

**Adult
Bible Study
in
Simplified
English**



**Teaching
Guide**



The Gospel of Matthew

JESUS' TEACHINGS

INCLUDES BONUS CHRISTMAS LESSON

**Julia
Wrotenbery**

**BAPTISTWAY PRESS
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ADULT BIBLE STUDY IN SIMPLIFIED ENGLISH

Teaching Guide

The Gospel of Matthew: Jesus' Teachings

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Introduction for Teachers

The purpose of this teaching guide is to provide teachers with a plan for teaching a quality Bible lesson while helping participants improve their English language skills. Use of this material is suggested for International Sunday School classes or any Bible study group taught at a Basic English level.

The teaching guide begins with listings of the Lesson Focus, Focal/Background Text, and Memory Verse, all of which provide the premise for the lesson. This information is followed by a teaching plan under headings of Connect with Life, Guide the Study, and Encourage Application. At the end of each lesson, Supplemental Teaching Ideas are provided under those same headings. As the teacher, you may pick and choose from these helps to use along with the student's Study Guide to fit the lesson to your class members' abilities and needs.

The Bible text printed in the lesson material is from the NEW LIFE Version of the Bible (NLV), an inexpensive translation (not a paraphrase) which uses only an 850-word vocabulary. The NLV is available from Christian Literature International, P. O. Box 777, Canby, Oregon 97013; e-mail christian@canby.com; telephone (orders only) 1-800-324-9734.

The NLV Bible often uses simplified phrases to express terms generally familiar to anyone raised in a Christian environment. In the Teaching Guide, these terms will usually be expressed using the NLV terminology, followed by the more common term in parentheses; for example, "proud religious law-keeper (Pharisee)" or "early preacher (prophet)." The teacher has the option of using the NLV term for new Christians or beginning students, or the common term where it will be better understood and less cumbersome in teaching. Once a word or phrase has been introduced in the Word List or teaching procedures, however, the familiar expression may be used to help students add it to their vocabulary.

Prayer is sometimes specifically suggested in the teaching procedures. It should be an integral part of your lesson plan. Use your own judgment as to where it best fits into the teaching session.

The writers and editors wish you success and give you prayerful support in your teaching of this Adult Bible Study in Simplified English.

Adult Bible Study in Simplified English is published by the Baptist General Convention of Texas and follows the same curriculum plan as the Bible Study for Texas materials, but has no Texas emphasis. Teachers may wish to purchase Bible Study for Texas lesson comments and teaching guides as additional resources. These may be ordered through your church or directly from the Sunday School/Discipleship Division, Baptist General Convention of Texas, 333 North Washington, Dallas, TX 75246-1798, e-mail baptistway@bgct.org; FAX 214-828-5187; or toll-free telephone 1-800-355-5285.

About the writer

Julia Wrotenbery currently works with ESL at University Baptist Church in Fort Worth. She retired from 30 years of service in public schools. She received a BA from Baylor University, an MA from University of Texas, and an MRE from Southwestern Seminary. Her husband, Carl, is retired dean of libraries at Southwestern Seminary. They are parents of a son, Alan (deceased), and a daughter, Martha Runnels, who lives in Fort Worth. They have three grandchildren.

Suggestions for Teaching

General Suggestions

1. Provide language edition Bibles so students can read the focal passage in their native languages.
2. Beginning students may require three sessions to complete one lesson.
3. Review the Word Study before beginning the study. Provide page (see resources) for class to keep vocabulary studies in their notebooks.
4. Prepare 9-12 core sentences which tell the most important part of the Bible focal text. Illustrate each sentence with stick figures and symbols in *picture sequence* form (see details below).
5. Prepare lesson outlines or written materials before class—make your own cling sheets by cutting apart white plastic garbage bags and writing on them with markers. The plastic bags will cling to the wall.

Bible Comments/Focal Text

1. Help students hear English and practice their pronunciation by modeling phrases and sentence. Allow the entire class to repeat. Be consistent with stress and intonation. Speak naturally.
2. Allow individual students to read a sentence or paragraph at a time. For further practice, ask students to tell sections from Bible comments in their own words.
3. When time allows, pairs may read the lesson again to each other.
4. Class may close books and listen as a native speaker reads the section again.
5. Discuss lesson using “Things to Think About.”

Memory Verse

1. Challenge class members to say the Memory Verse several times each day.
2. Provide Study Sheets for students to write Memory Verses.
3. Write phrases or individual words on separate pieces of paper. Give to students to place in order.
4. Write entire verse on board. Read in unison. Erase key words a few at a time. Recite verse until entire verse is erased and class can repeat by memory.
5. Make a symbol for each word or phrase of the verse.
6. Use the symbols as a reminder for saying the verse.

Picture Sequencing (Lipson Method)

This method is especially suited for teaching beginners. It consists of a series of pictures with accompanying sentences that tell a story. It may be used solely for oral production (using pictures alone) or for integrated skills (engaging students in reading and writing the story). You may use real pictures, videotape, pictures that are professionally drawn, or stick figures

Other benefits include the following:

1. Relaxed, low-anxiety atmosphere as students focus on the pictures and create their own sentences to tell the story
 - Focus on fluency, not just accuracy
 - Focus on a message or task rather than form or grammar
 - Minimal error-correction as students tell the story
2. Pictures (even stick figures) convey meaning in every language.
3. The same set of pictures can be used with more than one level of students by making the sentences easier or more difficult.
4. The use of pictures helps students learn the language in “chunks” rather than words in isolation.
5. The only item needed is a piece of chalk—or a marker, if using a cling sheet or overhead cell.

Preparation

1. Put a story into sentences that are suitable for the level of your students. Try to tell the story with a maximum of ten sentences. For low beginners, choose the simplest and fewest words possible. Keep sentences in their most basic form, so students can combine sentences later.
2. Draw simple pictures or stick figures to illustrate key points in the story. These serve as prompts for the telling of the story. Other drawing tips:
 - An “x” in a small square beside a picture enables you to cue for a negative as you tell the story.
 - Direct quotations may be indicated with a cartoon-type bubble.

Procedure

1. Introduce the story by following your prepared script of sentences (for consistency) and pointing to the pictures as you speak. This will give students the main idea and help them think in chunks of language (as in real-life language use).
2. Introduce the new words as you again reference the pictures. Use props and/or dramatization as needed to establish understanding. Work on individual sounds and word stress as students repeat new words.
3. Lead students in repetition of the story, one sentence at a time, working on sentence stress and intonation.
4. Lead the class in one more repetition of the story (going straight through and continuing to refer to the pictures throughout the story).
5. Ask the class to tell you the story as you cue the story sequence by pointing to the pictures. (You become “stage prompter” at this point.)
6. Then ask for a single volunteer to tell the story. (This may open the door for several more proficient students to use what they know.)
7. Divide the class into small groups of 3-5 students to

give each person practice in telling the story. (Inevitably, the most eager student will go first, followed by another “semi”-eager student. By the time it is the least proficient student’s turn, he/she will have learned a lot by listening, will have observed a good model at least a couple of times, and will have bolstered courage for risk-taking.)

8. Follow with questions to review story (begin by naming the setting, the characters, etc.—easy questions).

9. Conclude with life application questions that require some thought and give students opportunity to express opinion, emotion, and their own ideas.

Lesson Expansion

If the setting and circumstances permit, use these ideas:

- Sequencing pictures (a set for each pair of students) while listening to you or to a taped voice tell the story
- Picture sequencing without hearing the story told
- Matching pictures and sentences
- Scrambled sentences to arrange in order (writing numbers or letters in front of sentences to show sequence; cutting up sentences and moving around to position correct order)
- Strip story (cutting up sentences, issuing one strip per student, asking students to arrange themselves in order, having them retell the story by contributing the portion on their paper strip)
- Cloze (supplying a written copy with every nth word blank; students work in pairs to fill in the missing words)
- Dictation (teacher or student telling the story while students write what they hear)
- Provide a copy of the sentences for each student. Ask that they read the story to a partner.
- Ask students to write the story in their own words.

Bible passage as content for reading

Procedure:

1. Tell the parable or story using pictures. Use animation and simple sentences.
2. Ask questions about the main idea of the story.
3. Read story aloud while students follow along and underline unknown words. Go over the meaning of these words with the whole class.
4. Intermediate or advanced students: Have students read silently a second time to look for answers to two or three questions about details that you have written on the board. Ask students to discuss their answers with a partner. Then go over answers with the whole class.
5. Beginning or low-intermediate students: Read story again and ask students to repeat it with you line by line.
6. Invite the class to read the story with you in unison.
7. Ask pairs to read the story to each other.
8. Ask for volunteers to tell the story in their own words.
9. Make drawings large enough for the back row to see.
10. Select a list of new words in the story—unfamiliar words that the students would not likely be able to figure out from context (generally 8-10 new words per lesson).
11. List the new words in categories: verbs, nouns, adjectives, adverbs. When listing verbs, you may write

both simple present and past tense forms (e.g., eat/ate, walk/walked). Basic beginners would do well to tell the story in present tense, but high beginners could work in present tense, then retell the story in past tense.

Checklist for Successful Classrooms

Right Kind of Input

1. New language in every lesson
2. Input that is slightly above the students' current level of proficiency
3. Content relevant to the students' real-life needs and interests
4. Language learned in meaningful chunks, not words in isolation
5. Comprehensibility achieved by use of the following:
 - Realia or authentic materials
 - Simplified language (rephrasing, repeating, clear enunciation)
 - Demonstration and multiple examples rather than explanation
 - Lots of gestures and nonverbal language

Low Anxiety Environment

Students should not be afraid to make mistakes or take risks in language learning. The following factors contribute to a relaxed and comfortable atmosphere and build a sense of community:

- Personally greeting and bidding farewell to students
- Sincere and frequent affirmation
- Minimal error correction from the teacher
- Frequent reference to the culture(s) of the students
- Smiles and laughter that are commonplace
- Connecting with students through eye contact and positioning yourself on students' eye level
- Calling students by name

Checklist for Real-Life Interaction

1. Pace activities with a balance of noisy/quiet and still/active
2. Attention to different learning styles (visual, auditory, tactile, kinesthetic)
3. Variety in grouping (predominately pairs and small groups of three or five; using whole class in initial presentation and again for feedback and wrap-up at the end)
4. A focus on a task or message rather than form (grammar)
5. Provision for all four skills (listening, speaking, reading, writing)
6. Avoidance of questions for which answers are known
7. Use of information gap activity in which partners have different pieces of information and must ask each other questions in order to fill in their gaps of understanding
8. Other useful activities: surveys, interviews, role-play, problem-solving, and interactive games
9. Review previous material.

Some suggestions based on material developed for the EFL Training Manual—Beyond our Borders.

Teaching Guide

The Gospel of Matthew: Jesus' Teachings

Unit 1: A New Way of Life

Lesson 1: Jesus' Design for Life

Lesson Focus

The road to happiness for a Christian is to live as Jesus taught and to bring honor to God.

Focal Text

Matthew 5:1-16

Memory Verse

“Let your light shine in front of men. Then they will see the good things you do and will honor your Father Who is in heaven” (Matthew 5:16).

Connect with Life

1. Say: *Happiness is a desire everyone has for himself. There are many miserable people in our world who do not know how to be happy. Let's meet some of them.*

First, there is Patricia. She starts quarrels with everyone and doesn't understand why people do not like her.

Then, there is James, who really thinks he is better than other people. It puzzles him that people seem to avoid him.

George gets avoided, too, because his language is so foul that it makes others uncomfortable.

Sue refuses to share anything, even if she doesn't need it. The misery of others does not move her. She can't understand why her acquaintances like to be with Betty who is always busy helping someone who needs it.

Jesus understood people like this. He explained to His followers how they could be happy by living by God's directions.

Guide the Study

2. Ask the students to turn to their Study Guides to the first two paragraphs under “Rules for a Good Life.” Ask for a volunteer to read these paragraphs.

Emphasize the terms “Sermon on the Mount” and “Beatitudes.” Point out that the Beatitudes cover verses 1-12. These represent the way to live a perfect life filled with happiness and contentment in God's love. “Beatitudes” is sometimes translated “blessed” or “happy.”

3. Have one of the students read Matthew 5: 1-3. Ask: *Can you picture the scene with Jesus Christ seated, perhaps on a large rock, somewhat above the crowd so that they could see Him? The people were spread out on a lower level listening. Sometimes these crowds involved thousands of people who wanted to hear what Jesus said and followed Him to listen to His words. Jesus asks and answers the question, “Who are the happy people?” His answer is that they are the ones who know heaven is theirs because of their belief in and obedience to God.*

4. Next, have someone read Matthew 5:4-6. Explain: *Here are three different situations in which people can find happiness. The first one involves sorrow. The promise is not that life will not have sorrows. The promise is that God will give comfort. (If you know your group well enough, you might ask someone ahead of time to tell of a sorrow for which God brought comfort. If not, you might offer an example from your own life.)*

The second situation involves the absence being full of pride. Wrongful pride leads to arrogance. These people know that the joy of knowing God and being right with Him makes their stay on earth truly blessed.

The third situation involves those people who long for God with such intensity that it is like physical hunger and thirst. They will be filled with the Spirit of God.

5. Now ask for a volunteer to read Matthew 5:7-9. Tell the class: *Look at verse 7. Do you know someone who is always kind and concerned about other people? How do people react to that person?*

Do you know others who never try to help anyone and seem uninterested in others? How do people react to that person? God wants us to be the first kind of person.

Direct the class to verse 8. Ask: *What do you think is meant by a "pure heart"?* (Possible answers: A heart directed toward God, ethical behavior, strong moral principles, Christian virtues, such as unselfishness, generosity, prayerfulness, love, etc.)

Say: *Look at verse 9. What is a peacemaker?* (One who does not stir up trouble or anger, but rather tries to seek fairness to all opinions.)

6. Have someone read Matthew 5:10-12. Tell the class: *Sometimes we know the right thing to do, but we find it very hard to do it. It may be that we'll be made fun of and laughed at, be called names, or even suffer punishment for doing what we know is right. Do you know anyone to whom this has happened?* (Allow time for response. If there is none, tell of a personal experience.)

Say: *Now examine verse 11. Some people suffer not just for doing the right things but for trying to follow Jesus' teachings. These have a special reward. In verse 12, what are we urged to feel?* (To feel joy because we are worthy to suffer for Jesus' sake just as the Old Testament prophets did for telling what God told them to tell.)

7. Read Matthew 5:13-16. Ask: *What two things are Jesus' followers compared to?* (Salt and light)

Tell the class this incident: *During World War II in the Philippines, the villagers fled from Japanese soldiers. Their friends and family members helped to hide and protect them. There was one thing they were expected to contribute as they came: Salt. Every family tried to carry a bag of salt with them so as not to be a burden on their hosts. What is salt used for?* (To flavor food, to preserve foods like fish or meat as they did before there was refrigeration, to help heal as a doctor might prescribe a salt gargle for a sore throat.) *If salt were to lose its salty properties, it could not be used in these ways.*

The other comparison is light. We are very conditioned in this country to take light for granted until something happens to our electric supply and

we find ourselves in the dark. What experiences have you had with the loss of light which made you appreciate it much more? (Allow for response.)

Jesus says we are the light for the world if we are His followers. In verse 16 He tells us we must let the world see that light as a witness.

Encourage Application

8. Turn together to the Study Guide. Read the last section under "Light." Discuss ways that you as individuals can be light for the world. (Suggested replies: Be kind and loving, be righteous and just in all your dealings with others, make sure your language is not profane or hurtful to others, try to reconcile those who quarrel, be humble rather than arrogant, earnestly seek to know God and live by His guidance, etc.)

9. Close with prayer.

Supplemental Teaching Ideas

Connect with Life

1. Say: *One of the verses in our Scripture for today warns that following Jesus' teachings may not be easy. The unbelievers would make life very hard for them. Soon after Jesus' resurrection, the book of Acts (chapters 6-7) tells of one man who was willing to die for the right to follow Jesus. Stephen preached to the crowd about Jesus. He angered the religious leaders so much that they dragged him outside the city and stoned him to death for what he said. Stephen's last words before he died were, "Lord, do not hold this sin against them." He died a happy man because he knew he had done right and that Jesus was waiting to receive him. Our verses today teach us how to be that happy and confident in Jesus.*

Encourage Application

1. Ask the class to work with a partner to memorize the Memory Verse. After a few minutes, have everyone repeat this verse together. Close with a prayer that we all may try harder to live the ideal life which Jesus describes to us.

2. Discuss the Word List. Make sure everyone understands the meaning.

Teaching Guide

The Gospel of Matthew: Jesus' Teachings Unit 1: A New Way of Life Lesson 2: A New Look at Old Teachings

Lesson Focus

Jesus tells us what God's laws really mean and how we can work toward keeping them.

Focal Text

Matthew 5:17-48

Memory Verse

"But I tell you, love those who hate you. Pray for those who do bad things to you and who make it hard for you" (Matthew 5:44).

Connect with Life

1. Tell this story: *A young woman was studying this passage in her Sunday School class. She was particularly upset by verse 39 where Jesus said, "Whoever hits you on the right side of the face, turn so he can hit the other side also." She angrily told the class, "I tried this with my sister. So she hit me on the left side, too." How would you feel in her place? What could Jesus have meant for us to do? Today's passage gives us some really revolutionary ideas. Let's look at the passages to see if we can figure out how to put them to use in our lives.*

Guide the Study

2. Ask one of the students to read Matthew 5:17-20. Over the years the original laws had been cluttered up with many interpretations that made them very hard to understand or to keep. Jesus is trying to make plain what God meant.

Read together in the Study Guide the introductory paragraphs.

3. Have someone read Matthew 5:21-26. Most civilized people agree that one person must not murder another, and they have laws against murder, with penalties attached. But verse 22 goes much

further in showing us where sin begins.

Ask: *What feeling would someone feel in order to kill another person? (Anger) Jesus goes even further still. The beginning may be in the words an angry person says. What are these? ("You have no brains" and "you fool.") In verses 23 and 24, what is the situation? (Even before the anger has built up there have been some hard feelings. If your friend or brother has hard feelings toward you about something, go make it right. Make peace with those who may want to sue you in court, lest you be found guilty and put in prison.)*

4. Ask for a volunteer to read Matthew 5:27-30. Then refer to the Study Guide and read together the section on Adultery. Notice that here again, the sin begins in the heart and mind.

Ask: *What do verses 29 and 30 tell us to do to prevent sin? (If the eye causes sin, pluck it out. If the hand causes sin, cut it off.) Can the eye or hand really cause sin? (No.) Where is the source of sin, then? (In our hearts and minds.) Jesus is really telling us to control ourselves in our desires so that we will not sin. Verses 29 and 30 are exaggerations to show us the seriousness of allowing our minds to be clogged with impure thoughts.*

5. Have a student read Matthew 5:31-32. These verses are related to verses 27-30. Sex sins and adultery can lead to divorce. Ask someone to read the two paragraphs under "Divorce" in the Study Guide.

6. Ask a person to read Matthew 5:33-37. Tell the class: *In this country, children may make a statement with their fingers crossed. In their minds, that means the statement or promise does not have to be honest. Other cultures may have other ways of avoiding telling the truth or keeping a promise while still defending themselves against dishonesty. Do you know of any folk ways from your own country that work like that? (Allow time for answers.) As you see from this passage, the Jewish*

people of Jesus' time had devised a way to avoid unpleasant responsibilities. What teaching about statements and promises does Jesus emphasize in verse 17? (Your "yes" or "no" should be acceptable because you do not avoid truth.)

7. Have someone read Matthew 38-42. Tell the class: *Many people still live by the idea of an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth. In Jesus' day this was actually an improvement over what the people had been doing. An injury to one might have meant a whole family or even a whole tribe would be killed or injured as punishment for a single injury or death. But Jesus did not leave the matter with this improvement. What do you think He is telling us in verses 39-42? (Try hard to get along with others. Do not just hit back when someone hits you but rather try to work out the reason for the anger or grievance and make it right.)*

8. Read Matthew 5:43-48. Have one of the class members read the section in the Study Guide called "Love for Enemies." Tell the class: *These verses sum up Jesus' ideas. We are kind, loving, generous, forgiving because we love. We love God, and, therefore, we love mankind. It is easy to love those who love us, to be kind to those who are kind to us, but Jesus says our love must encompass even our enemies and those who would do us harm. It is very hard to do, isn't it? Only with God's help can we try to accomplish this.*

Encourage Application

9. Read together the last section of the Study Guide called "Christian Love." Tell the class: *Think of someone whom you find very hard to even tolerate, let alone love. In our closing prayer, let's ask God to help us this week to think less harshly of this person. Perhaps we could resolve to pray for him each day.* Close with prayer.

Supplemental Teaching Ideas Connect with Life

1. Relate this story: *A young woman from another country had expressed deep hatred toward a group who had wronged her family. When she began to study the teachings of Jesus, she became convinced*

that Jesus wanted her to love and to forgive. For months she prayed about this, trying to see how she could change. Finally, one night in a dream she was sure she heard God speaking to her: "These people do not know me. They do not keep my commandments because they do not know how to love. You could tell them about me." She awoke, horrified at such an idea. Many more months passed before she could bring herself to be willing to do this. Finally, she bowed to God's will. Today she spends her time with her former enemies, trying to show them that God loves them.

Encourage Application

1. Ask the class to spend a few minutes working together to learn the Memory Verse. Then say the verse together. Give each person a slip of paper. Ask each one to write the name of someone to whom they need to show more Christian love. Tell them to keep it where they can see it each day and pray about it, making every effort to show love to that person.

2. Discuss the Word List and the questions in Things to Think About.

Teaching Guide

The Gospel of Matthew: Jesus' Teachings

Unit 1: A New Way of Life

Lesson 3: When God Is the Only Audience

Lesson Focus

We need to seek to please God and do His will without expecting others to praise us or even know what we are doing.

Focal Text

Matthew 6:1-18

Memory Verse

“Be sure you do not do good things in front of others just to be seen by them. If you do you have no pay from your Father in heaven” (Matthew 6:1).

Connect with Life

1. Explain: *Every newspaper is full of accounts of things people have done. Some people expect public praise for all the good things they do. Their feelings get hurt if no one notices them. Some may brag to others about the good they do. Some try to have it publicized in some other way. Most of us know someone like that. This attitude is not God's plan for us. All that we do to serve Him is for Him to know, not for others to know.*

Guide the Study

2. Ask one of the students to read Matthew 6:1-4. Ask: *What should be our reasons for giving to the poor and praying to God? (We give as a service to God because He has told us to love others and try to help them when they need help. We pray to talk to and listen to God.) What kind of attitude do you think God expects while we do these things? (We should do these things gladly because we love God.)*

3. Have someone to read Matthew 6:5-8. Ask: *Have you ever heard anyone pray who seemed to be talking for the benefit of his own pride so he might*

be bragged on? Can you imagine someone standing on the street, praying aloud for others to hear? What does Jesus have to say about this? (He tells His followers that the only benefit they will get from this is the admiration of people who think they are especially good. There will be no reward from God.) What does Jesus say about making your prayers unnecessarily long? (He compares these to the pagans who do not know God but repeat their rituals endlessly to try to get the attention of whatever they worship.) What assurance does verse 8 give us that this is not necessary? (“Your Father knows what you need before you ask Him.”)

4. Now select a person to read Matthew 6:9-13. Tell the class: *This is sometimes called the Lord's Prayer and sometimes the Model Prayer. Many churches repeat this together as part of their worship. But Jesus said, “Pray like this.” Let us examine the prayer to see what elements are in it.*

What are the elements in verse 9? (God is personal. He is our heavenly Father who loves us. God is also pure and righteous and powerful—that is, He is holy.)

In verse 10 what elements do we find? (We must desire God's reign over all the world. We must also seek His will in all that we do, not our own.)

Verses 11-13 list the things we can ask Him for: What are these? (Our daily needs. He wants us to have adequate food, clothing, and shelter. He doesn't indicate that we can ask for more than we need. The second item is forgiveness for our wrongdoing. But our forgiveness from God is tied to our forgiveness to others. We forgive others, and God forgives us. Verse 13 tells us to seek God's help in avoiding temptation from sin.) Notice that the prayer ends with a return to our confession of God's power and greatness.

5. Ask someone to read Matthew 6:14-15. Say: *Jesus explains more about how important it is that we forgive wrongs done against us. He expresses it with two big ifs. What are they? (If you forgive*

others, God will forgive you. If you do not forgive others, God will not forgive you.)

6. Have a student read Matthew 6:16-18. Then ask another student to read aloud from the Study Guide the section entitled "Fasting." Tell the class: *Fasting was a part of the ritual which many Jews practiced. Its original idea was to help them commune more effectively with God. In Jesus' time the practice was often abused by those who were "showing off." What do you think Jesus is trying to show in these verses? (If any good can come of this practice, it has to be done sincerely between the person and God, not for show.)*

Encourage Application

7. Tell the class these incidents: *A pastor's wife felt uncomfortable making hospital visits to the members of her church. Instead she felt she could best minister by washing clothes for the sick person's family, cleaning their house, cooking for the family, or looking after their children. These things she did quietly, not for praise. Now in her 80's, she continues to minister in this way.*

A wealthy man quietly made scholarships and jobs available to students who showed promise, but could not afford an education.

A church volunteer music worker was willing to use her talents by coaching children and young people and helping them to use their gifts for God.

These people offered what they had and did it to serve God, not to get praise from others. Let us close with prayer that God would help us be willing and eager to serve Him without any outward show.

Supplemental Teaching Ideas

Connect with Life

1. Those of us who believe in Jesus as our Savior want to worship Him in a way that will show Him honor. How can we learn to do that? Look in the Study Guide at the section entitled "At the Foot of the Cross." Ask various students to read those paragraphs aloud. Ask for comments about the material. Tell the class: *Matthew 6:1-18 gives us much information about how to do this in a way that will please God.*

Encourage Application

1. Discuss the Memory Verse. Work as a group to learn it and then repeat it together.
2. Ask the students this week to write down a prayer they might pray using the guidelines in the Model Prayer. This is a private exercise and may be shared next week with the class if any student desires to do so. (Use your own judgment as to what the class will respond to best. The teacher might instead write such a prayer ahead of time to share at this time.)
3. Ask if there are any questions about the new terms used in the Word List.
4. Use Things to Think About as a discussion starter.

Teaching Guide

The Gospel of Matthew: Jesus' Teachings

Unit 1: A New Way of Life

Lesson 4: The Wealth That Lasts

Lesson Focus

We need to trust God more and worry less.

Focal Text

Matthew 6:19-34

Memory Verse

"For wherever your riches are, your heart will be there also" (Matthew 6:21).

Connect with Life

1. Say to the class: *Think of people you know who have "laid up riches in heaven" rather than on earth. Without calling them by name, unless you especially wish to do so, describe the kind of person who fits this description.* (These may include parents or grandparents, church leaders, neighbors, etc.) If the class is reluctant, recount some of those you have known.

Now, think of people who seem uninterested in their spiritual lives, but focus, instead, on accumulating material possessions, money, or power. According to Jesus in today's Scripture lesson, it is the first group who is doing the right thing.

Guide the Study

2. Ask one of the students to read Matthew 6:19-21. Explain: *These verses sound at first as if we are not to try to have any material possessions. If Jesus did not mean the words in this way, how did He mean them?* (He is warning us not to put such emphasis on our earthly possessions. We are here only for a short lifetime. They will do us no good in the life to come.) *The chief measures of wealth in Jesus' day were storage for the year's crops, clothing which was packed away for future use, and gold. What could happen to these things?* (Moths or other insects could ruin the clothes, rats and other rodents

could get into the crops, and thieves could dig through the walls and steal the gold.) *What does Jesus expect us to concentrate on?* (Obeying God and helping others.)

Have someone retell (or read) the portion of the Study Guide entitled, "One Who Thinks of Others."

3. Have someone read Matthew 6:22-23. Refer to the Study Guide which discusses "The Lamp of the Body." Ask: *Think of people from history whose light became dark as described in verse 23. Who would you name?* (Perhaps Hitler, Stalin, Nero, etc.) *Now think for a moment to yourself: Have I had moments when the light did not enter my body?*

4. Read together Verse 24. Tell the class: *Sometimes we find ourselves trying to please two people who want opposite things from us. If we please one, we offend the other. Jesus is telling us here that we have that same problem if we try to please God but work toward our own desires at the same time. What does the verse say are the two bosses we try to please?* (God and the desire for riches)

5. Ask a student to read Matthew 6:25-30. Tell the class: *People today do worry about food and clothing and many other things. Some people think Jesus was telling them not to work to earn their food and clothing, but just to sit and wait to be provided for. What do you think Jesus meant?* (If the class offers no answers, refer them to the first two paragraphs under the heading "Do Not Worry" in the Study Guide.)

6. Select a person to read Matthew 6:31-34. Ask the class: *What does the word worry mean?* (To be uneasy, upset, anxious about the outcome of anything) *Not worrying does not mean that you don't care, but worry by itself accomplishes nothing. Most of us do worry. What are some of the things that you worry about?* (Perhaps getting or keeping a job, having enough money to pay bills,

your health or that of someone else, passing an exam, etc.) *Now ask yourselves: Which of those things did I improve by worrying? What does verse 32 tell us? (God knows you need these things.) What does verse 33 tell us to do? (Seek God first and trust Him to help you with what you need..) Now look at verse 34. This may sound as if you are not to plan ahead. If this is not the meaning, what is it? (We may plan for tomorrow, but actions can be taken only today. We need to use each day the best we can without getting upset about what we cannot do anything about.)*

Encourage Application

7. Tell the class: *At the beginning of the lesson, we talked about two groups of people—those who try to get rich in this life and those who try to “gather riches in heaven.” Let us try to find from this passage the ways we can prepare for the life to come and list them on the board.*

Here are some ideas they may suggest:

- (1) Make God your only boss.
- (2) Do not worry, but turn to God with your needs.
- (3) Learn that God cares for us and wants what is best for us.
- (4) Work on increasing our faith in God.
- (5) Find God's will for you, and make things right with Him.
- (6) Try to use each day well as God leads, and do not fret about tomorrow.

Supplemental Teaching Ideas

Connect with Life

1. Say to the class: *Let me tell you about three people who were not interested in riches in this world but rather invested their lives in serving God. Albert Schweitzer was a scholar and a famous organist. One day God laid Africa on his heart. Schweitzer gave up his comfortable life in his own country and studied medicine so that he could go to Africa to help people in God's name.*

William Carey was not a wealthy man like Schweitzer, but when God touched his heart for India, he gave up everything to go and tell others about Jesus.

Lottie Moon was a popular young woman from a well-to-do family. She became burdened for

China. She labored there for the rest of her life to make the Gospel real to the Chinese people. She helped them in their day-to-day lives. In fact, it is said that she hastened her own death because when food became scarce, she shared her own with those she had come to love.

These are certainly unusual cases, but God has a plan for each of us to serve Him in some way. Earthly wealth is not the goal He wishes for us.

Encourage Application

1. Ask for volunteers to explain one of the words from the Word List in their own words (i.e., to paraphrase the definition), and to use the word in a new sentence.
2. Use the questions in Things to Think About as a small group activity.
3. Learn the Memory Verse together. Repeat it to each other. Ask each person to write on a slip of paper at least one thing he or she can do to begin gathering riches in heaven. Instruct them to put the paper in their Bible, and use it to pray about and to work on this week. Close with prayer that God would help each one to worry less, trust more in God, and seek to lay up riches in heaven.

Teaching Guide

The Gospel of Matthew: Jesus' Teachings

Unit 1: A New Way of Life

Lesson 5: Choose Life Under God's Rule

Lesson Focus

If we choose to live under God's rule, He will reward us in the life to come.

Focal Text

Matthew 7:1-27

Memory Verse

"Do for other people what you would like them to do for you" (Matthew 7:12a).

Connect with Life

1. Tell the class: *The Olympic Games have very strict rules which the athletes must follow. In the 2004 Summer Olympics in Athens, Greece, a number of athletes were forced to withdraw from competition because they broke rules about using illegal drugs. Two leading athletes from Greece embarrassed their home country by being in this group. The competitions also have very strict rules. In gymnastics, as in some of the other events, if a person steps out of bounds in competition, points are deducted from the athlete's final score. The judges are deduct points for every error. The athletes have chosen to compete, but to do so they must follow the rules. Jesus tells us that God expects us to follow His rules if we choose to follow Him.*

Guide the Study

2. Ask one of the students to read Matthew 7:1-5. Say: *It is very easy to see faults in other people that we excuse or overlook in ourselves. What does Jesus say will happen if we keep pointing out what is wrong in someone else's life? (We will be judged by others if we judge them.)*

What comparison does Jesus make in verses 3 and 4? (The person trying to help has a huge piece of wood in his eye and is trying to help

someone with a tiny piece, apparently not even being aware that he has a problem.)

What seems to be Jesus' advice here? (Clear up your own wrong doing before you point out and try to help someone else's wrong doing.)

We also judge worth of the person by the way he looks. Have a volunteer read the portion of the Study Guide under the heading "Do Not Judge."

3. Read verse 6 to the class. Tell them that this is a difficult verse to understand and there are many different ideas about its meaning. In its simplest explanation, it would seem to warn Jesus' followers that not everyone is able to understand or respond to Jesus' teachings.

4. Request that someone read Matthew 7:7-12. Ask: *What is Jesus teaching in verses 7-8? (God hears your prayers and welcomes you into His fellowship. It cannot mean that anyone gets anything he wants from God. Those who know Him will not ask for things outside of or against His will.)*

In verses 9-11, what is revealed about God? (God is like an earthly, loving father in that He will not give something harmful to His child, even though the child may ask or plead for it. If an earthly father can love and care for his children, how much more can a holy and perfect heavenly Father love us!)

In verse 12, we have what most Christians refer to as the Golden Rule. Why would it be called that? (It sums up how we should treat others in order to be treated well ourselves.)

5. Ask a student to read Matthew 7:13-14. Ask: *What does the narrow door or gate represent? (The way to God's favor and eternal life.)*

What does the wide door or gate represent? (The way to satisfy only oneself, not God. It leads to hell.)

Which seems to attract more people? (The wide door, because it is easy and seems pleasant.)

6. Have someone read Matthew 7:15-23. *What is Jesus warning about here?* (False teachers who lead people astray. They may seem to represent God, but they do not.)

How do we recognize these false teachers? (Verse 16 says we will know them by their fruit. It is our responsibility then to see that their teachings and behavior fit what Jesus tells us is the way to live and to relate to God.)

Notice in verses 21-23 that some of these false teachers may even be surprised themselves to find that they were not following God's rules. That is why it is so important for us to study what the Bible teaches about what God wants of us.

7. Select someone to read Matthew 7:24-29. Ask the class: *What requirements does verse 24 give for a wise man?* ("Whoever hears these words of Mine and does them...")

To what is he compared? (To a man who builds on a strong foundation.)

What happens to his house when the storms come? (It continues to stand firm.)

How is the foolish man described in verse 26? ("Whoever hears these words of Mine and does not do them...")

How is the foolish man described in verse 26? (One who built his house on sand, an unfirm foundation.)

What happens to his house? (When the storm came, the house was destroyed.)

Verses 28 and 29 tell us that the people were surprised at Jesus' words. Why? (He spoke like someone who had authority. Apparently they could sense God's power and truth in Him.)

Encourage Application

8. Tell the class: *This lesson touches on many ideas. Let's list some of some ways we can put these into practice. Copy down those which may help you so that you may refer to them during the week. The first idea has to do with judging others. Think of some ways we can be less judging of other people.* (Possible ideas—try to see things from the other person's point of view, try to imagine yourself in that person's place with his problems, try to correct your own faults so that you can be of help to others who may need it.)

The second idea is about approaching God in prayer. How can we improve here? (Pray often and trust God to hear and to help.)

How do we treat others? (Just like we want to be treated)

How can we avoid the road to hell and find the way to heaven? (First and foremost, by trusting Christ as Savior. Because of our love for Him, we respond to His love through obedience to His commands.)

How can we recognize false teachers who might lead us in the wrong direction? (Be sure their lives match their words and that they teach according to God's Word.)

How can we be wise rather than foolish? (Trust God and obey Him.)

Close with a prayer asking God to help us follow His rules.

Supplemental Teaching Ideas Connect with Life

1. Bring a blueprint showing the plans for the foundation of a house, or secure photographs of actual projects in the community which show foundation work. Ask the group to give any facts they know about how foundations are prepared. If anyone is familiar with blueprints, ask him or her to explain the instructions for laying the foundation.

Ask: *How important is a foundation to a building?* (No building can remain structurally secure if the foundation is faulty.) Have someone read the first two paragraphs from the Study Guide under the heading "Wise and Foolish Builders." Tell the class: *Today we are looking at the foundation for the Christian life. It, too, must be solid if the structure is to be sound.*

Encourage Application

1. Have the group work together to learn the very brief Memory Verse. Recite it together. Ask each person to think of something he or she can do to put this verse into operation. Close with prayer that God would guide each one to build carefully on a strong foundation so that God will be pleased with each life of His children.

Teaching Guide

The Gospel of Matthew: Jesus' Teachings Unit 2: Instructions to Disciples on Mission Lesson 6: Called to Jesus' Mission

Lesson Focus

If we are to be Jesus' disciples, we must tell others what we know about Jesus.

Focal Text

Matthew 9:35-10:15

Memory Verse

"You have received much, now give much"
(Matthew 10:8b).

Connect with Life

1. Tell the class: *Baptists speak a great deal about being "called" to Christian service. What they usually mean is entering into paid positions as full-time Christian workers. What we need to understand from the teachings of Jesus is that everyone is "called" for some specific plan which God has for his or her life. It may be hard to believe that God has individual plans for every person, but that is what the New Testament writings insist is true. You may be called to be a minister in the church. Or you may be called by God to be a banker or construction worker who represents Jesus in the secular world, yet also serves his church in other ways. All of us must seek what God wants us to do as individuals. This is not just a one-time operation. Jesus expects us to seek His guidance in prayer. In today's Scripture lesson, we see how He sent His disciples out on a special mission.*

Guide the Study

2. Ask a student to read Matthew 9:35. Ask the class: *Name the things Jesus does in this one verse. (He goes to all the cities and towns in the area, He teaches in the synagogues, He preaches about the holy Nation of God, and He healed every sickness and disease among the people.) Your Study Guide names Him Herald, Teacher, and Healer. What is a*

herald? (One who brings a message from a king.)

3. Select a student to read Matthew 9:36. *What did Jesus feel for the people He saw?* (Compassion or loving-pity)

To what does He compare them? (Sheep without a shepherd) Ask if anyone has ever worked with sheep. If so, ask him or her to tell what kind of care they need. If not, explain: *Sheep need supervision and care. They cannot protect themselves against wild animals, they cannot determine what plants might be poisonous, and they would have trouble finding still water to drink. They need a shepherd to direct and protect them.*

4. Have someone read Matthew 9:37-38. Tell the class: *Now Jesus makes another comparison. To what does He compare the people?* (To ripe grain ready to be harvested)

What is the problem He sees? (There are not enough people to harvest the grain crop.)

What does Jesus tell them to pray for in this case? (Pray that God will send more people to tell them what God wants them to know.)

5. Now ask someone to read Matthew 10:1-4. Ask for a volunteer to write the names of the disciples on the board so they will be easier to remember. (Simon Peter, Andrew, James, John, Philip, Bartholomew, Thomas, Matthew, James the son of Alphaeus, Thaddeus, Simon the Canaanite, and Judas Iscariot.)

6. Have a person read Matthew 10:5-10. Say: *Jesus sent His disciples on a mission. What were their instructions?* (Go only to Jewish people. Tell them that the kingdom of Heaven is near. Heal the sick of all their diseases, raise the dead, and cast out demons. It is time to repay for some of the teachings you have received. Do not take money, extra clothes, food, or even a walking stick. The people who believe you will provide for you.)

7. Now ask someone to read Matthew 10:11-15. *Jesus tells them how to approach each community. What does He instruct?* (Seek a place to stay with a respected and willing family. Wish them well, but if they prove unworthy, your good wishes will return to you. However, Jesus warns that those who hear, but refuse to believe, will be punished more than the towns of Sodom and Gomorrah, which God destroyed with fire and brimstone.)

Encourage Application

8. Have the students discuss these questions: *Why did Jesus send the disciples only to Jews?* (God's plan was that the Jews would spread the Gospel to the other nations. That was the reason He had watched over them all these years.)

Why does Jesus tell them to seek a place to stay in the community and to depend on the ones they are preaching to for whatever their physical needs might be? (Traveling teachers were given hospitality in the time of the Bible writings. There were few inns, and many were undesirable. Also, their generosity to those who brought them this news would show that they truly believed and received it.)

Why are they to move on if the people are not willing to listen to them? (Time is short for Jesus. He wanted as many people as possible to hear His message.)

What does all this mean for us? (Jesus expects us to spread His message also wherever we go.)

Supplemental Teaching Ideas

Connect with Life

1. Imagine a situation in which you are being trained to do some job that is crucial for the survival of mankind. One day your teacher says, "It is time to begin to share your knowledge with others. Here are your assignments. Go to these places and teach others what you have been taught. The welfare of mankind depends on you doing a good job." How would you feel? Isn't that just what Jesus is asking of His disciples in our Scripture lesson? It is necessary that we pass on what we know of Jesus to those who do not know. Otherwise, they may remain lost for eternity.

Encourage Application

1. Talk with the class about what Jesus wants us to do. Look together at the Memory Verse. Memorize it and say it together. Then ask the class for ways in which we today can carry out this command. Close with prayer that God would guide us so that we can be good disciples.

Teaching Guide

The Gospel of Matthew: Jesus' Teachings Unit 2: Instructions to Disciples on Mission Lesson 7: Toward Trust in Jesus

Lesson Focus

Jesus expects us to obey His commands regardless of the personal cost.

Focal Text

Matthew 10:16-42

Memory Verse

“Whoever makes me known in front of men, I will make him known to my Father in heaven” (Matthew 10:32).

Connect with Life

1. Tell the class: *In many countries today, a belief in Jesus and an attempt to obey Him may mean that the person's family disowns him or her. In some countries, it may mean a prison term, perhaps for many years. In other instances, Christians may actually be sentenced to death. In some places, groups of fanatics have attacked Christians' homes or blown up their churches while believers were meeting for worship. In this country, opposition to Christianity may take the form of ridicule, hateful talk, and accusations, or even the loss of family, friends, or job. Some of you may have experienced this kind of trouble in your own countries or know of someone who has. If you would like to share some of those experiences, we would listen prayerfully.*

Guide the Study

2. Ask a student to read Matthew 10:16-20. Explain: *Jesus told His disciples that He was sending them out like sheep among wolves. What did He mean?* (Sheep are defenseless against those who would attack them, and so were the disciples.)

In verse 16 what advice are they given? (Be wise as snakes and gentle as doves. In other words, they were not to fight or resist enemies, but they

were to be cautious and careful.)

Verses 17 and 18 list the specific problems they may have. What are they? (The disciples might be taken to court or attacked in the synagogue. They might face charges before community leaders or even kings.)

At the end of verse 18, Jesus tells them their primary task before these people. What is it? (They will tell others about Jesus and what He came to do.)

Verse 19 tells them how to handle these situations. What are they to do? (First, they are not to worry. The words they need for defense will be provided by God's Holy Spirit.)

3. Have someone read Matthew 10:21-23. *These are frightening words in verses 21 and 22. What terrible things does Jesus prophesy?* (They may be so hated for their message that families will turn against each other and be willing to have other members killed for believing in Jesus.)

But at the end of verse 22 Jesus gives us a promise. What is it? (“He who stays true to the end will be saved.”)

Now look at verse 23. What are they instructed to do if the people refuse to believe? (They are to go to another community and not waste their time on people who will not listen.)

4. Select a reader for Matthew 10:24-33. *In verses 24 and 25 what does Jesus warn them about?* (People will say you are evil, but do not be afraid. You should be glad to be like Jesus in suffering.)

In verse 26 what promise do they have? (The things which have been secret will be made known and their understanding will grow as they follow Jesus' directions.)

In verse 27 what instruction are they given? (Speak the truth that Jesus has given so that it can be heard by everyone.)

Verses 29-31 remind us again not to be afraid even of physical death. Jesus reassures with what comparison? (God cares even about the fate of

common birds, and people are far more important to Him.)

Verses 32 and 33 make a very strong statement. What is it? (If you make Jesus known among men, He will make you known to His Father. If you do not, He will not make you known to God.)

5. Have someone read Matthew 10:34-42. *In verses 34-36 Jesus summarizes what He has already said in warning to His disciples: Complete commitment to Jesus and His teachings can cause enmity even between family members. Verses 37-39 tell us of an even more difficult task. What is it? (Jesus must be the most important person or desire in the life of His followers, more important than mother or father or spouse or children. He wants our total life. Anything less is not worthy of Him.)*

In the concluding verses (40-42), Jesus speaks of His followers being His representatives and gives them great power. He also assures us that what we do to serve Him will be rewarded even to so lowly an act as giving someone a cup of cold water if it is done in Jesus' name.

Encourage Application

6. Ask a student to read the section from the Study Guide entitled "The Offers of Jesus." Discuss these ideas in class. Ask the students to pray individually and silently that God will show each person how he or she can serve Him best. Close with oral prayer that God would help each person to live up to what he or she feels directed to do.

Supplemental Teaching Ideas

Connect with Life

1. Collect pictures, newspaper clippings, etc., of people who have shown devotion to God's work in the face of difficulties. These may be contemporary or Biblical or historical in some other way.

Some suggestions: Missionaries, ministers, lay people doing missions projects. Try to include a number of nationalities. Show these to the group and spend some time talking about what they have done. Then tell the class that today's lesson shows us what Jesus wants of us and what sacrifices we might be called on to make.

Encourage Application

1. Have the class spend some time learning the Memory Verse and saying it to each other. If anyone will volunteer to explain what that might mean for the individual who wants to follow Jesus, have him do so. If this group is not that English literate, try to make a brief summary statement. Then close in prayer that God would help each person to be willing to put Jesus first and to do His will each day.

2. Create strips of paper featuring the vocabulary words from Lessons 6-7 Word Lists. Write a vocabulary word on each strip; write its definition on another strip. Mix up the order of the definition strips. Let each student (or a small group if your class is large) choose one definition strip and match it to the correct vocabulary word. If your class is more advanced in its comprehension of English, create definition strips for all the vocabulary words in this series (Lessons 1-7) to increase the difficulty.

Teaching Guide

The Gospel of Matthew: Jesus' Teachings

Unit 3: Teaching in Parables

Lesson 8: When the Harvest Comes

Lesson Focus

Jesus expects His followers to plant the seeds and to be ready to harvest the results.

Focal Text

Matthew 13:1-23

Memory Verse

“The seed which fell on the good ground is like the one who hears the Word and understands it. He gives much grain. Some seed gives one hundred times as much grain. Some gives sixty times as much grain. Some gives thirty times as much grain” (Matthew 13:23).

Connect with Life

1. Illustration: *Until the middle of the 20th century, many churches held two-week revival meetings where the message of Jesus Christ was emphasized to the community. These were not Bible studies, nor were they doctrinal discussions. Each night, the message of salvation was preached with great fervor in order to persuade people to accept the salvation offered by Jesus. Many decisions were made; some were dramatic and very surprising to the community. When the community settled down again after the close of the revival, various people who made decisions reacted in different ways. Some seemed to forget their commitment by the end of the next week. Some began with enthusiasm which died away after a few months. Some even laughed at their decision and made a joke of it. But many were sincere in their commitment. Some of them changed noticeably in their actions and personal habits. Some began quietly to look for ways to serve God.*

Jesus knew that people were like this. In the time He spent on earth, He talked about just such a situation in His parable of the man who planted seeds.

Guide the Study

2. Ask a student to read Matthew 13:1-2. Tell the class: *These verses give us the setting for the parable or picture-story to follow. Jesus is in the region of Galilee, apparently on the shore of the Sea of Galilee. How is this gathering different from most of the others?* (Jesus sat in a boat and spoke to the people who remained on the shore.)

3. Choose one of your better readers to read aloud Matthew 13:3-9. Tell the class: *This is an example of the kind of picture-stories Jesus told. What kind of jobs were probably done by the people of this area?* (Fishing or farming would probably be the most common.) *This parable deals with what most of them would know about from experience or observation. It concerns a farmer sowing seeds. This would have been primitive, involving no machinery. The farmer would have a container of seed, perhaps a leather bag slung on his shoulder. He would bring out a handful of seeds and toss them around Him. That would explain why some fell in odd places. Where did they fall?* (Some fell beside the road; some between rocks. Others fell into a patch of thorns. Most of them fell on good ground which had been prepared for them.) *What happened to the seeds beside the road?* (Birds ate them.) *What happened to the seeds in the rocks?* (They sprouted quickly, but died because the soil was too shallow.) *What happened to the ones which fell in the thorns?* (They grew, but the stronger thorns choked them so they died.) *What about the greater number which fell on good, prepared soil?* (They grew and produced a crop of grain, some a little harvest and some a great harvest.)

4. Now select someone to read Matthew 13:10-12. *What question do the disciples ask Jesus?* (Why did He teach with picture-stories or parables.) *What is Jesus' answer?* (The message was first of all to the disciples. Only they were prepared to hear and act on the idea.) *In verse 12 Jesus tells them that the*

ones who have will get more and those who have little will lose even that. In this context He is talking about their preparedness to follow Him. Those who are totally committed will be asked for even more, but those who are not very committed will possibly fall away. Another interpretation may refer to the growing wisdom of the disciples in contrast to the lack of understanding by the religious leaders of the people.

5. Ask a student to read Matthew 13:13-17. *Here Jesus answers more fully the question asked in verse 12. Will someone summarize what He is saying?* (Many people seem to listen, but they fail to understand. They seem to be looking, but they are not seeing the truth. If they would allow themselves to see and to hear, they would understand and receive salvation.)

6. Next request a student to read Matthew 13:18-23. Divide the group into small groups of two or three students. Ask one group to listen and report on what happened to each type of seed. (The seed by the roadside is the words the people heard which were taken away by the devil. The seed that fell between the rocks is the person who hears it, believes with joy, but he cannot stay faithful when trouble comes. The seed among the thorns is the person who believes, but lets cares and greed overcome his faith. The seed that fell on the prepared ground is the person who hears, understands, and faithfully follows through and gives service to God.)

Encourage Application

7. *Imagine that we follow some of the people from the revival described in the opening. We will give them names so you can compare them with people you know.*

Dave heard but failed to understand and so forgot all about it.

Jim believed with great excitement and big plans. Soon the excitement faded and he became busy with his old group of friends, who persuaded him to return to his old way of life which ignored God.

Betty received the good news joyfully, but a death in her family caused her to doubt God's goodness. Then she found that giving generously to

God's work would leave her with less money for clothes and luxuries. Gradually she slipped back into her old life of selfishness. Many of those who received the good news at the revival changed the way they lived and thought.

Mary began to study her Bible, to pray often, and to teach children in her church.

Dan saw that there were needs among the poor in his community. He set up a food and clothing center with the help of several of the others from the revival. They found people to help and to tell about the love of God. Soon others came to believe and to join their work.

Now ask yourself: What kind of believer and follower am I?

Close with prayer that God will give ears that hear, eyes that see, and a heart that wants to serve Him.

Supplemental Teaching Ideas Connect with Life

1. Ask someone to read aloud the first three paragraphs of the last section in the Study Guide entitled, "A Double Meaning." *Sometimes we hear, but fail to understand what is meant. Perhaps we see something, but we misinterpret what it means. Can you think of a time that happened to you and share it with the group?* (Suggestions: misunderstanding the time and place you were to meet someone; misunderstanding a name in a telephone message; seeing part of an event but not being aware of what caused it, etc.) *Our Bible text today will show us that this can happen in our spiritual lives also.*

Encourage Application

1. Divide into groups to learn the Memory Verse. Practice saying it to each other. Then have the whole group recite it together. Ask them to pray silently for a moment. Then close with a prayer that each person may be like the seed that fell on good ground and became productive for God in His harvest.

Teaching Guide

The Gospel of Matthew: Jesus' Teachings

Unit 3: Teaching in Parables

Lesson 9: Will You Be Patient?

Lesson Focus

We must learn to trust God to achieve His goals in His own time, not ours.

Focal Text

Matthew 13:24-43

Memory Verse

“The hearts of these people have become fat. They hear very little with their ears. They have closed their eyes. If they did not do this, they would see with their eyes and hear with their ears and understand with their hearts. Then they would be changed in their ways and I would heal them” (Matthew 13:15)

Connect with Life

1. Tell the class: *Your Study Guide answered the question, What is patience?* Ask someone to read the first paragraph which answers this question. Ask: *What kinds of things are we impatient for?* (Allow time for various answers.) *Impatience is something all people experience, from children demanding a toy or food to older students being impatient to finish school. Adults feel impatience with their fellow workers at times or with their families. The most difficult kind of impatience to overcome may be our impatience with God because we feel He is slow to act. We must not become like the woman who was praying earnestly, “Lord, give me patience—and hurry!” Today’s Scripture passages help us to see time more as God sees it.*

2. Have a student read Matthew 13:24-30. Give the class a few minutes to read over the explanation in the Study Guide about this problem under the heading “The Parable of the Weeds.” Then ask them to summarize what the problem was and why it was so hard to solve. *What suggestions did the servants make?* (To pull out the weeds from the

field.)

Why was that not a good solution? (It was too hard to tell the wheat from the weeds until it was too late. Pulling up the weeds would also pull up the wheat.)

What is the solution the owner proposed? (When the grain is ready for harvest, pull the weeds up first and burn them. Then harvest the grain.)

Ask someone to read the last three paragraphs of this section to explain the meaning of the parable.

3. Ask someone to read Matthew 13: 31-32. Tell the class: *In this present day, mustard is more like a vegetable. The green leaves are cooked and eaten like spinach. The seeds are ground to make a seasoning. In other parts of the world, what they call mustard is more like a bush which can grow up to twelve feet high. Birds are particularly fond of its seeds. What does your Study Guide say about the meaning of the parable?* (The kingdom begins small like a mustard seed, but it grows to immense size.)

Guide the Study

4. Select someone to read Matthew 13:33. Ask: *What is yeast?* (It is a fungus which reacts with sweet substances to reproduce itself. Mixed with flour and water, it increases the volume so that the baked product becomes soft rather than hard.)

A cook could use a piece of risen dough to add to the next batch of flour to make it rise. Today we call that process making sour dough bread. Jewish people had two kinds of bread. What were they? (Leavened—with yeast, or unleavened—without yeast.)

Look at your Study Guide under “The Parable of the Yeast.” Have someone read the first two paragraphs. Ask: *Why do you think bread was so important to them?* (Their foods were very basic. Bread was perhaps the only food a poor family might have.) Point out that making yeast bread

takes time. It would perhaps be several hours before the dough was ready for baking. Unleavened bread was quick, a mixture of flour and oil baked quickly and producing something like unsalted crackers. When the people were taken out of Egypt, they were instructed to use unleavened bread as they escaped and traveled. They continued to use it in celebrating certain rituals, such as the Passover Feast, as a commemoration of that time. That is perhaps why they came to view yeast as evil, but Jesus uses it in His story in a different way. It makes great changes over a period of time and continues to work silently.

5. Choose an advanced student to read Matthew 13:34-43. Point out: *Sometimes even the disciples had trouble understanding Jesus' parables.* Ask the students to help summarize the points Jesus explained. Before class, write these italicized questions on the board or on large pieces of paper to refer to or display at this time during the lesson.

Who is the planter? (Jesus)

What does the sown field represent? (The world)

Who are the good seeds? (Children of the holy nation)

Who are the weed seeds? (Children of the devil)

Who planted the weed seeds? (The devil)

When is the harvest? (The end of the world)

Who are the reapers? (God's angels)

What happens to the weeds which are gathered?
(They are burned in the fire.)

What will happen to the children of the holy nation?
(They will shine like the sun in a world without evil.)

Encourage Application

6. Select students to read aloud the last four paragraphs of the Study Guide. Ask students to list ways in which following Jesus has changed the world today. Then discuss what they might do to bring about the growth of God's kingdom in their daily lives.

Supplemental Teaching Ideas

Connect with Life

1. Find current news clippings showing the evil that is being done in different parts of the world today. After summarizing them briefly, ask the class if they

have sometimes wondered why God does not stop all the evil. Explain that today's lesson shows us how God plans to stop all evil and gather His own children to Him and that we must be patient to do our part while we wait for God's will to be worked out in His time frame rather than ours.

Close with prayer.

Encourage Application

1. Discuss the meaning of the Memory Verse. *Have you ever failed to hear and understand what God speaks to you or failed to see and understand what He shows you? Do you feel God may be prolonging the evil world we live in to give the children of the devil time to hear, to see, and to obey? What do you feel should be the responsibility of a child of God to bring this about?* Learn the verse by working in small groups. Show the groups how to work on one sentence of the verse at a time. Say it together.

Teaching Guide

The Gospel of Matthew: Jesus' Teachings

Unit 4: Life in the Fellowship

Lesson 10: You and the "Little Ones"

Lesson Focus

God expects us to have the humility and trust that a child has for those he loves.

Focal Text

Matthew 18:1-14

Memory Verse

"For sure, I tell you, unless you have a change of heart and become like a little child, you will not get into the holy nation of heaven" (Matthew 18:3).

Connect with Life

1. Ask the class: *What are some of the traits that we admire in children?* (Make a list of these on the board as students answer—innocence, trust, imitation of those they admire and look up to, honesty, unselfconsciousness, the ability to be absorbed in what they are doing, the desire to please those they look up to, lack of worry, the ability to enjoy simple things, lack of personal ambition, lack of arrogance.) Discuss these briefly and ask for illustrations of some of them. Tell the class: *Many of these traits we lose as we grow older. In today's lesson, Jesus shows us that we need to keep some of these traits and use them in our spiritual lives.*

Guide the Study

2. Ask a student to read Matthew 18:1-4. Tell the class: *In today's world, there seems to be such a strong sense of competitiveness to be the best, the greatest, the top. Many people lose sight of anything else. Even the disciples felt this pressure two thousand years ago. What does Jesus do to answer their question?* (He places a child in the center of the group and tells them that they must change and become like little children before they can even enter the kingdom.)

3. Choose someone to read Matthew 18:5-6. *In what way does Jesus show us how to serve Him in these verses?* (Care for the children who are helpless. Make sure they know God.)

What action would cause punishment?

(Leading a child the wrong direction so that he falls into sin.)

What punishment does Jesus mention?

(Having a large stone tied around a person's neck and casting him into the sea.)

4. Select a person to read Matthew 18:7-10. *Jesus now shifts to the personal responsibility of His followers. He knows that people will be tempted to sin, but He reserves strong judgment for those who cause another to sin. What illustrations does Jesus give of this point?* (Jesus asks us to imagine that some part of our body could cause us to sin. He tells us we would be better off without those parts than to keep them and go on sinning.)

At this point, Jesus returns to the children.

What protection does He say they have? (Angels of God are watching over them.)

5. Ask someone to read Matthew 18:11-14. *What does Jesus say is His purpose in coming to earth?* ("To save that which was lost.")

Here Jesus tells them another parable to illustrate this point. What does the parable concern? (A shepherd who finds that one of his flock is missing.)

What would a good shepherd do? (He would go find the lost sheep.)

How does this shepherd feel about finding the lost sheep? (He rejoices more over finding the lost than over the ninety-nine who stayed with the flock.)

What does Jesus tell us about God's wishes?

(God "does not want one of these little ones to be lost.")

Encourage Application

6. *If God is so concerned about how we treat children and those who are weak and helpless, what can we do to improve their lot?* (Suggested answers: Spend more time with your own children and emphasize their spiritual lives, try to meet needs of the children's friends who need love and understanding, contribute to community or church programs that collect food or clothing, volunteer to help in a school, make sure that your child and others over whom you have influence have a chance to learn about God and His word, report any suspected child abuse to the proper authorities, etc.)

Close with prayer that God would guide us to serve those who need it most.

Supplemental Teaching Ideas

Connect with Life

1. Tell this story: *On the first day of school in a Russian village in 2004, armed terrorists herded all the children, their teachers, and their mothers into the building to hold them hostage. They wired the building with bombs so that no one could escape. Some of the mothers were allowed to leave, but they could take only one child. The others had to remain. Some of those children were later saved, but hundreds died in the bomb blast. When the families whose children were saved were united again, can you imagine how precious those children were to them? That's how God the Father and Jesus the Son feel about those who turn to them for salvation.*

Encourage Application

1. Work in groups to learn the Memory Verse. Recite it together. Ask that each person mention a trait in children that God may want from us. Close with prayer that we might become more childlike in our ability to trust and obey God.

Teaching Guide

The Gospel of Matthew: Jesus' Teachings

Unit 4: Life in the Fellowship

Lesson 11: Relating to Imperfect People

Lesson Focus

Because God forgives us our sins, we ought to forgive the sins of other people.

Focal Text

Matthew 18:15-35

Memory Verse

"Then Peter came to Jesus and said, 'Lord, how many times may my brother sin against me and I forgive him, up to seven times?' Jesus said to him, 'I tell you, not seven times but seventy times seven!' " (Matthew 18:21-22).

Connect with Life

1. *Do you ever read the advice column in the newspaper? In these columns, people write and ask what to do about problems. Usually their questions are about how someone has unkindly treated the person seeking the advice. Sometimes family members have refused to speak to each other for years over some slight misunderstanding. Each person thinks he has been wronged in some way. He wants the other person to change or apologize, yet the advice-seeker does not want to admit any guilt. The advice columnist suggests ways to improve the situation.*

Jesus has a more direct way of handling the situation which He discusses in today's Scripture lesson.

Guide the Study

2. Ask a student to read Matthew 18:15-17. *What is the first thing Jesus suggests? (Go to the brother. Tell him what you feel he has done to offend you.)*

What if that does not help? (Then go back with one or two trustworthy friends and try again.)

If the second attempt does not work, what then? (Present the problem to the church so that

they can help straighten out the problem.)

If this does not work, what should the person do? (Consider him as if he were as bad as a person who does not know God or as a person who helps his country's enemies.)

3. Have someone read Matthew 18:19-20. Tell the class: *This is a passage which needs to be read with Jesus' other words about prayer. It is true that a group praying together may be more effective than a single person praying, but even here, God promises to hear us and to do what He thinks is best for us, not necessarily to do what we wish.*

4. Select a person to read Matthew 18:21-22. Tell the class: *Peter thought he was being very generous when he suggested that he might forgive someone seven times. What did Jesus tell him? (Not just seven times, but seventy times that much—a much higher number than anyone would bother with keeping an account. Jesus wanted His followers to forgive their offenders an infinite number of times.)*

5. Have someone read Matthew 18:23-30. Tell the class: *Jesus again tells a parable to illustrate His point. What is the situation described at the beginning of the parable? (A king is calling in debts and loans which were owed to him.)*

What was to happen to the man who owed much money and could not pay it? (He, his wife, and his children were to be sold into slavery.)

What response did the man make when he heard what was to happen to him? (The man threw himself at the king's feet and begged for more time. He promised to repay all the money.)

How did the king respond? (He was so merciful that he canceled the debt completely and let the man go free.)

What did this same man say when someone begged for more time to repay the small amount he owed? (He had him thrown into prison until he could pay all the debt.)

6. Request a volunteer to read Matthew 18:31-35. *How did the king hear about the debtor's actions to his fellow man? (The other servants told the king what he had done because they saw how unfair it was.)*

How did the king react? (He sent for the man he had forgiven. He asked him why he did not show pity to his own debtor when the king had been so forgiving to him. Then he turned the man over to the authorities to be beaten and kept in jail until he could pay.)

Verse 35 tells us a very important lesson: God forgives us freely, but He expects us to forgive others in the same way.

Encourage Application

7. Ask the class to turn in their Study Guides to the last section entitled "How to Forgive." Have various students read these paragraphs aloud. During a moment of silent prayer, ask the students to think of people they might need to forgive for something and to ask God to help them do it.

Supplemental Teaching Ideas

Connect with Life

1. Have a student read the introductory paragraphs in the Study Guide. Tell the class: *Jesus knew relationships with God and with others were the most important part of life. In today's Scripture passage, He tells us how to keep those relationships firmly connected.*

Encourage Application

1. In small groups, have the students memorize the Memory Verse and recite it to each other. Then ask that they think of their own sin and how God offers forgiveness. Ask that they think of any person they need to forgive or a person they need to ask for forgiveness. Close with prayer that God would give the strength to be grateful enough for their own forgiveness to seek to mend relationships with other people.

Teaching Guide

The Gospel of Matthew: Jesus' Teachings Unit 5: Teachings about Accountability Lesson 12: Against Religious Hypocrisy

Lesson Focus

The road to happiness for a Christian is to live as Jesus taught and to bring honor to God.

Focal Text

Matthew 23:1-30

Memory Verse

“He who is greatest among you will be the one to care for you. The person who thinks he is important will find out how little he is worth. The person who is not trying to honor himself will be made important” (Matthew 23:11-12).

Connect with Life

1. Ask a student to read aloud the introductory material in the Study Guide about pretense and hypocrisy. Ask: *Do you know people who pretend to be “good” but who do dishonest or unkind things? Jesus condemns these people and explains what He wants us to do in today’s Scripture passage.*

Guide the Study

2. Have someone to read Matthew 23:1-4. Ask: *What two groups is Jesus criticizing? (Teachers of the law [Scribes] and proud religious law-keepers [Pharisees]) What is wrong with what they are doing? (Telling the people to do hard things which they do not do themselves) We have a saying, “Practice what you preach!” That seems to sum up Jesus’ point.*

3. Appoint a person to read Matthew 23:5-12. *Verse 4 is an accusation against them. What does it tell us? (These men make religion a burden for people and will not offer any help when the burden is too heavy.) Why do the Scribes and Pharisees do this? (To show off to the people how religious they are.)*

What do they do to show off? (Wear large boxes containing Scriptures; wear wide trimming on their garments; want the best seats at suppers and in their synagogues; like for people to show respect and call them Teacher.) In Verses 8-10, Jesus instructs in some things not to do. What are they? (Don’t expect that others call you Teacher or Rabbi. Don’t call anyone on earth “father” because only God is the heavenly Father. The same is true for “leader” because Christ is our Leader.) In verses 11-12, Jesus explains how to know who is greatest. What does He say? (The greatest person will serve others as God directs him. The person who serves humbly will be considered important by God.)

4. Request a volunteer to read Matthew 23:13-33. *In verses 13-15 Jesus states what is wrong with what the teachers of the Law and the proud religious law-keepers are doing. What does He say? (They are pretending to be good when they are not. By doing this they are keeping others from God’s kingdom. They steal widows’ homes and cover it up with long public prayers.) In verses 16-22, Jesus criticizes their definition of a binding promise. What are they doing? (They find ways to break the promises when it suits them by saying that when a person promises by certain things he does not have to keep his promise. Jesus tells them they are wrong.) In verses 23-24, Jesus tells them they are using the practice of tithing in a way that displeases God. What is tithing? (The practice of returning to God for His work one-tenth of the income a person earns.) What are they doing? (They give a tenth of even the herbs that they grow for the kitchen but ignore more important things like concern and help for those in need.) What does Jesus compare them to? (A man who gets upset over a small bug in his cup but doesn’t even notice a camel.) We have developed a saying to describe a person who emphasizes unimportant things and ignores crucial things: “He will strain at a gnat and swallow a camel.” In verses 25 and 26, Jesus makes some other comparisons. What are they? (These religious*

leaders are like people who only wash the outside of a cup or plate but leave the inside dirty.) *What do you think He means by this? Is He really talking about washing dishes?* (Jesus is emphasizing that real purity for a person is within his heart. That is the evil which must be cleansed.) *In verses 27-28, Jesus compares these people to something even worse. What is it?* (They are like a grave which has been whitewashed to make it more attractive, but like the grave, they are full of decay and rotteness.) *In verses 29-32, Jesus accuses them of hypocrisy. On what grounds does Jesus say this?* (They build handsome tombs and memorials to the prophets who have been killed for speaking God's words and brag that they would not have behaved so if they had been there. But Jesus says they are just like their ancestors who killed the prophets in order not to hear God's Word.) *In verse 33, what does Jesus call these men?* (They are a family of snakes who will end in hell.)

5. Ask a student to read Matthew 23:34-36. *Jesus says in these verses that He does not give up trying to reach people with the truth. He will keep sending messengers with His words. What may happen to some of those messengers?* (They will be persecuted. Evil men who oppose God will beat them, kill them in various ways, and even crucify them. These things did happen to Jesus who was crucified and to His disciples who were beaten or killed.) *What harsh punishment does Jesus say the Scribes and Pharisees will have?* (They will be guilty not just of the blood of one person whom they killed, but of all the followers of God who have suffered.)

6. Select someone to read verses 37-39. *Jesus still loved these people. He mourns for all in Jerusalem who would not listen to Him. What comparison does He make?* (He would have sheltered the people of Jerusalem like a mother hen shelters her chicks to protect them from danger. But they would not let Him.) *Jesus was very sad that the people would not listen. He knew He would not be on earth much longer. After that, people would see Him only when they acknowledged Him as Savior.*

Encourage Application

7. Ask someone to read the last section from the Study Guide, "Woe and Hell." Give the class the opportunity to discuss these ideas. Tell them: *If we really believe that Jesus is the only way to salvation for all people everywhere, we need to be busy trying to reach the world with this message. Think about what you can do. Do you know someone who does not believe? Will you talk to that person and try to explain God's plan to him or her?* Have a short time of silent prayer and dedication. Then close with a prayer that God will help us not to be hypocrites or show-offs, but true followers who feel the urgency to reach out with God's love.

Supplemental Teaching Ideas Connect with Life

1. Bring a dictionary to class and ask two students to read definitions of hypocrite and pretense. Ask the class: *Do you know anyone who fits these definitions?* Tell of these hypothetical cases:
 - (1) Roger confessed to a friend that he could not believe in a religion when so many believers from the local church owed him money which he could not collect.
 - (2) Joan was faithful to attend church, but everyone knew that she bragged about cheating on her income tax for the past four years.
 - (3) John was a banker who was an active deacon in his church. But during the week, he was known to take unfair advantage of people to seize their property. Are these people guilty of pretense and hypocrisy? In today's Scripture, we find what Jesus would say to such people.

Encourage Application

1. Work in small groups to learn the Memory Verse. Recite it together. Discuss how it can affect our lives. Close with prayer that God will help us to keep His laws and to show His love to the world as we witness to others.

Teaching Guide

The Gospel of Matthew: Jesus' Teachings Unit 5: Teachings about Accountability Lesson 13: For the Least of These

Lesson Focus

Jesus expects Christians here on earth to serve God by caring for those who need help in the name of Jesus.

Focal Text

Matthew 25:31-46

Background Text

Matthew 24-25

Memory Verse

“Then the King will say, ‘For sure, I tell you, because you have done it to one of the least of My brothers, you have done it to Me’ ” (Matthew 25:40)

Connect with Life

1. Tell the class: *If you were in Jerusalem looking for the site of the Jewish Temple, all you could find today would be a short span of the foundation wall. The area is now occupied with a magnificent mosque. The Jews call the foundation the Wailing Wall. They come there to pray and lament the fate of their nation. Jesus warned His disciples in today's scripture passage that the Temple would be destroyed.*

Ask someone to read the Introduction in your Study Guide about the fate of the Temple.

Guide the Study

2. Select a person to read Matthew 24:3-14. Tell the class: *The disciples asked Jesus to tell them when the end of the world would come. Jesus warns them not to be led astray by those who claim falsely to be the Christ. What are some of the things they are to look for? (Wars and rumors of wars, scarcity of food, natural catastrophes, like earthquakes, volcano eruptions, and hurricanes. This is not the end.*

Christians may have to suffer and die for their beliefs. They will betray each other, but those who remain faithful will be saved when the end finally does come.)

—*One last thing they must look for is found in verse 14. What is it? (The Good News must be preached over the whole earth. Then the end will come.)*

3. Have a student read Matthew 24:29-31. *How does Jesus describe the final outcome? (When everything foretold has been accomplished, the sun will get dark. The moon will be dark. Stars will fall. Powers in the heavens will be shaken. Then there will be a sign in the heavens known to all the world. They will see Jesus coming in the clouds with power and glory. Angels will sound the trumpet. God's people will be gathered together.)*

4. Ask someone to read Matthew 24:35-44. *Heaven and earth will pass away, but not the words of Jesus. How can we know which day He will come? (We cannot know. Even Jesus, in His earthly form, did not know. Only God knew the exact time.)*

—*How does Jesus compare Noah's flood with the end of the world? (People will be going about their daily lives with no suspicion of what is about to happen. In Noah's case, everything was normal for the people until the torrential rains began. For us, life will be as it is each day. It will happen suddenly.)*

—*What does verse 44 remind us to do? (Be ready all the time, because we do not know when the end will come.)*

5. Request that someone read Matthew 25:31-46. *Jesus did not tell us what day it would happen, but He did describe some of the events. In verses 31-33 what will happen first? (Jesus will sit on His throne with all the angels about Him. All nations will be before Him. He will divide His followers from the unbelievers just as a shepherd divides the sheep from the goats in his flock. The sheep will go on His right side, the honored place. The goats will go*

on His left.)

—*What will Jesus say to those on the right?* (Come into heaven, which was made ready even before the world was made.)

—*Why does He select these?* (They gave Him food, water, clothes, and comfort when He needed them by helping the people in need.)

—*What do these chosen ones ask Him?* (When did we help you?)

—*What does the King say to those on the left?* (Go into the punishment you deserve because you did not care for the poor and weak who needed help.)

—*What punishment is reserved for them?* (Everlasting punishment of fire with the devil and his angels.)

Encourage Application

6. Bring note cards (any size) for each student.

Ask: *If we know God will judge us by how we relate to Him and to our fellow creatures, what must we do?*

Ask that they list on a note card some things that they can do to please God. (Suggestions: Pray, give money or food or clothes to help those who need help, give time to listen to the lonely and mentor those who need guidance. But the most important thing is to witness about Jesus and what it means to trust and obey Him, so that all the people we know will have a chance to be right with God.)

Now ask that they keep this card in their Bibles. They need to read it often and pray about what God wants them as individuals to do to serve Him. Close with prayer that God would help us all to see what needs to be done and to do it for His sake.

Supplemental Teaching Ideas

Connect with Life

1. Tell the class this story: *A young woman had a vivid dream. In the dream, there were long lines of people who were being weighed on a balance scale. She was too far back in the line to see what was in the balancing part of the scale though she strained her eyes to see. When she came closer, she saw that the person sat on one side of the scale and bundles she could not quite see clearly were piled on the other side. If the scales balanced or if the side with*

the bundles was heavier, the person left to go into a brightly lighted room where she could hear what seemed to be an angelic choir. Those who were heavier than the side with bundles were sent into a dark room from which came terrible sounds.

Finally someone answered her frantic question, "What does this mean?" She was told, "The King is evaluating His subjects. The bundles you see are all the good things the person has done to serve Him. Those who balance or whose bundles weigh more than they do, get rewarded. The others are banished."

"But who is this King?" she asked.

The reply came, "The King is Jesus. He is judging the people. Those who serve Him have everlasting joy. The others are punished eternally."

She began to cry, "I'm not ready. I haven't been a good servant." Suddenly she awoke to realize it was a dream. She believed God had sent her a message. She must prepare herself to be judged. From that time on, she changed her life to serve God.

Encourage Application

2. Work together to learn the Memory Verse.

Recite it to each other. Ask them to remember the story of the girl and her dream. *What would be in your bundles? Would they outweigh you? How can we be sure that we are serving God to the best of our ability?* (Study the Bible, pray, witness, look for people you can help, worship regularly to keep your spirit fed, etc.)

Close with prayer that God would enable you to serve Him more completely.

Teaching Guide

The Gospel of Matthew: Jesus' Teachings

Bonus Christmas Lesson

Lesson 14: God With Us—and Not Just Us

Lesson Focus

Jesus came to earth for the purpose of bringing salvation to all the world.

Focal Text

Matthew 1:18-2:12

Memory Verse

“A Son will be born to her. You will give Him the name Jesus because He will save His people from the punishment of their sins” (Matthew 1:21).

Connect with Life

1. Ask someone to read the first two paragraphs of the Study Guide under the heading “Joseph’s Problem.”
2. Ask about marriage customs in the countries from which the students come. Do parents still arrange the marriage? At what age would the legal ties begin? Do the bride and groom have any say about what is to be done? Only a few years ago many countries had arranged marriages. Today only a few do. In Jesus’ time it was the normal state of things. But God took a hand in events in an unexpected way.

Guide the Study

3. Ask a student to read Matthew 18:18-21. Point out that Mary and Joseph were in the betrothal stage which was legally binding. It would have been hard for Joseph to change the arrangements.

Ask: *How does Joseph find his answer?*

(God appeared in a dream and told him that Mary had not been unfaithful. The child she would bear was not the child of another man, but of God’s Holy Spirit.)

—*What else was Joseph told in the dream?* (The child would be a son and He would be named Jesus, which means “Savior.”)

—*What was Jesus’ purpose?* (To save people from their sins.)

3. Select a person to read Matthew 18:22-23. Tell the class: *Matthew was writing primarily to convince the Jewish people that Jesus was the promised Messiah. He used many references to prophecies in the Old Testament. Who does he quote in verse 23?* (Isaiah)

—*One of the names applied to Jesus was “Immanuel.” What does it mean?* (“God with us.”)

4. Have someone read Matthew 18:24-25. Ask: *What does Joseph do about the dream?* (He proceeds with the final marriage vows, but he has no sexual relations with Mary until after Jesus is born. He gives Him the name Jesus.)

5. Choose a student to read Matthew 2:1. Tell the class: *Mary and Joseph were living in Nazareth, in the northern part of Israel. They traveled to Bethlehem because a Roman decree required all citizens to travel to the place which was the base of their clan in order to take part in an official census. That story is told in other parts of the Gospels (Luke 2:1-7). Matthew omits this explanation. In his account he does explain that Herod was the king in this area. Where in Bethlehem was Jesus born? Refer to the Study Guide under the heading “The Birthplace of Jesus.”* (He was born perhaps in a stable or in a cave because the town was so crowded that Mary and Joseph could not find a place to stay. Luke tells this story.)

—*Who comes to find Jesus?* (Some wise men, often called the Magi, came from the East. Their job was to study the stars.)

6. Ask a person to read Matthew 2:2-6. Ask: *Who were these wise men?* See the Study Guide under “The Wise Men.” Herod was only part Jewish. He was certainly not a devout, practicing Jew. He did not know about the Jewish prophecies, but he called the Jewish religious leaders who told him. Prophecy

said that Jesus was to be born in Bethlehem. They referred to the Old Testament prophet, Micah, in verse 6.

7. Have someone read Matthew 2:7-8. Now refer to the Study Guide under “Herod.” *Why was Herod worried?* (He was afraid a new king would try to take his power from him. He was afraid that there might be a revolution in a few years which would anger his bosses, the Romans.)

—*What reason did Herod give the wise men (or Magi) for returning to tell him where the child was? (So that he could worship Him.)*

—*Tell the class: Matthew 2:16-18 tells what Herod’s plans really were. He meant to kill the child to prevent future trouble. When God warned the Magi not to report to him, he was so angry that he sent soldiers to kill all the male children two years of age and under. God, however, had warned Joseph to take his family secretly to Egypt for safety.*

8. Request a student to read Matthew 2:9-12. Ask: *How did they find the exact spot where Jesus was? (The star led them.)*

—*By now Mary and Joseph were in a house. What did the Magi do? (They bowed down and worshiped the child Jesus. Then they gave rich gifts—gold, frankincense, and myrrh.)*

—*Frankincense is a very expensive type of perfume or incense which was used in worship services. Myrrh was an expensive spice used to embalm the dead. Both could have been sold to help finance the journey to Egypt where the family stayed until Herod died. Then God sent them to Nazareth where Jesus grew up.*

Ask someone to read the section in the Study Guide called “Gifts for Jesus.”

Encourage Application

9. Explain that the best gift of Christmas is realizing that eternal life is offered to everyone from a loving Heavenly Father:

Christians believe that Jesus is the only hope for the salvation of the world. Man is sinful and unable to relate to God as he ought because of his sinfulness. Jesus came to be a sacrifice for man’s sin. Because of this sacrifice, His death on the cross,

and His resurrection to rejoin God in heaven, all men and women have the means and opportunity to appear as righteous before God if only they will accept the gift Jesus offers.

Are you right with God? The gift is offered, but you have to accept it. God does not force His salvation on anyone.

What of your family and your friends? The people in the country you have come from? The people who live near you or work with you? Let us pray that God will open our hearts and lead us to do His will. God means for us to tell the whole world of His gift of Christmas love.