

How Did Jesus Serve as Both Priest and Sacrifice? *The Old and New Covenants

LEVITICUS 9; HEBREWS 7:22–8:7

Background

Old Testament sacrifices were complicated, messy, bloody, and public. Blood from the animals covered the horns of the altar, the altar, the priest, and even the people watching the sacrifice. There was little doubt in the minds of the people of Israel that sin was a serious problem that required serious and gruesome atonement.

The purpose of the sacrifice was to restore the relationship between God and Israel. In order to enjoy a close relationship with God, the sins had to be paid for by the blood of the unblemished animals.

The high priest (Aaron, in today's reading) had to offer sin and burnt offerings to atone for his own sins before offering sacrifices on behalf of the people. Once that was accom-

plished, he could stand before God and make atonement for the sins of the people. Afterward, a right relationship with God would again be restored.

Through the sacrificial system, God was preparing Israel for the sacrifice of the Messiah, which would put an end, once and for all, to the old covenant system. Jesus would be the perfect sacrifice that would finally pay for all sins; no further sacrifices would be necessary for salvation. Jesus was also the perfect High Priest. He would have no need to offer a sacrifice for His own sins. He would never have to leave the Most Holy Place, driven away by His own sinfulness. He would remain there, at the right hand of God, permanently interceding on behalf of the people.

Devotions

Andrew's head was down, his palms were sweaty, and he could barely sit in the chair. He was sitting outside the principal's office, and he wasn't looking forward to the meeting. Andrew was guilty, and there wasn't going to be any way to get out of some major trouble. He sighed as he thought about what his parents would say. "Your brother never gave us trouble like this! Why can't you be more like him?" Andrew often wondered that himself. His brother was good at everything. He was a great older brother. He made time for Andrew, even let him hang out with his friends. He rescued Andrew from bullies, and he drove Andrew around when his parents were too busy. But Andrew was tired of the constant comparisons. He would never be as

good as his brother at anything. His talent was getting into trouble!

Sometimes, people feel that way about their perfect brother, Jesus. They think that next to Him, they will never be good enough. They avoid church and Sunday School because it just makes them feel guilty. They don't read their Bibles because personal devotions are for good people, not them. They don't try to help others because they are too much of a mess to think about anyone else.

Our brother Jesus can do something for us in heaven that Andrew's brother couldn't do for him in the principal's office. Jesus steps in front of us when we sin so the Father sees His righteousness instead of our guilt. The Father treats us like we were Jesus, giving us the right to

Central Truth

In Jesus' role as our Priest, He is the mediator between God and mankind, reconciling us to the heavenly Father.

Objectives

- Know that sin separated us from God, but Jesus intervenes; now God looks instead at the perfect obedience and righteousness of Jesus.
- Rejoice that Jesus not only gives us His righteousness, but He also willingly sacrificed Himself, taking the punishment for our sins.
- Willingly sacrifice our time, talent, and treasure to serve others and to give glory to God in gratitude for Jesus' much greater sacrifice for us.

Materials

- The Basics
- Reproducible 42
- Web Resource 42a

Bible Prep

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

- Leviticus 9
- Hebrews 7:22–8:7

come to Him in prayer, the right to be called a child of God, and an eternal home in heaven with Him! We don't need to feel guilty or hide from church. The Bible is there for us to read so that we can find forgiveness and encouragement. We don't have to stand by when someone is in need, because God Himself will help us serve others. We have the best big brother ever!

PRAY: Thank You, Jesus, for taking my place and getting rid of my guilt. Help me share You with others by the way I treat them and live my life.

In Your name, I pray. Amen.

Sing: "Son of God, Eternal Savior" (LSB 842).

Animal Sacrifice

Read through with the class the story of the rescue of a young boy by a dog named Zion. Ask, **How did the dog willingly sacrifice itself to save the boy?** (Zion the dog is an animal that offered his life to save and rescue a boy named Ryan.) Transition the conversation to focus on animal sacrifices of another kind described in detail in the Old Testament Book of Leviticus.

Ask, **What kind of information would you expect to find in a book called Leviticus?** (It sounds like the word *Levite*. The Levites were the tribe of priests, so it is probably about priests and worship.) Read together Leviticus 9. After verse 4, ask, **What kind of animals were God’s Old Testament people commanded to use for the burnt and sin offerings?** (Bull calf and ram, without blemish; male goat and calf of a lamb, a year old, without blemish) **Why do you think the animals had to be without blemish?** (They had to offer their best animals to atone for their sins. The animals were a picture of what the final sacrifice would be—Jesus would be unblemished by sin.)

Finish reading the passage. Allow students to comment on the “grossness” of the sacrifices. Emphasize that the animals had to give their lives to pay for the sins of the priest and the people. The blood is the symbol of their lives. Blood covers the altar, the priest, and the people.

If you choose to do so, review the types of sacrifices described in Leviticus 9. (The priests offered sin and burnt offering for their own sins first to make them clean before offering sin, burnt, peace, and grain offerings for the people.)

Activate prior knowledge. Ask students what they already know about the sacrificial system of the Old Testament. Jot ideas on the board or a large piece of newsprint.

Old and New Covenant Comparisons

Comment that Aaron, the first high priest, and the one offering sacrifices in today’s reading, was a fore-runner of Jesus, the Great High Priest. Read Hebrews 7:22–8:7 together. Ask students to look for ways Jesus is a different kind of High Priest. The hymn stanza in this section reminds us that **Jesus is Himself the victim and Himself the priest, who offered His body and shed His blood for all people, the greatest and the least.** Stress that Jesus’ very body and blood are received together with the bread and wine in the very meal through which we celebrate and remember His great sacrifice for us and for all people.

Distribute copies of **Reproducible 42**. Allow time

How Did Jesus Serve as Both Priest and Sacrifice?

*The Old and New Covenants

Leviticus 9; Hebrews 7:22–8:7

Animal Sacrifice

“Help! Help!” yelled nine-year-old Ryan Rambo as he swept down the icy waters of the Roaring Fork River in Colorado. Just minutes before, Ryan had been kayaking with his mom and a family friend. Now, he feared for his life.

Thirteen-year-old Chelsea Bennett stood on the shore with Zion, her two-year-old yellow Labrador Retriever. As Ryan bobbed by, Zion jumped into the river. The untrained dog swam out and returned with Ryan clinging to his collar.

Onshore, Chelsea covered the shivering Ryan with warm sand. In a short time, Ryan’s mom and family friend arrived to help. Later,

Zion won the American Humane Association’s Golden Paw Award for his amazing rescue of Ryan.

Zion might have drowned attempting to save Ryan. Zion’s sacrifice rescued Ryan from certain death. In this lesson, we will learn about animal sacrifices of another kind—the Old Testament kind that pointed to Jesus and the sacrifice He would make of Himself to rescue us from sin and death.



Old and New Covenant Comparisons

In the Old Testament, God’s people received the forgiveness of sins through a system of priests and sacrifices. In this system, priests would select healthy animals and offer them to God to pay for the sins of the people. This practice was known as the old covenant. In the New Testament, God’s people receive forgiveness from Jesus, the great High Priest whose once-for-all sacrifice on the cross ended the sacrificial system. We remember Jesus’ sacrifice as we receive forgiveness and the assurance of salvation in the Lord’s Supper. Explain the meaning of the words of the following Communion hymn.

Draw near and take the body of the Lord. And drink the holy blood for you outpoured; Offered was He for greatest and for least, Himself the victim and Himself the priest.



REVIEW

Use the glossary to define these words.

- propitiation— **to pay or make amends for an offense, crime, sin**
- intercede— **to act between parties to reconcile differences**
- advocate— **one who pleads on behalf of another**
- sacrifice— **to give up something or suffer in some way for a person or cause**

for students to work through this activity comparing Old Testament priesthood with the permanent priesthood of Jesus, the Great High Priest of the new covenant. Review student responses. Stress that Jesus is the only High Priest of the new covenant: He never dies. He is able to save. He is always interceding for us. Exalted, He has no personal sins to atone for, and He needs to offer only one sacrifice.

Review

Have students look up the meanings in the glossary and write them on the lines next to the terms. Help students understand that Jesus is in heaven at this very moment interceding with the Father for them.

A Priestly Comparison

Read Hebrews 7:22–8:7. Then, complete the following to contrast the Old Testament sacrificial covenant with the new covenant that we now have in Christ Jesus with respect to the role of the priest in each.

Priests of the Old Covenant	Jesus, Priest of the New Covenant
pointed to Jesus	Hebrews 7:22 guaranteed a better covenant
(Hebrews 7:28) were many	is the sole priest of the new covenant
rotated, changed, died	Hebrews 7:24–25 guaranteed a better covenant
sacrificed repeatedly	Hebrews 7:27 sacrificed Himself, once for all
were men who were weak, sinful	Hebrews 7:26 is God’s own Son
served on earth	Hebrews 8:1 is seated at the right hand of God
(Hebrew 8:4) offered gifts	offered Himself

UNIT 4

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Himself the Victim and Himself the Priest

Jesus served and continues to serve as our great High Priest in three ways. Match the description of each with the number of the Bible verse on the right that most closely explains it.

- _____ Active Obedience (Jesus placed Himself under the Law and obeyed God in our place without sin.)
 - _____ Passive Obedience (Jesus sacrificed Himself to pay the penalty for all human sin.)
 - _____ Intercession (Jesus pleads for us at the right hand of God the Father.)
1. He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world (1 John 2:2).
 2. But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons (Galatians 4:4–5).
 3. My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous (1 John 2:1).

A Sacrifice Recognized



Two friends visited a cathedral in Italy to see its artwork. One was Christian; the other was not. Looking at a large figure of Jesus hanging on the cross, the Christian said, “Isn’t that beautiful?” The other man looked at Jesus and replied, “I don’t see anything beautiful about it.” The Christian asked, “If you knew that Jesus was up there to save your wife and children, would it be beautiful then?” Surprised, the man replied, “Yes, yes, then it would be beautiful to me.” Jesus lifted up on the cross is not a pretty sight, but He is beautiful to those He saved. Jesus’ sacrifice paid the price for the sins of the world. God freely gives the benefits of this sacrifice to everyone who believes in Jesus: forgiveness of sin, eternal life, and a life of purpose and contentment as a child of God. What difference has Jesus’ sacrifice made in your life? What difference might it make?

REMEMBER

[Christ] is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us. Romans 8:34

A Sacrifice Recognized

See Web Resource 42a. Read and reflect on this story with your class. Comment that only by the working of the Holy Spirit through God’s Word are we able to understand, appreciate, and trust in Jesus’ great sacrificial work on our behalf. Only by a Spirit-driven response to Jesus’ sacrifice for us are we able to serve God in our sacrificial service to God and others. Encourage students to share responses to the questions at the conclusion of this section.

If the discussion moves in this direction, encourage students to offer suggestions of how they might use their time, talents, and treasures to serve God and others sacrificially. Close with a prayer asking God to bless each student in his or her growing knowledge of—and faith in—Jesus. Ask God to help the students see and respond to opportunities to serve. Ask God to forgive our failures and strengthen us for future service.

Remember

As you assign and review this verse with your students, stress Jesus’ priestly actions for us, still interceding on our behalf as He sits at the right hand of His Father in heaven.

Himself the Victim and Himself the Priest

This section focuses on the three ways Jesus is our Priest through His (1) active obedience, (2) passive obedience, and (3) intercession with the Father.

Ask, **What does it mean to commit a sin?** (It means to do something wrong.) **When we actively do something against God’s Law, we call it a sin of commission.** Write “sin of commission” on the board. Ask, **What does it mean to omit something?** (Leave something out) Say, **Sometimes, we sin by failing to do something we should.** Write “sin of omission” on the board. **We have problems with both kinds of sin in our lives.** Ask students for examples of each from life or the Bible. (Commission—stealing, hitting, ly-

ing. David slept with Uriah’s wife, Eve ate the forbidden fruit, etc. Omission—holding back information, ignoring someone’s needs, not listening to parents. The people who did not help the wounded man in the parable of the Good Samaritan, etc.)

Allow time for students to look at the Bible references and to match them correctly. Review the three concepts.

Say, **Jesus had to deal with both kinds of sin when He came to save us. Notice the three items preceded by blanks. What do you think active obedience is?** (Listen to and discuss student ideas. Make sure students understand that active obedience is the opposite of sins of commission and omission. Jesus did only the things that God wanted Him to do. He also never failed to do

God’s will. He never left out any part of the Law. He completely obeyed the Law in every way.)

Discuss the meaning of passive obedience. **Passive obedience means that Jesus also obeyed God by sacrificing Himself on the cross. He allowed His enemies to put Him to death.**

Say, **Jesus is still serving as our Great High Priest right now.** Read 1 John 2:1. Share with students what it means to you to know that at this very moment, Jesus is interceding with the Father on your behalf. Stress that the Father sees Christ’s perfection instead of our sinfulness because He is always there beside the Father, reminding Him. This is happening every moment of every day, and will continue until we arrive in heaven.



Curriculum Connection

The Old Testament tabernacle and sacrifices are pictures of Jesus, who was to come. In many ways, they mirror His character and work for us, though on a lesser level. With your class, explore the mathematical concepts of similarity and congruency. You can do this using section 7.4.8, Properties of Similar and Congruent Triangles, found in the Math volume of the Concordia Curriculum Guide.



TEACHER TIPS

When discussing sins of omission and commission, use the confessions found in the Divine Services of the hymnal. We confess that we have sinned “in thought, word, and deed, by what we have done and by what we have left undone.” Help students connect these confessional words with the concepts in this lesson.

Check it Out

Does your classroom library have any Bible handbooks or encyclopedias? Consider checking out, borrowing, or buying used copies of a few of these resources. Look for interesting diagrams, colorful photographs, and concise explanations to encourage the interest of kids who like graphic novels better than straight text. Look for an Indiana Jones-style satchel at thrift stores or garage sales. Keep the resources in the satchel to encourage curiosity.



Bringing it home

Table talk—send a note home with each student that encourages the family to talk about experiencing God’s forgiveness because of Jesus. The letter may look like this: Dear Family, We are studying how Jesus takes our guilt on the cross and gives us His righteousness. During family devotions, during breakfast, or around the supper table, talk as a family about times each of you have experienced forgiveness. Adults, try to think of examples from when you were your children’s ages. Help kids remember times you have forgiven them. Share times you have forgiven others. Talk about how it feels to be forgiven. Why is it hard to forgive sometimes? Why does God forgive us? Pray together, thanking Jesus for the gift of forgiveness. Ask for His help forgiving one another. Pray the Lord’s Prayer together whenever possible.



Critical thinking

What would you bring? The Israelites offered the best of what they had as sacrifices to the Lord. They brought animals, bread, grain, drink, and such. Ask students to think about and perhaps even bring in their best blessings. Ask them to be prepared to explain why the object would be a good sacrifice. Remind them that a good sacrifice is the best of the best and important to the giver. Present the offerings to the class and share the reasons behind each selection in a modified show-and-tell type activity.

Challenge them further by asking them to think about a way they could offer God some of their time instead of their stuff. To make it concrete, have students write down and place on the altar one sacrifice of time to the Lord in the coming week. Remind students that we don’t make sacrifices to earn forgiveness but in celebration of the forgiveness Jesus earned for us.



Reaching Every Child

Invite students who are interested in Old Testament worship practices to use things such as fabric scraps, brown paper bags, and craft supplies to construct a costume, diorama, or model of Old Testament priestly garments or the tabernacle. The ark of the covenant may also pique students’ curiosity. Let them explore the facts and myths surrounding the ark. Monitor closely the resources used because there are many unreliable resources about the ark.



HANDS TO SERVE

Ask your pastor or congregation’s altar guild to help you educate your class about the sanctuary of your church. Take a tour, looking at the art, windows, candles, altar, Communionware, and architecture of the worship area. Ask the altar guild to do some training in how to care for the worship area; then let students help care for the sanctuary. They can wipe down pews, straighten hymnal racks, dust, clean windows, sweep, water plants, or whatever else is needed. Foster an atmosphere of reverence. Talk about what makes God’s house special.

What Names Do We Now Have in Christ and What Do They Mean for Us?

*Jesus Walks on Water

MATTHEW 14:22–34

Background

The Matthew 14 account of Jesus walking on water directly follows His feeding of the five thousand. In John's account, the multitude tries to take Jesus by force and make Him king.

Jesus then puts the disciples in the boat and sends them to the other side of the sea while He goes up on the mountain to a solitary place to pray. In the boat, the disciples were having a difficult time rowing against the wind. These sudden and violent storms were common occurrences on the Sea of Galilee, and certainly these fishermen were well experienced in dealing with difficult weather at sea.

We are told that during the fourth watch (between 3:00 and 6:00 a.m.),

Jesus went out to meet them, as they were about halfway to their destination (about 3.5 miles).

They thought they were seeing a ghost! But Jesus immediately put them at ease, saying, "Take courage. It is I. Do not be afraid."

Impulsive Peter responds, "Lord, if it is You, tell me to come to You on the water." "Come," Jesus invites. So Peter steps out of the boat and begins to walk toward Jesus. Then, the waves and wind cause Peter to take his eyes off of Jesus and he begins to sink in the water. He begs for help, Jesus reaches out to take his hand, they get back in the boat, and Jesus admonishes Peter for doubting, calling him, "O you of little faith."

Devotions

When Jesus invited Peter to walk on water, Peter was first able to do so just as Jesus did, but when he took his eyes off Jesus, he immediately began to sink. He was distracted by the storm, wind, and waves. He worried about his immediate circumstances and how he was going to survive—even with the God of the universe, the Creator of heaven and earth, and the Savior of mankind standing right in front of him!

But before we go pointing our fingers at Peter and laughing at him under our breath, we need to look in the mirror. Whom do you see? Do you see someone who obeys the First Commandment perfectly, trusting in God above *all* things? Do you see someone who never worries about a test or homework assignment? How about someone who is worried about

a sick family member or friend, or the latest boyfriend/girlfriend chatter?

There is no need to raise your hands in answer to these questions. We all worry; we all doubt. Young and old, we all take our eyes off Jesus and worry about the cares of life. We do this, just like Peter, even though we have been baptized into the name of Jesus, the giver of life. We do this even though Jesus is present for us in His Word and Sacraments. He is present to feed His people with His very body and blood in His Holy Supper.

Yes, Peter doubted and took His eyes off Jesus and began to perish. We also are on the verge of perishing every time we honor the temptation to doubt the Lord and trust in ourselves and our things.

Central Truth

By grace through Christ Jesus, God forgives our doubts and leads us to call on the name of Jesus.

Objectives

- Recognize that sin separates us from God and we are undeserving of His mercy.
- Acknowledge God's great power and love for us.
- Rejoice in the forgiveness, protection, and identity that are ours in Jesus' name.

Materials

- The Basics
- Reproducible 47
- Web Resource 47a

Bible Prep

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

- Matthew 14:22–34
- Matthew 5:2–11

But Jesus never doubted His heavenly Father. He trusted Him even while hanging on the cross to die. And die He did—for you—for the forgiveness of your sins—all your sins—even the sin of doubting Him and His promises. So fear not! Jesus has paid the price for your sinfulness. You will not perish. Your sins are forgiven! Through His cross, Jesus offers us the power to do brave things in His name!

PRAY: Dear Jesus, thank You for forgiving all of our sins, including our sins of doubt. Help us always to trust in You and to bravely live in obedience to Your Word. We pray in Your holy name. Amen.

Sing: "I Am Trusting Thee, Lord Jesus" (LSB 729).

The Name *Christian*

Begin the lesson by inviting students to consider and review the names given those who by grace through faith in Christ Jesus become the children of God. Stress that *Christian* means “belonging to Christ.” The name *Christian* defines who we are. Along with this name comes the privilege of having a new heart, soul, and mind, one that lives for loving God and serving our neighbor in love. No longer are we to just “look out for ourselves,” but we are to live lives of selfless sacrifice. Of course, the only One to do this without fail is our Lord Jesus Christ. When we fail, we confess our sins to God, and He, being faithful and just, forgives us our sins and cleanses us from all unrighteousness.

Other names, titles, or descriptors given for Christians in the Scriptures include saints, priests, the elect, members of the Body of Christ, Abraham’s offspring, flock, chosen people, children of light, and servants. Each of these names indicates some special dimension of the work Christ has done for and in us.

A Name to Live Up To

Read and discuss Matthew 14:22–34 with your class. Then invite students to place the events listed in this section in their proper sequence. This will serve to reinforce the Scripture lesson of Jesus walking on the water and rescuing Peter and the other disciples, while at the same time, it will reinforce the truth that Jesus is truly the Son of God. He can walk on water—the wind and the waves obey Him—He feeds five thousand with five loaves and two fish.

In your review of this account, emphasize the grace and mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ. Peter did not deserve to be rescued. Peter, you, and I are guilty of breaking the Commandments. Our just punishment for our sins is eternity in hell. But **Jesus says, in effect, to Peter and us, “Take My hand, receive My forgiveness; I give you all the righteousness and goodness that is Mine.”**

Jesus’ words “Stop doubting and believe” sound like a command, but they can only be an invitation,

What Names Do We Now Have in Christ and What Do They Mean for Us?

*Jesus Walks on Water

Matthew 14:22–34

The Name Christian

When people come to faith in Jesus, they receive a new name and a new identity, a name that describes them as something new. That name is *Christian*. It means one who belongs to Christ. Followers of Jesus were first called Christian in the city of Antioch during the time of the apostle Paul. Can you think of other names that may be synonyms for the name *Christian*?

Believer, redeemed, child of God, faithful, righteous, innocent, blessed, and others

A Name to Live Up To

Because we are sinners, even Christians sometimes fail to evidence their faith in Jesus. Read Matthew 14:22–34 to learn about what happened to Peter after he asked for the opportunity to put his faith to the test. Label the following story events in the correct order:

- 4. Jesus assures the disciples who He is and encourages them.
- 7. Peter cries out, “Lord, save me.”
- 1. Jesus dismisses the crowds and sends the disciples to the other side of the sea.
- 8. Jesus takes hold of Peter’s hand.
- 10. They get in the boat, and the wind ceases.
- 2. Jesus goes to the mountain by Himself.
- 3. During the fourth watch of the night, Jesus comes to them, walking on the sea.
- 5. Peter asks Jesus to identify Himself by commanding Peter to walk on the water.
- 6. Peter sees the wind and becomes afraid and begins to sink.
- 11. The disciples declare Jesus to be the Son of God.
- 9. Jesus rebukes Peter.

REVIEW

righteousness— **holy; free from guilt and sin**
innocence— **state of being free from guilt or wrongdoing**
blessedness— **state of having received good things**

because only with God’s power are we able to trust in Him. The devil, the world, and our sinful flesh fight against our faith in Jesus. Therefore, the life of a Christian is one of continuous repentance and forgiveness. We doubt, we take our eyes off Jesus and concentrate on what makes us happy for the moment. The devil wants nothing more than for us to place our faith and trust in anything or anyone but Jesus! Temptation leads to sin, and sin leads to other sins, and without repentance, sin leads to death and eternity in hell.

Review the confession section of the Small Catechism, leading the students

to a better understanding of the importance of Confession and Absolution. Being numbered with sinners is what we naturally want! There is no hiding who and what we are by nature. The Gospel is that Jesus came to save sinners—you and me. In Christ, we are forgiven, redeemed children of the heavenly Father.

Review

Allow time for students to write definitions for these words. Point out that righteousness, innocence, and blessedness are Christ’s gifts to us through His redeeming work on our behalf.

Righteous, Innocent, and Blessed—in Jesus

Can we really be called these things because we believe in Jesus? Is there really forgiveness and a new beginning for Peter and all others who fail to live up to our new identity in Christ? We certainly don’t deserve it, but yes, in Jesus, we are forgiven! Jesus has redeemed us, lost and condemned creatures. And, yes, because of His life, death, and resurrection for us, we can indeed be called righteous, innocent, and blessed. Review what Jesus has done for you by completing the activity below, matching each statement about a person who trusts in Jesus for salvation with the Bible verse most closely relating to that statement.

- c. 1. Christ took my sin upon Himself so that I may be righteous and blameless in the sight of God.
- a. 2. Because Christ has saved me, I am now freed from the slavery of sin and thus freed to serve God.
- b. 3. As a child of God through faith, I am chosen and set apart so that I can praise God for the light He brings into my life.
- e. 4. As Christ’s redeemed people, we are to set our hearts on the things of God.
- d. 5. Because Christ has died for us, we are to live for Him.
- a. Our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin (Romans 6:6).
- b. You are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His wonderful light (1 Peter 2:9 NIV).
- c. God made Him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God (2 Corinthians 5:21 NIV).
- d. He died for all, that those who live might no longer live for themselves but for Him who for their sake died and was raised (2 Corinthians 5:15).
- e. Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God (Colossians 3:2–3 NIV).



Someone New

Ramid and his family left their war-torn country at night, barely escaping with their lives. They found a new home overseas, where they worked hard to build new lives for themselves. One day after soccer practice, a friend told Ramid about Jesus. The next day, his friend gave him a Bible. Eventually, Ramid became a Christian and received Christian Baptism, in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Ramid’s family disowned him, but Ramid says he is happy in Jesus. He continues to pray for his parents and sisters. And his new Christian friends have become his family in more ways than one!

REMEMBER

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come. 2 Corinthians 5:17

Righteous, Innocent, and Blessed—in Jesus

Allow time for students to complete this matching activity. In your review of the matchings, stress that we understand and realize our new identity in Christ Jesus as the Holy Spirit causes us to do so through God’s Word. By nature, we are all sinners in need of rescue from sin and death. But our Lord has come to save us sinners and to make us new people with a new name and identity, that by the working of the same Spirit can grow to become more and more like Him.

If you choose to do so, explore this idea further by distributing copies of

Reproducible 47 for students to complete. Introduce the activity and comment that during Baptism we receive the sign of the cross of Jesus upon our forehead and upon our heart. Baptism forever marks us as children of God, redeemed by Christ the crucified. The Beatitudes (Matthew 5:2–12) contain nine statements from Jesus about the blessings He has in store for His people. In these blessings, Jesus also gives names or titles for the Christian: poor in spirit, mourners, meek, hunger and thirst

for righteousness, merciful, pure in heart, peacemakers, persecuted for righteousness’ sake, reviled and persecuted and falsely accused on account of Jesus.

Review the Beatitudes, emphasizing the blessing associated with each. We are poor in spirit because we are sorry for our sins, but with repentance comes forgiveness. We may mourn losses of many kinds, but in Jesus, we can always find comfort. We are meek, lowly, and humble because we recognize our unworthiness before God, but with forgiveness comes restoration, a new identity in Jesus, and blessings even in this life. We may hunger and thirst for righteousness because we have no righteousness of our own, and we will be satisfied with the Spirit’s blessings God in Christ continues to provide. We give mercy to our neighbor as we are motivated and empowered through the mercy Christ has shown to us. As we are forgiven by Jesus, we are now pure in heart. In Christ, we are at peace with God. Because we are in Christ, we will face persecution in the life we live for Jesus, just as our Lord was persecuted to the point of being crucified on the cross for us. God’s Spirit helps us to see times when we are reviled, persecuted, and falsely accused on account of Jesus as times of blessing because these times remind us that we are set apart as God’s redeemed and forgiven people.

Someone New

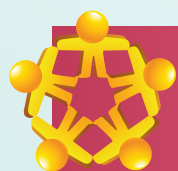
Read and discuss this story with your class. See Web Resource 47a. Ask students if they know or have heard of a similar experience. Stress that “living up” to the Christian identity is not easy, especially for those who by virtue of their faith in Jesus have been abandoned by their family and friends.

But Jesus promises to help us, to remain with us, and to strengthen and encourage us by the power of His Spirit.

Remember

As you discuss and assign this Bible verse for your students to memorize, underscore the new name we have in Christ and the new identity God’s Spirit continues to work in us through the Means of Grace.

The Beatitudes		
Using the chart, summarize Matthew 5:2–12, the Beatitudes. In the left column, write the description of the believers, according to the beatitude. In the right column, place the verse number of the beatitude. In the third column, record the blessing received from Christ according to the beatitude. There are nine in all.		
Beatitude	Verse(s)	Blessing Described
the poor in spirit	3	theirs is the kingdom of heaven
those who mourn	4	they shall be comforted
the meek	5	they shall inherit the earth
those who hunger and thirst for righteousness	6	they shall be satisfied
the merciful	7	they shall receive mercy
the pure in heart	8	they shall see God
the peacemakers	9	they shall be called sons of God
those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake	10	theirs is the kingdom of heaven
you when others persecute you on My account	11–12	your reward will be great



Working in Groups

Divide your class into groups to prepare large maps depicting movement in the Bible. Ideas may include the travels of Jesus during His earthly ministry, children of Israel in the wilderness, and the journeys of Jesus or Paul.



Curriculum Connection

Make a fun science connection by studying water with your students! Sections 7.3.2.14, 7.3.2.15, and 7.3.2.16 in the Science volume of the Concordia Curriculum Guide can be helpful. Explore topics such as the water cycle, fresh and salt water, and water pollution. Be sure to thank God for the amazing gift of water!



Technology

Encourage students to investigate the meanings of the names of the people in their families. They may already know the meaning of their own name. For instance, Robert means "Bright Fame" and John means "God Is Gracious." There are numerous Internet sources that allow an individual to search the history, meaning, and origin of first names.



Reaching Every Child

Have your students develop acronyms for biblical words and present them to the class via posters or PowerPoint media. Examples include Grace= God's Riches At Christ's Expense; Fear= False Evidence Appearing Real.



Check it Out

Have the students research and find pictures of the results of weather on landforms and the effects on society. This may include anything from the flood of Genesis to recent floods, typhoons, and tornadoes. Students may then gather information from LCMS World Relief and Human Care (or other relief agencies) on the ways in which the church cares for and provides aid to those affected by natural disaster.



Searching Further

Have the students prepare a report describing the use of wind and water in the Bible. Research can be gathered by using the aid of a concordance and the Bible. The main reading of Jesus walking on the water contains the effects of wind and water as it pertains to the fear and doubting of the disciples. The students will have no problem locating wind and water references in both the Old and New Testaments.

Why Do Worship Services Include Confession and Absolution? *Lost Son

LUKE 15:11–32

Background

Jesus told the parable of the prodigal son to the Pharisees and scribes after the parable of the lost sheep and the parable of the lost coin. The first two parables show people looking for a lost item, but the parable of the prodigal son shows the father waiting for, and then anxiously and enthusiastically welcoming and restoring, the lost son. Like the wayward son in the story, we are all lost because “all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23). We are helpless like the sheep and coin in the first two stories. What a comfort to us that God seeks us out and wants us to be saved.

Even those who belong to God by faith in Christ Jesus continue to wander away from God. We think we can manage on our own and give

way to our own individual kinds of waywardness. Eventually, we realize that our own way is not working. What a comfort to us that God is there, waiting for us to return to Him.

Though we are God’s children, we remain sinners in need of repentance and the comforting assurance God’s forgiveness earned for us by Jesus’ life, death, and resurrection. Jesus repeats in the parables that God in heaven rejoices when even one sinner repents. God’s saving grace is for all people. No individual is so good or so bad as to fall outside the parameters of His love. God would have us remember the inclusivity of His love and forgiveness as we deal with people, both believers and unbelievers, every day.

Central Truth

Christ Jesus forgives and restores us.

Objectives

- Admit that we are sinful people who cannot come before God on our own merits.
- Recognize and confess our sins and receive the assurance that Christ has removed our sins and welcomes us as His dear children.
- Express gratitude and appreciation for our loving and forgiving God and Savior.

Materials

- The Basics
- Reproducible 58
- Web Resource 58a

Bible Prep

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

- Luke 15:11–32

Devotions

Christina’s dad seemed strict and, at times, demanding. He believed in avoiding difficulties and didn’t deal well with surprises. When she was sixteen, Christina received her driver’s license. About this time, her dad, who loved old cars, bought a ’67 Ford Mustang. She convinced him to let her drive it to work one day early in December. Because snow was expected, he asked her to be home early.

As the day progressed, Christina was allowed to leave early from work that day so she decided to visit a friend. As they talked about the car, they looked outside and saw it had started to snow. Immediately, Christina started for home. The drive was fine until other drivers decided she was moving too slow! They would come up fast behind

her and then quickly drive around. She began to feel unnerved. Then, it happened. Hitting the edge of the road, her car jumped to the left toward the car that was passing. She pulled to the right and started to slide. She saw a pole straight ahead but couldn’t steer away. She wasn’t going fast, so she just slid into the pole. After getting out, she was relieved to see that the damage wasn’t bad. Still, she knew her dad would be angry.

She cried on the way home, and when she got into the house, she found her dad waiting. She started to apologize through anxious sobs when her dad did something that surprised her. He took her in his arms and said that the car didn’t matter; he was simply glad she was okay.

This is how God is with us. When we come to Him in sorrow and confess the tragedies, big and small, that our sins have caused,

God stands waiting—not to condemn and scold us, but rather to forgive us and assure us of His eternal love for us. God, our loving Father, absolves us of our sins because Jesus has paid for them. He has buried our sins with Him in His death. His resurrection from the dead assures us of the new life we have in Him.

PRAY: Dear God, thank You for the forgiveness You freely give us. Thank You for allowing us to come to You confessing our sins with the assurance of Your forgiveness. In our Savior’s name we pray. Amen.

Sing the hymn of the month: “Through Jesus’ Blood and Merit” (LSB 746).

INTO the lesson

Sins Confessed, Forgiveness Received

Begin the lesson commenting on the burden sin brings to each human life. Traditional Christian literature has pictured sin as a heavy bag each person carries on his or her shoulders or as a series of chains to which we add with each additional sin, link by link. But God’s Word provides us with a very different picture of sin in the life of the believer. Our Savior has paid the penalty for all human sins—those of the past, those being committed right now, and all future sins as well. He brings the comfort and assurance of His complete and all-encompassing forgiveness to us through a process we refer to as Confession and Absolution. Review this section of the catechism with your class at this point if you choose. Comment that confession may be either public or private. But it usually involves the pastor as the one who hears the confession and pronounces absolution upon the sinner. Acting in the place of Jesus Himself, the pastor announces to the penitent that his or her sins have been forgiven. **Jesus paid for the sins recently confessed and all other sins when He died long ago on the cross.** Read the introductory account of private confession together with your students. Ask, **Why do you think the writer regarded his experience of private confession as fantastic?** (The removal of sin and its eternal consequences is indeed fantastic. It frees the sinner and empowers him or her to lead a new life, restored as a child of God through faith in Christ Jesus.)

Comment that Christian worship usually begins with a general public confession, after which—having received the assurance of the forgiveness of our sins—believers continue with the worship service, united with God and with one another as His people, in the forgiveness Jesus earned for us.

Review

Fill in the missing words to complete the definitions. Relate the words to the theme of this lesson. Comment that like the lost son in Jesus’ story, we squander God’s gifts when we disobey God’s will for our lives.

Why Do Worship Services Include Confession and Absolution?

*Lost Son

Luke 15:11–32

Sins Confessed, Forgiveness Received

Having learned about private confession in confirmation class, I decided to check it out. So I called my pastor to set up an appointment for private Confession and Absolution. Making the call was easy, but then things became more difficult. As the day of my appointment grew closer, I began to run through in my mind a number of ways I could get out of it. I thought about simply not showing up or of feigning sickness or some last minute situation that would necessitate postponing my appointment for some vague, future time.

My struggle wasn’t that I’d done anything unusually bad, just the normal, run-of-the mill sins, at least for me. I had talked back to my parents a few times, told a few well-formulated lies when I found myself in a tight situation, thought a few thoughts I didn’t want anyone else to know about. Nothing big. It’s just that I didn’t want my pastor to think of me as a sinner. I wanted to keep his respect; I knew he liked me, at least up until now.

But as the time for our meeting arrived, I amazed myself by resolving to go through with our meeting. I decided God would want me to get real with myself and with my pastor about my sins. After all, I reasoned, if it weren’t for sin, the pastor would find himself without a job. And I was sorry for my sins. I knew Jesus had paid for them and I regretted the way my sin had contributed to His suffering and death.

As always, the pastor was warm and friendly. He began with a few words from Psalm 51 and then invited me to confess the sins I had committed. I simply spoke them to him, realizing that big or small, Jesus had already forgiven them. The pastor was Christ’s representative. He heard my confession in Christ’s place. Then, He asked me if I believed that his proclamation and assurance of forgiveness came from our Savior Himself. “Yes, I believe that,” I replied.

Then, I heard the assuring words that my sins had been buried with Christ, and because of His death and resurrection, I had been raised to live a new life in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Part of what had just happened seemed rather ordinary, like two people engaged in serious conversation. But mostly, what had just occurred was fantastic. And I knew it.



REVIEW

squandered—spent extravagantly or foolishly
confession—a written or oral acknowledgement of guilt of a party accused of an offense
absolution—a remission (forgiveness) of sins

INTO the Word

Parable of the Prodigal Son

As a group, read Luke 15:11–32. Allow time for students to complete the graphic organizer. Then, talk about the downward and upward progression of events in the story. Things digress until the son realizes that his situation is getting worse. The son remembers his father and returns to him. If you choose to do so, distribute copies of **Reproducible 58** for a dramatic review of the story. Be sure to emphasize that in the beginning of the story the son wants to handle life on his own, but then when it gets

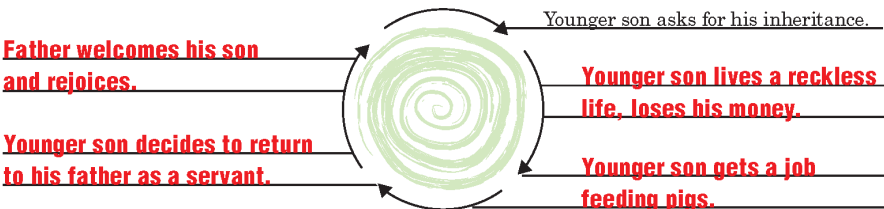
bad, he realizes the consequences of the bad choices, consequences that he has brought upon himself. He comes to repentance. He decides to approach his father, confess his sins, and ask for forgiveness. Before he can do this, his father welcomes him home and back into the family.

Just like the son came to his father confessing and asking for forgiveness, we come to the worship service and our Father in heaven confessing and asking for forgiveness. We are able to do this because of God’s grace, not because we deserve it. Rather, we come to God because of Jesus and what He has done for us.

Parable of the Prodigal Son

Read Luke 15:11–32 and fill in the graphic organizer correctly by placing the following sentences to illustrate the events of the story. The first one is done for you.

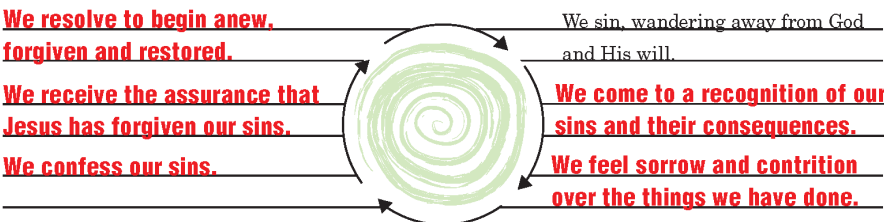
Younger son asks for his inheritance.
Younger son lives a reckless life, loses his money.
Younger son gets a job feeding pigs.
Younger son decides to return to his father as a servant.
Father welcomes his son and rejoices.



Sin and Restoration

Public Confession and Absolution usually take place at the beginning of Christian worship services. Confessing our sins and receiving the declaration of God’s grace and forgiveness, we come into the presence of God once again to receive His gifts as children approaching their loving Father. Place each of the following sentences referring to sin and restoration in the life of believers.

We sin, wandering away from God and His will.
We come to a recognition of our sins and their consequences.
We feel sorrow and contrition over the things we have done.
We confess our sins.
We receive the assurance that Jesus has forgiven our sins.
We resolve to begin anew, forgiven and restored.



REMEMBER

When I kept silent, my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long. . . . I acknowledged my sin to You, and I did not cover my iniquity; I said, “I will confess my transgressions to the LORD,” and You forgave the iniquity of my sin. Psalm 32:3, 5

INTO our lives

Sin and Restoration

Talk with students about their experience with sin, confession, and forgiveness. Examples may include simple situations such as this: they broke something at home, covered it up, their parents found out, they admitted guilt, they were punished or not, and they were forgiven. Or it may be a situation at school or with their friends. If the students don’t feel comfortable sharing from their lives, prime the pump by sharing an example from your life.

Allow time for students to write each of the sentences in the appropriate place to identify the steps in the sin and restoration process. Stress that God’s forgiveness involves not only payment for our sins in our place, but also includes the power and ability to begin anew as fully restored children of God and even the promise of eternal life in His name!

Remember

This verse underscores the promise associated with confession. Jesus has earned forgiveness for all sins. See also 1 John 8–9: “If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”

Parable of the Prodigal Son

Characters: FATHER, SON, WILD FRIENDS, SERVANTS

SON: Father, I have done enough work; please give me my inheritance because I want to enjoy my life now while I am young!

FATHER: If you are sure that is what you want, then I will do as you wish.

SON: Thank you. I am off to the big city! (Walks as if traveling to a far away land) It’s great to be with my wild friends having a good time.

WILD FRIENDS: Thanks, buddy, for all the fun!

SON: I am almost out of money. Does anyone want to pay for something?

WILD FRIENDS: No way! We don’t waste our money that way. Call us when you have money again. (WILD FRIENDS walk away.)

SON: I don’t know what I am going to do. I don’t have any more money, and my friends won’t help me. I will have to get a job. (Walks a short distance, and my friends

(if feeding pigs) This job is the only one I could find, and it is the lowest of jobs! Feeding pigs! The owner doesn’t even feed me as well as he does these pigs. (Steps to think) My father takes care of his servants better than I am being treated. I think I will return to him. Of course, I can’t expect that I would be treated like a son after what I did, but being treated like one of his servants would be better than the life I am living now.

FATHER: (Sees his SON walking toward him and runs to greet him) Son, you have returned!

SON: I am not worthy to be your son any longer. Please let me be one of your servants.

FATHER: Servants, bring me my best coat to put on my son and make a wonderful feast of all his favorite foods! My son was dead but now is alive. My son was lost but now is found! We will celebrate!



Curriculum Connection

God knows that past events have a strong influence on our present, and therefore, He gives us the gift of confession and absolution so we can start anew. Explore how the past affects the present, both personally and in the community, using section 7.1.4.1, Past Events (Present Influence of). You'll find it in the Social Studies volume of the Concordia Curriculum Guide. Choose one to three major events, then brainstorm with your students on how those events continue to affect us today. What does this influence tell us about how our own actions may affect the future?



Critical thinking

After gathering several weeks of bulletins to look over the confessions, attempt to write a confession of your own. Begin by acknowledging our sin, then follow with thanks to Jesus for dying and rising again to forgive our sins. Jesus took our punishment upon His shoulders because it is too much for us to bear.



Check it Out

Research the hymn of the month: "Through Jesus' Blood and Merit" (*LSB* 746). Written by Simon Dach in 1651, it is based on Romans 8:35–39. Even though Dach penned it 350 years ago, the message is still relevant today. We still need the assurance that nothing can separate us from the love of God.



Reaching Every Child

You will have students of various levels and backgrounds. The concept of confession and absolution might be either a misunderstood concept or something they haven't heard of before. Take some extra time to explain that confession and absolution bring us comfort, not suffering. Some students may come from homes in which forgiveness is rarely exchanged. This is an opportunity to show them that God always forgives us because of what Jesus did for us.



HANDS TO SERVE

There are always children carrying larger burdens than we think they should be carrying. This affects their schoolwork. Offer to help tutor students and encourage your students to volunteer to tutor as well. Sometimes, it may mean just time to be with a child who is struggling with a difficult home situation who needs someone to take the time to help him or her. Even if a student's home life is good, it is a burden when we feel like we are not smart in a subject. It is important during the tutoring time that we are just as concerned about the student's feelings as we are the subject matter.



Searching Further

Look at various confessions used by pastors. Have your pastor visit the class to discuss how he decides what confession is used each week. Over a few weeks, gather church bulletins to see what confessions are used. Discuss what makes them the same and what makes them different. Do some appeal to your students more than others?



Technology

The Internet provides Web sites that offer confessions. By typing "online confession" into a search engine, millions of matches can be found. People want to confess their sins because they feel the burden on their hearts. Being mindful of the content, take some time and look at some confessions to see what burdens people are carrying. To all who struggle under the guilt and shame of their sins, we can provide the comforting words of Jesus that we are forgiven. Our students might be carrying heavy burdens that we may not recognize or understand, but God does. For these hurts, His Son has already provided the cure.



Just for Fun

See Web Resource 58a.

How Can I Effectively Witness to My Friends and the Members of My Family?

*The First Disciples

JOHN 1:35–45

Background

Simon Peter, one of the most well-known disciples, and Nathanael, also called Bartholomew, are brought to Jesus through the witnesses of a brother and a close friend, respectively. The concept that Peter and Bartholomew were brought to Christ through the witness of those closest to them is a powerful testimony to the importance of telling others about Christ, especially those to whom we are especially close. According to church tradition, both Peter and Nathanael (Bartholomew) worked tirelessly after Jesus' ascension to bring the Gospel to as many people as possible throughout the world. Both were killed for professing their faith.

All Christians, regardless of personal talents or careers, have the privilege and responsibility to witness about Jesus to family members and friends alike. Our influence within our families and among our friends offers many opportunities for sharing the love of Jesus. The Holy Spirit promises to guide and help us as we witness. No one comes to faith without the Holy Spirit bringing them to faith through God's Word. But the Word of God through which the Holy Spirit brings our family members and friends to faith may just be the words heard from our lips!

Devotions

Listen to this letter from a friend:
Hey there! I miss you! I've been meaning to write to you for some time.

I have so many wonderful things to tell you. A few weeks back, my family and I almost bought the horse I have been wanting for a long time. At the last minute, though, the deal fell through. Then my car broke down. I couldn't believe my awful luck! But then I realized that if we had spent our money on the horse, we wouldn't have been able to afford to fix my car. When things get hard, God always finds a way to make Himself known to us. I love Him for that!

God has been there for me. He's there for you too. He loves us enough to die in our place so that we can go to heaven! We have one awesome God.

I can't wait to see you next. Maybe when you come into town in a couple

weeks, we can talk!

Your friend . . . (You can use a real friend's name, make up a name, or just say, "Your friend.")

What do you like to talk about with your friends? Your favorite sports teams? The news? Jesus? When you witness for Christ, that means inserting Him into your conversations. A witness tells about things that he or she has experienced. Speaking about Jesus and God's blessings in your everyday speech shows others that you truly see God and His blessings in your life. Inserting Christ's love and forgiveness into your normal speech is a very powerful witness.

PRAY: Dear God, You are at work in our lives all the time. We love You and thank You for

Central Truth

While global missions are important, there is also value in witnessing close to home, even to other Christians.

Objectives

- Admit that we often fail to share God's comfort and blessings with those who are closest to us.
- Recognize the many opportunities to daily share God's Word and God's compassion with our family and friends.
- Trust that if we ask the Holy Spirit to guide our words and actions, He will help us live and share our faith with those around us.

Materials

- The Basics
- Art supplies for a comic strip (colored pencils, pens, and the like)
- Reproducible 96
- Web Resource 96a

Bible Prep

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

- John 1:35–45
- Colossians 4:2–4
- 1 Peter 3:15

all that You do for us. Thank You for sending your Son, Jesus, to die and rise again for our forgiveness and salvation. Use us to let others know of Your boundless love and mercy. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

Sing: "Go Now in Peace" (AGPS 103, available on JPS).

INTO the Lesson

Talk with your students about what it means to be a witness, as in court. Emphasize that the role of a witness is simply to tell what he or she knows or has experienced. An expert witness at a trial, for example, shares his knowledge in a given area, usually applying it in some way to some aspect of the case. But a witness may not have any special training or acquired expertise; he or she may simply have seen or experienced something that supports or provides evidence useful in the trial.

INTO the Word

Spread the Good News

Direct students to fill in the speech bubbles in the comic strip. They may summarize the characters' dialogue in their own words or write the exact words used in Scripture.

The fact that some of Jesus' disciples came to Him because a family member or friend witnessed to them may be new knowledge for some students. Emphasize this point. Ask students to think about what might have happened if Andrew had never witnessed to his brother, Simon Peter. Encourage students to recall some of the Bible stories featuring Peter as a main character. He played a prominent role in many Gospel stories, and he also, by the power of the Holy Spirit, contributed significantly in the founding of the Early Church and in the spreading of the Gospel to others.

Ask, **Why is it important to witness to friends and family?** Accept answers. Remind students that God has given us the gift of family and close friends so that they might support, love, understand, help, and encourage us. A special bond exists among family members and friends that share a faith in **Jesus as the Son of God and only Savior of the world**. By God's grace and with His power and blessing, as God's Word is shared, the saving faith is passed from generation to generation through the working of the Holy Spirit.

LESSON 96

How Can I Effectively Witness to My Friends and the Members of My Family?

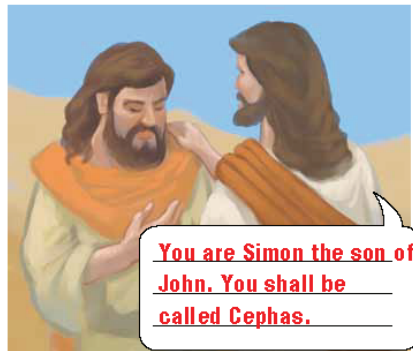
John 1:35–45

Spread the Good News

Read John 1:35–45 and fill in the blank speech bubbles. See how Christ's disciples came to Him through the witness of friends and family.



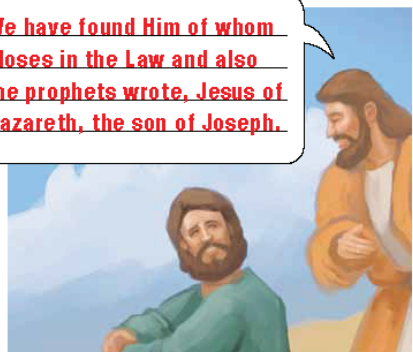
verses 40–41



verse 42



verse 43



verse 45

REVIEW

witness— **to openly express what one knows and believes**

Gospel— **the Good News of Christ's life, death, and resurrection**

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Ask, **Why did Andrew and Philip feel the need to tell Simon Peter and Nathanael the news about Christ's coming?** Accept answers. Students should realize that the disciples were eagerly awaiting the coming of a Messiah; when Christ came, they couldn't wait to spread the important news.

Students may recognize that whereas Simon Peter and Nathanael seemed to accept readily the news of Christ, many others might not be so accepting. Ask, **Why is witnessing to family and close friends sometimes difficult?** Answers may include things like fear of rejection, some people just don't care about the Gospel, and so on.

Even though witnessing can sometimes be intimidating or difficult, encourage students to recognize that they are not alone. God's Word and the Holy Spirit are there to guide us and give us the words we need. Ultimately, only the Holy Spirit can bring people to faith.

Review

Direct students to look up the words in the glossary, and write the definitions. Emphasize that Christians share the Gospel because the Gospel provides "the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes" (Romans 1:16).

Sharing Jesus' Love with Those Closest to Us

Monica's son lived a life of sin. But Monica never gave up hope that one day her son would become a follower of Jesus too. When she talked with her son about Jesus, her words seemed not to be heard. For many years, she fasted and prayed for her son, often in tears. Meanwhile, she continued to serve God by studying His Word and helping others. Often, she talked with her pastor about her wayward son. Once, he comforted her with these words: "God's time will come. It is not possible that a son of so many tears should perish."

Then one day, Monica heard from her son the news she had long waited to hear. He would give up his life of sin and become a follower of Jesus. At age 33, Monica's son was baptized.

Monica's son served his Savior faithfully for the rest of his life. And who was Monica's son? We know him as St. Augustine of Hippo, a famous Church Father in the Early Christian Church.

By God's grace, we can share the love of Jesus to everyone, beginning with our family and friends. If they may resist, God remains at work. His desire is for all people to come to faith in Jesus.

Look up the following verses. What does each verse say about how we can share Jesus' love so that eventually, through the working of God's Spirit, others may come to faith?

- 1 Timothy 4:12 **Set a godly example.**
- Colossians 4:2–4 **Pray that God may open a door for others to come to faith.**
- 1 Peter 3:15 **Be ready to talk about our hope in Christ.**



REMEMBER

Let no one despise you for your youth, but set the believers an example in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith, in purity. 1 Timothy 4:12

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INTO our lives

Sharing Jesus' Love with Those Closest to Us

Saint Monica is a great example of one who was persistent in her witness. Despite years of rejection, she never wavered in showing her love for both God and for her son. Patiently, she prayed for him and talked with him about Jesus whenever she had the opportunity. Allow students to read Monica's story or read it aloud in class.

Ask students to identify some of the things Monica did so that the Holy Spirit might bring her son to faith. (Talked to her son about Jesus, lived a life in which she put her faith in practice, prayed for her son)

Ask, **Why is it important to continue witnessing even if the person rejects the message at first?** Accept answers. Remind the students that the Holy Spirit uses us to witness, but He works in His own time. Sometimes, we have to be patient with the person to whom we are witnessing.

Direct students to read the Scripture references and identify the ways we can share Jesus' love so that by God's grace, those closest to us who do not yet believe may come to faith. Remind students of these three examples of ways to share Jesus' love evidenced in the life of Monica.

Refer students to the devotion. Remind them that learning to talk about our faith in our everyday language can be a very powerful way to witness.

Use **Reproducible 96** at this point in the lesson to reinforce the tools that God gives us in prayer, setting an example, and openly talking about Christ.

Comment that telling others about Jesus, especially those close to us, is not always easy. We may fear that the person may reject us or laugh at us. But God does not abandon us in our efforts to bring others the Good News. The Bible says, "No one can say 'Jesus is Lord' except in the Holy Spirit" (1 Corinthians 12:3). By living our lives in Christ, praying for nonbelievers, and openly talking about God's Word to others, the Holy Spirit works in the hearts of those we love. Sometimes, as in the case of Augustine, a person comes to faith in Christ after years of prayer and faithful witness in word and action. God asks only that we share His Word. We can trust in Him to work the results.

Say, **Suppose your family already knows and believes in Jesus as your Savior. Why is it still important to talk about God's blessings to you in your daily conversation?** (By such words, we encourage and support one another and build up one another in the faith.)

Remember

Stress that the Holy Spirit empowers all people, young and old alike, to witness to Jesus in our words as well as in our actions.





Ask students to find and briefly interview a Christian in their lives to find out how they were brought into God's family. Who served as a witness to them? How? What made an impact on their faith? Have students share their results with the class to better know how to be an effective witness. See also Web Resource 96a.



Put the students in groups to create and act out skits representing witnessing opportunities. Have the students present these skits to appropriate grade levels in the school. The students are then witnessing through their skits and giving the audience members ideas for their own lives of witnessing.



Technology

Assign teams of students to make video invitations. Each video should be no more than forty-five seconds long. The invitations should include a summary of the student's faith in a few sentences, giving the time and place of a local worship service or Bible study the family member or friend can look forward to attending with one of the video producers. The videos can be posted to YouTube.com with private settings. RSVP cards could be made. When the cards are returned, results could be noted as part of a tracking program to see how effective the videos were in getting the target audience closer to a relationship with God.



Curriculum Connection

One extremely important witnessing skill involves listening—before, during, and after any opportunities you have to speak about Jesus Christ. Listening shows Christ's love for others, and it also enables you to see what needs they have in their lives that the Lord is seeking to meet. Section 7.6.4, Listening Skills and Healthy Relationships, is found in the Health volume of the Concordia Curriculum Guide. The activities and ideas in this section can help your students develop this most important witnessing skill.



Critical thinking

Direct students to retell a scary, traumatic, or sad event from their lives using language that shows how God might have used the bad event for good. To retell an event in one's life is one thing, but to critically think about the events as acts of God stretches the class to think more deeply from that point on. The more often the class can be redirected to think of events as part of God's design, the less they should be consumed by life's disasters.



Faith in Action

Practice makes permanent. Have the students come up with one-liners to use to invite friends or family members to church or a Bible study. Don't stop there. Have the students present/practice their lines with a classmate in front of the class. When the students get the chance to try it, make mistakes, get better at it, and finally feel good about a process, they are more likely to use it in "real" life. It would probably be helpful to interject some devil's advocate statements into the experience to make it even more real in a "comfortable" setting.