording. Then play it again with students singing along. Follow this by singing “Our Hero,” which is on Web Resource 65b. This would be a good time to read aloud together the Bible verses mentioned in the Covenant Connection (Psalm 107:23–29).

LESSON 65

Stormy Seas



Matthew 8:23–27 and Matthew 14:22–33

Two Storms		
	Matthew 8	Matthew 14
Where is Jesus?	v. 23	vv. 22–23
Surprisingly, Jesus . . .	v. 24	v. 25
Amazingly, Jesus . . .	v. 26	v. 32
The disciples’ response:	v. 27	v. 33

Review

Covenant Connection

Psalm 107:23–29 foreshadows the events in this lesson’s Bible story. In Matthew 8 and 14, Jesus fulfills the prophecies of the psalm. Reading these verses in Psalm 107 is like reading the New Testament accounts, especially as the people’s courage melts away and they cry out for help. The strongest connection though is in Psalm 107:29, which says, “He made the storm be still, and the waves of the sea were hushed.” God’s Holy Word again shows us God’s holy plan through Christ Jesus, our Savior!



The Miracles of Jesus

1 The miracles of Jesus Can show His power and might. His power, though, is always To bring His love to light.	2 And Jesus gives you what you need To live from day to day. For water, clothing, and your home Are blessings sent your way.
3 Each miracle that Jesus did Can't be categorized. From a through U, each one can show His love and power and glory.	4 (B) The waves were crashing 'round the boat Upon a stormy sea. Pronouncing words from Jesus Made them calm as they could be.
5 (A) Jesus fed a hungry group— Five thousand, maybe more. He gave them bread and fish to eat. He loved them, rich or poor.	6 And Jesus watches over you. He's always very near. He listens to each prayer you bring. He knows what you may fear.

Name _____

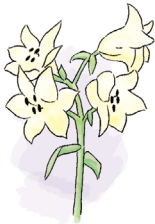
One in Christ™ © 2012 Concordia Publishing House. Reproduced by permission. Reproducible 65a

7 (C) Friends brought a crippled man for help. He had no cane or crutch. He knew he'd have his health again Through Jesus' word or touch.	10 The life you have is in God's hand. He always knows what's best. But wait—there's one more miracle That's better than the rest!
8 The healing hand of Jesus Christ Is with you still today. He'll help you with your problems. He'll never turn away.	11 The miracle of God's great plan Is given to you and me— Forgiveness, faith, eternal life. It's absolutely true!
9 (D) Two sisters once were very sad. Their brother dear was dead. Our Savior gave him life again. "Lazarus, arise," He said.	12 —written by C. S. Bergt —illustrated by _____

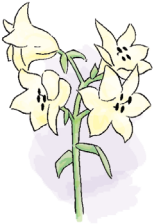
Types of Miracles

Jesus’ miracles proved that He truly is the Son of God. However, His main purpose in doing them was not for proof but out of compassion. Jesus also shows His compassion to us today in many ways. Look at this review of some of Jesus’ miracles, which we are studying. It is interesting to consider His wonders by categorizing them into four main types. Then, respond on the blank lines, writing how Jesus works to supply those same needs in your life today.

1. **Daily Needs.** (Recall Jesus feeding 5,000 people. Respond.) _____
2. **Protection.** (Recall Jesus stilling the storm. Respond.) _____
3. **Health.** (Recall Jesus healing the man who was paralyzed. Respond.) _____
4. **Life.** (Look ahead to the raising of Lazarus. Respond.) _____



And the greatest miracle of life is the eternal life we have through Jesus’ victory. By His death on the cross and resurrection at Easter, He has conquered sin, death, and the devil. And miracle of miracles, He gives His victory to us—giving us forgiveness, life, and salvation!



Remember

“These are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in His name.” (John 20:31)



INTO our lives

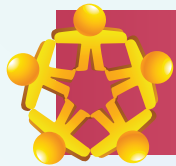
Types of Miracles

This section is just one of the ways to analyze Jesus’ miracles. It is a very concrete approach that should be helpful for young students. First, allow time for students to work on this individually or in pairs. Point out that though God can work miracles in our lives, He often blesses us in ordinary and even special ways that we might not even recognize. Have them list ways that God helps us today with our daily needs, protection, health, and life, emphasizing that there are many possibilities.

Take time for students to share their answers. After each of the four sections, ask if there are any volunteers who will lead the class in prayer. (You may want to point out that sometimes we read prayers, sometimes we write prayers, but throughout our lives, we will find that most of the time our prayers come straight from the heart and out of our mouth!) Sing together the song on Web Resource 65c.

Reproducible Activity

Reproducibles 65a and 65b review the portion of the lesson on the types of Jesus’ miracles. They consist of poem verses about the Bible stories reviewed and also about God’s action in our lives today. Students are to place each verse on a separate sheet of paper and illustrate the verse in order to make a book titled “Miracles of Jesus.” Give students several choices on how to approach this project. It can be done individually or by pairs or in groups. The verses can be cut apart and taped to each page or they can be rewritten. The illustrations can be drawings depicting the verse (which might be from Bible times or from modern times). Another choice could be that students design a symbol to represent what is happening in each verse. Or they could create a collage of pictures cut from magazines, Sunday School leaflets, or other sources. Another possibility, which would require group work, is to take photos of a staging of each verse—these could be photos of dioramas students make or this could be photos of tableaux, which would be still shots of students acting out a scene. Another possibility, again probably requiring group work, would be to create an online book, with the verses keyed in and possibly a video instead of an illustration for each page. Discuss whom these books may be shared with.



Working in Groups

Ask your students to design bookmarks or door hangers as gifts to members of your congregation or for residents in a local nursing home. Decorate the gifts with Bible verses that speak of God's promises to help His people. Illustrations might include the cross which is certainly a symbol of God's love, or a rainbow, a design often used as a reminder that God keeps His promises. Use heavy cardstock for the bookmarks or door hangers and laminate the finished designs. Arrange for students to hand out the finished designs to church members on a Sunday morning or plan a trip to the nursing home to deliver their gifts (contact the nursing home to see if students might include other small items, such as hand lotion, soap or socks, with their gifts).



DIGGING DEEPER

Say, When our plans are going well or if there are no serious problems in our lives, we don't worry so much. At such times, we feel very sure that God cares for us. But when trouble comes, big problems or small problems, we start to worry and feel frightened. We often experience fear and doubt, just as Kelly did, in the devotion, when her bake sale was not going well. We are not sure what will happen next. That is when we may start to doubt that God really cares for us. "Where is God?" we ask. "Why doesn't He do something? He promised to help!" Can you describe some times in your life when you felt worried and doubted God's care? Let the students discuss difficult times when they have had doubts. If your students do not feel comfortable discussing personal stories of fear and worry, ask them to suggest possible reasons for doubting God's love and care—sickness, loneliness, worry about grades, family problems, or friendship worries. **God's help does not always come to us in the way we think it might. He may not help us at the time we think is right, but His help will come at the right time, in His time. Sometimes, we may think that God does not answer our prayers at all. Read Romans 8:28. What does God promise? (He promises that all things work together for good for those who love Him.) God answers our prayers in His time and for His glory.**

We don't ever have to worry about God's love for us. He loves us and He will help us but His timing is not the same as ours. We might think He is not doing anything, but He acts when the time is right. When the time was right, God did the most wonderful thing for us that He could ever do. God sent His Son to die on the cross so our sins can be forgiven. Jesus rose from the dead and we know that sin and death can never separate us from God. If God took care of us and defeated the greatest trouble of all—sin and death—He can help us with all of the other problems in our lives too. Romans 8:31-32 says, "If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare His own Son but gave Him up for us all, how will He not also with Him graciously give us all things?" When you are tempted to doubt God's love and help, remember what He has already done for you. Remember that Jesus died on the cross and rose from the dead. Your sins are forgiven and you have the gift of eternal life! God can help you in ways you cannot imagine.



HANDS TO SERVE

Kelly, the girl in this lesson's devotion, organized a bake sale to help a family in need. Talk to your pastor and to other teachers to find out if there are families in the congregation, school, or local community that may need financial assistance during difficult times. Help your class organize bake sales, garage sales, car washes, or other events to raise money for those in need. Ask parents, church members, or teens in your church's youth group to help. Other service projects might include collecting canned food for a local food pantry or clothes and toys for a homeless shelter. Your students can share God's love and care as they work together to serve others in the name of Christ.



TEACHER TIPS

God blesses us in big and small ways. We have the great blessings of forgiveness and eternal life in the name of Jesus, our Savior. We have the blessings of church, school, home, family, and friends. Decorate a classroom bulletin board with raindrop shapes on which students write about blessings God showers or pours on them. Blessings might include the names of family members and friends, things in God's creation, or life events and times of trouble in which students or family members experienced God's help.

Shipwrecked

ACTS 27 (SHIPWRECKED); 28:1–11 (MAROONED)

Background

It is probable that the evangelist Luke traveled with Paul on the way to Rome, because Luke, the writer of Acts, often refers to “we” in the narrative and gives an eyewitness description of the events. Initially, they traveled on a “coaster,” a ship that hugged the coastline, stopping frequently at ports along the way. Probably hoping to speed up the trip to Rome, the centurion moved his soldiers and prisoners to a ship from Alexandria, probably carrying grain from Egypt to Rome, which sailed on a more direct route out to

sea (and also out to danger, because the stormy season was approaching). The first time they ignored Paul’s warnings, they sailed into trouble. The second time Paul advised them, they listened (they had no alternative because they were about to sink). Through all of these dangers, God kept Paul informed and safe. God had a significant purpose for getting Paul safely to Malta and then safely to Rome: Paul was to spread the news of salvation through Christ Jesus to more and more people.

Devotions

Carmen’s first mistake that day was getting into the kayak when she knew it was too windy. Her second mistake was not telling her family where she was going. Another mistake was not listening to her dad earlier when he had told her to practice her kayaking skills with her brothers. It would be a morning of mistakes. When the strong winds and waves pushed her downstream, away from camp, and she was not able to control the kayak, she knew she was in trouble and wouldn’t be able to right herself if she tipped over.

Now here she was, heading farther away from their cabin, being pushed along against her will. *I should have told someone I was going out on the water*, Carmen thought with regret. With all her strength, she dug the paddle into the muddy river bottom. She slowed for a second, but then she spun around backward. Suddenly,

the kayak flipped—and she was underwater.

God, please help me! Carmen prayed. *I’m in trouble!* Her mind raced as she tried to remember what she had heard her dad tell her brothers. There was some sort of trick to flipping upright, but she couldn’t think of what it was. A surge of panic welled up in her chest, and again she prayed frantically for help, knowing she wouldn’t be able to hold her breath much longer. *Lord, please give me the strength to get out of this mess!* she prayed.

In what felt like an eternity—but was really just a matter of seconds—she pulled her body out of the kayak while still underwater. She found her footing in the murky water and pushed herself to the surface, hitting her shoulder on the kayak on the way up. Struggling against the strong wind and current, she reached for the boat before

it could float away.

Thank you, Lord! I am so sorry for trying to do this by myself. Please forgive me for not listening to my dad! Now Carmen prayed with a sense of relief. With an ache in her shoulder, she pulled the kayak closer and gave it a flip. Here, the water was shallow enough for her to walk in the water and push the kayak back to shore.

Her relief was cut short when she reached the shoreline. Soaking wet, she pulled her ruined cell phone out of her pocket. Though mad at herself over ruining her phone, she said another silent prayer of thanks that God had kept her safe. She knew she would make a lot of mistakes in life, yet she was grateful that God would always be near.

Sing “O God, Our Help in Ages Past” (LSB 733; recorded as *Hymn of the Month* for grade 3, November). Chant or speak Psalm 95:1–7 to praise the Lord.

Central Truth

God is strong to save us, even in the worst situations.

Objectives

- Realize that there are times when fear and trouble overwhelm us.
- Believe God’s promise to be with us and keep us in His mercy, no matter what.
- Entrust ourselves to Him wholeheartedly whenever we are in need.

Materials

- Hymnals and music CDs
- Reproducible 99
- Web Resource 99a
- Web Resource 99b

Bible Prep

Post in advance so students can bookmark the reference before class time.

- Acts 27:1–28:11

INTO the Lesson

Say, Today we are going to talk about disasters. Some disasters are smaller, such as forgetting to bring your homework to school the day of your big report. Some disasters are enormous, such as the earthquakes, tsunamis, tornadoes, and hurricanes we hear about in the news. In today's world, there are many ways to call for help when a disaster strikes. Use Reproducible 99 to explore some of these, and then emphasize that the most important call for help is at the bottom of the page. God will always hear our cries for help. That doesn't mean we always will be rescued in the way and at the time we want. We must trust that God knows what is best. And we also can be certain that He has saved us from the greatest disasters of all—sin, death, and the devil—by sending Jesus to be our Savior.

After looking through the reproducible activity, point out that the Bible story today is about Paul and stormy seas and a shipwreck. Point out that the song on Web Resource 99a was originally written for the Bible narrative about Jesus in a ship with His disciples on the Sea of Galilee. But the song is just as appropriate for today's lesson, because God was also with Paul in the ship on the Mediterranean Sea. And it also applies to us, because Jesus is with us in any kind of trouble or danger. Sing the song together.

INTO the Word

Sailing for Rome

The best way to look at this Bible story is to read it directly from Scripture. The author, Luke, gives a detailed, step-by-step look at all the events, almost as if he were writing a ship's log. Go around the classroom and have each student read one verse (to capture the single moment). Invite students to stop at any time to ask a question or add a comment about what is happening. Read Acts 27:9–44. Here are additional questions you might ask:

1. When the gentle south wind began to blow, how do you think the crew felt? (In v. 13, it says they “supposed that they had obtained their purpose”; in other words, they thought their strategy had been successful.)

- 2. This is an example of “the calm before the storm.” Think about a time in your own life in which you experienced calm before trouble started. Was prayer a part of that experience?
- 3. What is symbolic about the crew throwing all the cargo overboard during the storm? (This was a cargo ship; sometimes we need to give up everything and rely only on God.)
- 4. Why did Paul wait until the crew was starving and had given up all hope before he offered them words of encouragement? (Just the night before, he had a dream in which an angel

LESSON 99

Shipwrecked

Sailing for Rome

Paul was now the prisoner of a Roman centurion named Julius, of the Augustan Cohort. As they set sail for Rome, winter was approaching, which is a dangerous time for storms on the Mediterranean Sea. What follows is best read step-by-step from Scripture in Acts 27:9–44.



Message in a Bottle

Communication was often difficult in Bible times. There were no phones, radios, telegraph, or e-mail to send a message from a ship. Sometimes, people would put a message to their family into a bottle, cork it, and toss it into the sea, hoping that somehow—perhaps after months or even years—it would be found and taken to their family. The message often shared faith, encouragement, and hope. If you were tossing a message in a bottle into the sea, what message of faith and hope about Jesus would you share with friends and family? Write it here.



Review

Covenant Connection

In all of Paul's troubles, trials, and shipwrecks (he was in four), God was with him, setting his focus always on the Gospel. As was promised of old, and to the Early Christian Church, and to us today, God is near, with His shelter and salvation. Psalm 91:1–2 says, "He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High will abide in the shadow of the Almighty. I will say to the Lord, 'My refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust.'"



Survival!

Acts 28:1–10

Narrator: As the ship began to break apart and sink, Paul and the rest of the crew swam or floated to an unknown island, where they were greeted by friendly islanders.

Islander 1: Welcome to Malta, our little island. You must be wet and cold.

Islander 2: Come and sit. We will build you a fire.

Paul: Let me help gather some firewood. Whoa, a snake has attacked my arm!

Islander 1: It's a poisonous viper!

Islander 2: (To other islanders) He must be a criminal because even though he escaped from the sea, justice has not allowed him to live!

Luke: Quick, shake the viper off, into the fire!

Narrator: Paul suffered no ill effects, and after waiting a long time, he did not swell up and die like the people thought he would. Then they changed their minds and said he was a god.

Paul: No! No! It is God who has saved me! He has saved me in many ways. Let me tell you about my God and Savior.

Publius: As chief official of the island, I welcome you to my home. We will need to be quiet, though, because my father is sick in bed with a bad fever.

Paul: I will visit him if you would like, and pray for God to bless him.

Narrator: So Paul went in to see him. After praying, Paul placed his hands on him, and the man was healed in the name of the Lord.

Father of Publius: (Seated) Wow, I feel so much better! Thanks be to God! (Stands and shakes Paul's hand and gives Luke a high five)

Narrator: After this had happened, the rest of the sick came to see Paul, and many people heard the Gospel message of salvation in Jesus. After three months, the stormy winter was over, and it was time to continue on their journey.

Paul: Thank you for all your kindness.

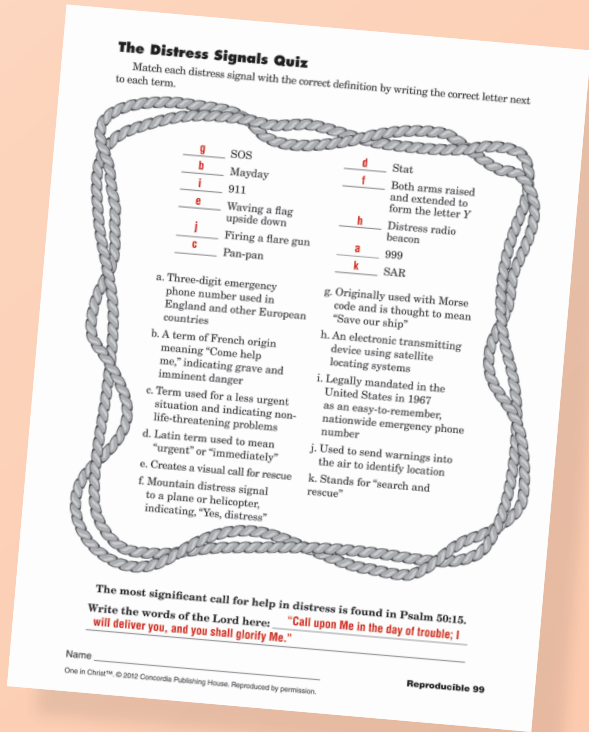
Islander 1: (Giving Paul a pat on the back) No, let us thank you for sharing the message of the one true God with us!

Islander 2: (Giving Paul a high five) If you must leave, here—have some supplies for your journey to Rome. Wherever you travel, know that distance does not separate us, for we are one in Christ.

Narrator: They honored Paul and the crew, and when they were ready to sail, the islanders gave them what they needed. God blessed Paul and his crew in spite of the shipwreck so that others could see the work of God and hear His saving Word.

Remember

“So take heart . . . for I have faith in God that it will be exactly as I have been told.” (Acts 27:25)





Lesson Support



Ideas for the Gifted

Let several students work together to simulate what would have occurred if Paul could have had a GPS mapping system. Students may trace the journey on a map and record these directions to indicate the journey's path.

GPS directions:

1. Begin voyage by leaving Caesarea and sailing north along the coast of Asia.
2. Arrive at Sidon on the right.
3. Pass the lee of Cyprus on the left.
4. Sail across the open sea off the coast of Cilicia and Pamphylia on the right.
5. Arrive at Myra in Lycia on the right.
6. Recalculating; cannot arrive at Cnidus.
7. Sail to the lee of Crete opposite Salmone.
8. Continue along the coast to Fair Havens, near the town of Lasea on the right.
9. Continue to sail along the shore of Crete.
10. Recalculating; pass the island Cauda.
11. Recalculating; unable to arrive at destination; swim to the island of Malta.



Curriculum Connection

While Paul was on Malta, he was bitten by a poisonous snake, and the islanders expected him to die (Acts 28:3–6). Make a health connection to Paul's story by learning first aid. Use section 6.3.6, Health and Safety Practices, found in the sixth-grade Health volume of the Concordia Curriculum Guide series. If applicable to your area, see to it that students also learn what to do in case of snakebite.



Check it Out

Would sailors in ancient times have had glass bottles to throw into the sea with their message? Yes; the Romans were good at glassmaking. Archaeologists today find many pieces of glass in ancient Roman digs. Often these are just broken bits that had been tossed onto a refuse pile, but these shards of discarded glass have become valuable today. Roman glass often has a greenish-blue color, much like the color of a gem or of the sea. It has become popular for higher-end jewelry makers to use these two-thousand-year-old pieces of glass to make mosaics for decorating silver jewelry. Imagine being able to wear a piece of jewelry that contains Roman glass from biblical times!



Critical thinking

Prepare a large T-chart on the board with the column headings "A Dangerous Voyage" and "A Venomous Snakebite." With the whole group, compare and contrast the two incidents and the events involved. Challenge the students to provide ideas that show what we know about God and life itself. Some possible answers may include the following:

A Dangerous Voyage

God spared the crew.
The trip was dangerous to many.
Crew members doubted.
God allowed the storms to come.
Paul gave glory to God.

A Venomous Snakebite

God spared Paul.
The snake was dangerous to one person.
Islanders were certain Paul would die.
God allowed Paul to be bitten.
Paul gave glory to God.



Technology

Divide the class into teams, and challenge the students to create a list of nautical terms used in Acts 27. Have them compete to see which team can create the longest list. Set a time limit, such as two minutes. The list below can be used to check the lists and declare a winning team. Have teams visit a variety of Web sites that will create free word puzzles with the terms they enter. Allow students to print their word puzzles and distribute them to the other teams to try and solve.

Terms: *aground, anchor, bay, beach, bow, cargo, coast, foresail, gear, harbor, island, jettison, lee, northeaster, open sea, overboard, pilot, planks, port, reef, ropes, rudders, sailed, sailors, sandbar, ship, shore, soundings, stern, surf, tackle, tempest, vessel, voyage.* (Note: These terms are found in the ESV; your lists may vary if you use another version of the Bible.)