

Teaching Guide



*ADULT BIBLE STUDY
IN BASIC ENGLISH*

1, 2, 3 JOHN
1 PETER

PLUS BONUS CHRISTMAS LESSON

Margaret Gayle

BAPTISTWAY

Dallas, Texas

ADULT BIBLE STUDY IN BASIC ENGLISH
TEACHING GUIDE
First, Second, and Third John and First Peter

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Adult Bible Study in Basic English—Teaching Guide

1, 2, 3 JOHN & 1 PETER

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 Basic English.

Bible Study in Basic 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 (\$1.95 each per quarter) 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

Margaret Gayle served with her husband, Jim, as a missionary in Vietnam and Indonesia for more than 24 years. For eight years, she taught ESL at University of North Texas in Denton and at Tarrant County College. Margaret is a native Texan and lives in the Dallas-Fort Worth area. She and her husband have three adult sons and ten grandchildren.

Suggestions for Teaching Basic English Bible Study Lessons

General Suggestions

- Provide language edition Bibles so students can read the focal passage in their native languages.
- Beginning students may require three sessions to complete one lesson.
- Review the Word Study before beginning the study. Provide page (see resources) for class to keep vocabulary studies in their notebooks.
- 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).
- 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

- 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.
- 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.
- When time allows, pairs may read the lesson again to each other.
- Class may close books and listen as a native speaker reads the section again.
- Discuss lesson using “Things to Think About.”

Memory Verse

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

Picture Sequencing (The 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.

Picture Sequencing (continued)

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 of the 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 turn of the least proficient student, 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 in review of the 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,

- 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 lesson

Procedure:

Tell the parable or story using pictures. Use animation and simple sentences.

Ask questions about the main idea of the story.

Read story aloud while students follow along and underline unknown words. Go over the meaning of these words with the whole class.

(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.

(Beginning or low-intermediate students) Read the story again and ask the students to repeat it with you line by line.

Invite the class to read the story with you in unison.

Ask pairs to read the story to each other.

Ask for volunteers to tell the story in their own words.

Make drawings large enough for the back row to see.

3. 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).

4. 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**

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

◇ **Low Anxiety Environment**

The following factors contribute to a relaxed and comfortable atmosphere and build a sense of community that is a safe place for risk-taking: (Students are unafraid to make mistakes or feel foolish.)

- 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 the students as often as possible through eye contact and/or positioning yourself on the eye level of students

Calling students by name as often as possible

◇ **Real-Life Interaction**

Checklist for interaction:

- Pacing of activities with a balance of noisy/quiet and still/active
- Attention to different learning styles (visual, auditory, tactile, kinesthetic)
- 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)
- A focus on a task or message rather than form (grammar)
- Provision for all four skills (listening, speaking, reading, writing)
- Avoidance of questions for which answers are already known
- 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
- Other useful activities: surveys, interviews, role-play, problem-solving, and interactive games
- Review previous material.

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

Teaching Guide

Unit 1 1, 2, and 3 John: Understanding True Christianity Lesson 1: Jesus and Us

Lesson Focus

Students will understand how Jesus lights our lives and forgives our sins.

Focal Text

1 John 1:1—2:2

Memory Verse

If we live in the light as He (God) is in the light, we share what we have in God with each other. And the blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, makes our lives clean from all sin.

—1 John 1:7

Connect with Life

1. If possible, show a short clip from the *Jesus* film. Invite discussion of how seeing this movie helps us think of Jesus as a real person. Ask the class to imagine that they could enjoy close fellowship with Jesus as a man. Then comment that John enjoyed just such a closeness. He wrote this letter to help his readers know what was true about Jesus.

Guide the Study

2. Read aloud as a class 1 John 1:1-4. Explain that John had a personal relationship with Jesus while He lived on earth. He heard, saw, looked at, and touched the physical body of Jesus. Most of John's readers would not have had that experience. John wanted them to know Jesus as he knew Him. He wanted them to know that Jesus, Who was in the beginning with God, had come to live, breathe, and walk in human flesh as the Son of God.

3. Referring to verse 4, ask: *What purpose did John have in writing this letter?* (so our joy may be full)

Invite someone in the class to tell how he or

she experiences joy by knowing Jesus and sharing in Christian fellowship.

4. Invite the class to read silently verses 5-10. Then working in pairs, ask the class to complete these sentences:

•*If we say we are joined with God but walk in darkness, we are _____.*

•*If we live in the light as He is in the light, we share _____.*

•*If we say that we have no sin, we lie _____.*

•*If we say we have not sinned, we make _____.*

Ask the class to consider what kind of person would say these things.

5. Guide class discussion using the following questions:

•*How would you describe what walking in the light means?*

•*How would you describe what confessing sin means?*

•*How is saying we have not sinned making God to be a liar? How serious is that?*

6. Write the statement "God is Light" on the board. Comment that in this life we often experience dark moments and difficult times. Because the light of God shines in the midst of this darkness, we have assurance of His love and presence with us.

7. Draw attention to the Memory Verse, reading it aloud together. Ask: *What happens in our lives when we live in the light of God?*

(answer) *We share what we have with God and with others.* Comment that this is what Christians call *fellowship*. True fellowship with God is sharing life's experiences with Jesus Christ. With God as "light," believers can see the way through their difficult circumstances.

8. Ask: *What else results in our life when we live in the light of God?*
(answer) *The blood of Jesus Christ makes our lives clean from all sin.* Comment that when we accept this truth, confessing our sins brings forgiveness and cleansing.

9. Invite the class to read the first two verses of 1 John 2 to understand Jesus' role in achieving forgiveness for us. Ask: *What is that role?*

Response: *He is the "go between." He goes between us and the Father and presents His blood which He used to pay for our sins.*

Encourage Application

10. Review the main points of the lesson by asking class members to reflect on these matters:

- (1) *Do you have doubts about Jesus being the Son of God Who can take away your sins?*
- (2) *Are you living "in the light"? If not, what do you need to do to "live in the light"?*
- (3) *What place does Christian fellowship have in your daily and weekly activities? Offer to talk with any class member after class or during the following week.*

11. Close with prayer that God will convict us of the areas in our lives where we do not act like true Christians, that we will confess our sins, and seek God's forgiveness and cleansing.

12. Review words on Word List by relating each word to today's lesson.

Supplemental Teaching Ideas

Connect with Life

1. Ask if anyone in the class has ever been involved in a traffic accident. Were there any eyewitnesses? Comment that the testimony of an eyewitnesses is very important because they can tell what they saw happen. The writer of 1 John was an eyewitness of Jesus. He knew the flesh-and-blood, human Jesus. His words were important to the readers of this letter. His words are important to us today.

Encourage Application

1. Summarize the main points in the lesson by

asking these questions:

- (1) *What are some reasons today that people deny that Jesus came in the flesh?*
- (2) *What are some ways believers can walk in the light?*
- (3) *What are some ways believers can include others in Christian fellowship? How does Christian fellowship differ from just being with people?*

2. Close with a prayer of thanksgiving that Jesus did come in the flesh, and a request that Jesus will help us walk in the light every day this week.

Teaching Guide

Unit 1: 1, 2, 3 John—Understanding True Christianity Lesson 2: Tests for Knowing God

Lesson Focus

Students will learn that if we know God, we will obey Him, love others, and follow the truth.

Focal Text

1 John 2:3-11, 18-27

Memory Verse

“The Holy Spirit has been given to you and you all know the truth.” (1 John 2:20)

Connect with Life

1. Present this case study: When a missionary returned to the U.S. after living overseas a number of years, her drivers license had expired. The Department of Public Safety told her she needed to be tested. Surprised, she tried to convince them she was a very good driver—that she had driven in unbelievable traffic and had never had an accident. They insisted. First, she had to take a written test to prove she knew all the facts. Then she had to get in a car with a policeman and show that she could actually drive. They wouldn't take her word for it. She had to demonstrate that she was a careful driver. She had to pass their tests.

2. Explain: *In today's lesson, John gives several tests to help us know if we really know God.* Suggest that looking at these tests and evaluating our relationship with God can bring assurance that indeed we do know Him.

Guide the Study

1. Ask: *What would you say some of the tests of a real Christian are?*

Receive responses, then invite the class to read 1 John 2:3-6 and see what John says the first test of a true Christian is.

Write *The Test of Obedience* on the board.

Elaborate on the idea of obedience by making a contrast between a child obeying his/her parents out of love or out of fear. State that when we know God, we obey because we know His commandments are for our good.

2. Continue with the class reading aloud 1 John 2:7-11 to discover the second test.

Then write *The Test of Loving Others* on the board. Invite discussion of the concept of fellowship among believers. Ask: *What is unique about it? How is it different from fellowship among unbelievers?*

3. Point out that loving others was a command in the Old Law: “...love your neighbor as yourself” (Leviticus 19:18). God commanded this love as a testimony to the world. The *new* commandment John talks about here refers to the words Jesus spoke to His followers the night before He died: “You must love each other as I have loved you” (John 13:34).

4. Ask: *In what ways did Jesus show His love for people of the world?* (He loved people no one else would love—the beggar, the lame, the sinner. He loved enough to forgive. He forgave His unfaithful followers. He forgives all of us who claim to know Him yet sometimes fall into sin.)

5. Divide 1 John 2:18-27 into three sections and ask different individuals to read aloud each section. Then referring to these verses, ask: *What might the third test be?* Accept varying answers such as having right beliefs or holding to the truth. Write the third test on the board along with the others.

6. Explain: *In John's time there were teachers (called false-Christ) who were against the truth of Jesus. In our world today, there are also false teachers who take the Bible and use it for their own benefit. They twist the truth in God's Word and*

make some people believe it. A false teaching is a lie, and true believers must reject it and not follow it.

7. Ask: *As Christians, what are steps we must follow to assure that we are following the truth?*

- (a) Keep in our hearts what we have learned from the beginning: that Jesus is God's Son Who came into the world in human form, Who died to pay the penalty for our sins, and Who gives us life that lasts forever.
- (b) Let the Holy Spirit Who lives in us be our teacher.

Encourage Application

8. Prepare a card for each class member listing the three questions below. During class, distribute a card to each class member. Suggest they ponder these questions this week, asking the Holy Spirit to lead them.

- *What do I need to change to live for Christ more effectively?*
- *What do I need to change to show more love to others?*
- *What do I need to change in my beliefs to accept Jesus more fully?*

Supplemental Teaching Ideas

Connect with Life

1. Ask: *When you were in school, what did you enjoy most?* (Give time for answers.)

Then ask: *What did you enjoy the least?*

When someone answers "tests" or "exams," state that in today's lesson the writer gives us several tests to determine whether we really know God.

Then say: *Let's look for these in our study and see how we well we do on the tests.*

Encourage Application

1. Invite the class to review the three tests. Suggest that the tests could be called a moral test, a social test, and a doctrinal test. State that if members passed all three, you are going to bestow on them the "Degree of LLB" (Life, Love, Belief). Then invite anyone who feels he or she failed one or more of the tests to talk with you after class. You may want to offer to go with that person to speak with

your pastor or another counselor.

2. Review words on Word List by relating each word to today's lesson.

Teaching Guide

Unit 1: 1, 2, 3 John—Understanding True Christianity Lesson 3: Being God’s Children

Lesson Focus

Students will learn that as God’s children, Christians can grow to become like Him.

Focal Text

1 John 2:28 to 3:10

Memory Verse

“See what great love the Father has for us that He would call us His children. And that is what we are.” (1 John 3:1)

Connect with Life

1. Tell this case study: I grew up in a family of four sisters. Recently one of my nieces, whom I had not seen in many years, came for a visit. As we worked together in the kitchen, I was struck by how much she reminded me of my sister—her mother. The way she did tasks and her mannerisms were just like my sister. I was amazed that this young woman so resembled her mother.

2. Give each student a small card on which is written the first part of this sentence. Ask them to finish it: I am most like my father (or mother) when I

Ask them to hold the card until later in the class. Suggest: As we study about “Being God’s Children,” ask yourself “When am I most like my spiritual parent?”

Guide the Study

3. Comment that today’s Bible lesson tells us children of God should reflect their family lineage. To be in God’s family means Christians are to reflect the nature and character of their Heavenly Father. Likewise, children of the devil will reflect the nature and character of their father, the devil.

4. Write in two column headings:

Evidences of God’s Child and *Evidences of the Devil’s Child*.

Divide the class into two groups with an assignment to read 1 John 2:28-3:10. Request one group to look for evidences of being God’s child and the second group to look for evidences of being the devil’s child. Provide each group with paper and pens. Allow sufficient time before calling for reports.

(Possible answers: *God’s Child*: Has the Holy Spirit within, is not ashamed, is loved by the Father, has hope, keeps himself pure, doesn’t keep on sinning. *Devil’s Child*: Breaks the Law of God, doesn’t know God, keeps on sinning, doesn’t do what is right, doesn’t love his brother)

5. Draw attention to verses 2:29 and 3:7 and the expression “being right with God.” Point out that John contrasts the person who is right with God and the person who practices sin. Ask the class to help formulate a definition of *sin* (missing the mark and falling short of what God wants). Comment that people who keep on sinning show a disregard for how God wants people to live.

6. Continue this thought, referring to verse 3:5, by asking: *How can Jesus take away our sin?* (because He had “no sin”)

Comment that as God’s children, we should live in a way that shows the family resemblance to Jesus. We should try to live right since He has taken away our sins.

7. Emphasize to the class that John is not indicating we will never sin again. Read again 1 John 1:8-9: “If we say that we have no sin, we lie to ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we tell Him our sins, He is faithful and we can depend on Him to forgive us of our sins. He will make our lives clean from all sin.”

The emphasis John makes is on sinning as a habit or as a lifestyle.

Encourage Application

8. Invite the class to suggest one-sentence summations for the lesson. Possible answers include:

- How people live show to whom they are related.
- God's children should demonstrate their relationship to God by right living.
- Believers should not have habitual sin in their lives since Jesus has taken that away.
- Children are to act like their parents. To be "children of God" means to live like God.

9. Circle back to #2 under Connect with Life and invite members to share answers to the question, "When am I most like my parent? Ask: *Why do you do things as your parent does them?* (Answers may include such things as: Being taught, observing, mimicking, and spending time together.)

Invite discussion of whether these same reasons might be true as we become more like Christ.

Supplemental Teaching Ideas

Connect with Life

1. Ask: *What do you know about DNA? What is it used to test?* When someone answers "paternity," state that in the Bible lesson today we will learn how to distinguish a person's spiritual parent using a spiritual DNA—the way a person lives.

2. Case Study: *The national news reported the story of a young woman who declared herself to be the lost child of a couple whose child had been abducted years earlier. The young woman actually resembled the picture of the lost child. But when DNA testing was done, the results showed that the young woman was not their child. She had told a lie. When police investigated the young woman, they found that she had a pattern of telling lies and deceiving people.*

Relate this story to the lesson today by commenting that if we are God's child, we will live like Him. If we are not God's child, we are the child of the devil, who is the father of lies.

Encourage Application

1. Discuss: *In what practical ways can our lifestyle demonstrate we are children of God?*

2. Lead the class in a period of meditation. Ask: *What changes do I need to make in my prayer life, my family life, my work life, my social life to better reflect the image of my heavenly Father?*

3. Pass out a printed test, matching words and meanings, using the three vocabulary words from the Word List in the Student Lesson.

Teaching Guide

Unit 1: 1, 2, 3 John—Understanding True Christianity Lesson 4: Showing Love in Daily Living

Lesson Focus

Students will learn that showing love as Jesus did means we are willing to give our lives and possessions for other people.

Focal Text

1 John 3:11-18, 23-24; 4:7-21

Memory Verse

“Let us not love with words or in talk only.
Let us love by what we do and in truth.”
(1 John 3:18)

Connect with Life

1. Comment that many murders in the U.S. happen between family members. (If available, display a recent newspaper article which carried a story of such a murder.) The stress and strain of family life can result in huge amounts of sufferings. Even though the family was instituted by God to provide love and security, it can come apart when love has no place in the family.

2. Explain that in today’s lesson, taken from the 1 John 3-4, the writer emphasizes that experiencing God’s love and showing love to others brings assurance that a person truly knows the Lord.

Guide the Study

3. Form the class into groups of two to four members. Give one group a copy of Study Assignment #1; to another, Study Assignment #2; and to a third, Study Assignment #3. Tell each group as they read aloud the indicated verses to look for answers to their assigned questions. Be prepared to share their answers with the whole class later.

Study Assignment #1: The First Love (1 John 3:11-18)

- Contrast the attitudes of Cain and Jesus. (verses 12 and 16)
- How do we know we have passed from death to life? (verse 14)
- What does “giving our lives for our brothers” mean?
- Besides sharing food and clothing, in what other practical ways might we help our brothers?

Study Assignment #2: The Witnessing Love (1 John 3:23-24; 4:7-21)

- What does it mean to “put your trust in the name of His Son, Jesus Christ”? (verse 23)
- How does the Holy Spirit help us obey Christ?
- How would you define love? As a feeling? A choice? An action?
- In what way did God show how much He loves us? (verses 7-13)
- How is showing love giving a witness?

Study Assignment #3: The Defining Love (1 John 3:16; 4:9,11)

- How can we define the kind of love God commanded in 1 John? (verse 3:16)
- What was the value and purpose of God’s great gift? (verses 9,10)
- Why is sacrificial love costly and difficult?
- What should be our response to God’s love? (verses 11-13)

4. After giving time for the groups to work on their assignments, briefly review the answer to each question. Encourage input from all groups. Add

your comments, when appropriate, to clarify an answer.

Encourage Application

4. Use these activities to help the class apply practical love this week:

- Ask the Holy Spirit to show you any person who is particularly hard for you to love.
- Keep the name of that person in your prayers. Commit to make a special effort to love that person this week.
- Consider what you can do for this person to show love. What sacrifices are you willing to make?

5. Close with a prayer that we will show more love to God by loving others more.

Supplemental Teaching Ideas

Connect with Life

1. Comment that in today's lesson, John stresses how important it is that Christians love each other. God commands that we love because when we love we become most like the Father. True love for Christians shows they are willing to give their lives, resources, and time to those who are in need.

Encourage Application

1. Use these questions to guide discussion:

- When we give to others, what kind of witness is this to the world? To ourselves?
- Can you think of a word to define God's love? (sacrificial)
- What are some words to describe sacrificial love? (self-giving, costly, difficult, unselfish)
- How do you show your unselfishness and love to others?

2. Write the three words from the Word List on the board. Ask members to suggest several sentences using each word.

3. Challenge members to watch for God at work this week. Say: *When you see God at work, let this become your invitation....*

Teaching Guide

Unit 1: 1, 2, 3 John—Understanding True Christianity Lesson 5: Faith Is the Way to Victory

Lesson Focus

Students will learn that faith in Jesus as the Son of God enables us to face life's challenges victoriously and with confidence.

Focal Text

1 John 5:1-21

Memory Verse

“Every child of God has power over the sins of the world. The way we have power over the sins of the world is by our faith.” (1 John 5:4)

Connect with Life

1. Take a couple of minutes to discuss the class's application of last Sunday's lesson. Inquire: *During this past week, what plan did you use to show unselfishness and love to someone? How did it work out?*

2. Comment that in today's lesson, John emphasized the necessity of faith in the midst of our everyday lives. Only faith in God can bring confidence to face our daily problems and give us victory in this life and the next. Today's lesson will give us a picture of the victorious life that is available to every believer.

Guide the Study

3. Cut pictures of babies, children, and families from magazines and create a collage (pictures overlapping each other covering a poster board entirely). Using four narrow strips of paper, write the following in large letters: Living the Faith Life, Consistently, Victoriously, Confidently.

4. Display the collage and ask the class to mention a word that these pictures bring to mind. When the word *family* is mentioned, ask: *Do*

newborn babies choose their family?

Then call on a member to read 1 John 5:1 aloud. Ask: *How does one become a child of God?* (by believing)

5. Write the words *belief* and *faith* on the board. Share these thoughts on their meaning. The word *belief* can mean believing something intellectually as a fact. This is not the proper interpretation of the Greek word *faith*. The English language doesn't contain a verb form for *faith*—to *faith*. *To faith* Jesus means to live for Him in an obedient and trusting way, not just to make an intellectual acknowledgement to the facts about Jesus.

6. Call on a member to read 5:6-9 aloud. State that we enter into the faith life when we believe the testimony God has given about His Son.

Tape the first strip, Living the Faith Life, near the top of the collage. Explain the three witnesses—water, blood, and Spirit.

The witness of water is reflected in the baptism of Jesus as the voice from the cloud announced Jesus was God's Son.

The witness of blood represents Jesus' crucifixion when His blood was shed to bring about people's salvation.

The witness of the Spirit is the Spirit of Truth Who came when Jesus went away. These three witnesses help us *to faith* Jesus because they all are in agreement.

7. Request a member read 5:2-3 aloud. State that we need to live the faith life consistently. Ask: *How can we live a life of faith consistently?* ((by loving God and obeying His word)

Invite comments about whether God's Word is hard to obey. Tape the second strip, Consistently, on the collage under and slightly to the right of the first strip.

8. Read together 5:4-5. Point out that “having power

over the sins of the world” (v. 4) means the same as “having victory.”

Ask: *What does having victory mean in a believer’s life? Wait for comments, then ask: Where do you have the most difficulty overcoming the world?*

Tape strip three, Victoriously, under the second strip.

9. Call on a member to read 5:10-20 aloud. Invite the class to look back over the verses and find the truths about which 1 John says, “We know” (see 5:10,13,18,19,20).

State that knowing we have eternal life helps us live confidently in this life. Tape the fourth strip, Confidently, under the third strip.

10. Referring to verses 14-15, ask: *How can we be sure God hears our prayers?* (when we ask for what He wants us to have)

Referring to verses 16-18, comment that a “sin that leads to death” refers to the sin of not believing Jesus as Savior. People commit this sin when they constantly turn away from God. Our faith and prayers cannot help them if they continually choose to reject the invitation Jesus offers for eternal life and forgiveness. Remind the class that James 5:16 prompts us to pray with hope: “The prayer from the heart of a man right with God has much power.” We can ask God to help unbelievers understand their sin, turn to Jesus, and to receive His loving forgiveness.

Encourage Application

11. Point out that today’s lesson focuses on some things that 1 John says “we know.” Encourage the class to jot down on a piece of paper some things that give them assurance as they think about their lives and their faith. Invite comments by the class or share in pairs.

12. Close with a prayer that the themes we have studied in 1 John (forgiveness, obedience, love, assurance) will increase our confidence in life because we know our relationship with Jesus as God’s Son will give us victory.

Supplemental Teaching Ideas

Connect with Life

1. Ask if anyone has ever been asked the question, “If you should die tonight, do you have confidence that you would go to heaven?”

Receive responses.

State that in this letter John uses logic to persuade his readers that having the presence of the Lord in their lives is the only basis for knowing whether they have eternal life. For believers, eternal life is not something that begins after we die but something we are in the process of living. The presence of Jesus gives us victory in every part of life.

Encourage Application

1. Request the class to consider the question presented in the Study Guide: *Think about the ways overcoming each trial or problem can build your confidence in God.* Invite responses.

Then write the four words from the Word List on the board and ask volunteers to compose sentences relating the words to today’s lesson.

Teaching Guide

Unit 1: 1, 2, 3 John—Understanding True Christianity Lesson 6: Be Wise, Be Generous

Lesson Focus

Students will learn that Christians have a responsibility to be wise and generous in supporting Christ's work.

Focal Text

2 John 1-11, 3 John 1-8

Memory Verse

"I can have no greater joy than to hear that my children are following the truth." (3 John 4)

Connect with Life

1. Display the title of this lesson, "Be Wise, Be Generous," before the class and call attention to it. Point out that instructions in 2nd and 3rd John will give guidance for following both parts of this advice.

2. Before the class session begins, ask a class member to plan to stand at the back of the room and place a call to you (the teacher) on his/her cell phone at this point during the lesson. When you answer your cell phone, the class will be able to hear both conversations. During the call, the class member will request financial support for an agency handling orphan children. After asking a few questions of the caller, your response is to turn to the class with a puzzled look on your face and ask, "What should I do?"

Guide the Study

3. Write on the board the words *truth* and *love*. Request a member to read 2 John 1-6 aloud while the class listens for how often these words are used.

4. From these verses, ask the class to describe the lifestyle of people who are "living in the truth."

- All who know the truth love each other (v. 1).
- Loving-favor, loving-kindness, and peace are ours (v. 3).
- We obey God's Word (v. 6).
- Our hearts are full of love (v. 6).

5. Explain that in this letter John is helping his readers understand how knowing the truth will help them be wise and generous. Comment that Christians have a responsibility to know who truly speaks for God and then to be generous in supporting those messengers who are involved in sharing the truth about Jesus with others.

6. After reading verses 7-11, use these questions to guide class study:

- *What were the false teachers teaching?* (that Jesus Christ did not come in a human body, v. 7)

Briefly explain during the time of John's writing this letter, some teachers were saying all flesh was evil. If Jesus was flesh, he was evil. The early church had to resist these teachings.

- *How should believers treat false teachers?* (with lack of support, vv. 10-11, and yet with love, vv. 5-6)

- *What dangers do we face if we follow false teachers?* Receive responses. Point out that following false teachers will lead us astray from the truth of the Gospel. We will miss the blessings and rewards of being a faithful follower of Jesus Christ.

7. Explain: *While 2 John deals with being wise and generous from a negative side, 3 John approaches it from a positive side.*

Instruct the class to look and listen for positive guidelines for a believer's giving in 3 John 1-8. Request a member to read these verses aloud.

8. Use these questions to guide class study of 3 John:

- *How did John know about Gaius's activities?* (The traveling teachers [strangers] had reported to him [vv. 6-7]).
- *What did they report about Gaius?* (He was kind to Christians, even to strangers; he showed love and helped people on their way [vv. 5-6]).
- *In verse 8, what reason does John give why we should support people who are working to share the good news about Jesus?*

Encourage Application

9. Returning to the phone call at the beginning of class, ask: *From what we have learned from John's instructions in 2 and 3 John, what would a wise and generous response be to the request made by phone call earlier in the class?* Receive responses.

10. Discuss: *Which false teachers should we refuse to support? How can we treat them with love?*

11. If time allows for a review of 1, 2, and 3 John, share responses to this question:

- *How have these letters changed your willingness to love others more, to live confidently for Christ, and to give generously?*

Supplemental Teaching Ideas

Connect with Life

1. Set the stage for this lesson by arranging on a table at the front of the room two types of household items: (1) those that provide a warning, such as a smoke alarm or cleaning product; (2) those that indicate hospitality, such as a welcome mat or hostess travel kit. Invite the class to look over the items and try to determine the themes: warning and hospitality. State that they will discover how these words apply to our study of 2 and 3 John.

Encourage Application

1. Ask these questions: *What are some ways we can show hospitality?* (Possible answers: Sharing food, lodging, money, love)

How can we become a more generous supporter of our church and other Christian causes?

Where can we get the wisdom to know which ministries are worthy of our support? (Responses should include: Biblically based, good reputation, good track record of accountability, financial

stewardship, etc.)

2. Review the Word List by asking members to make sentences relating the words to the theme of the lesson.

3. Challenge members to watch for God at work this week. Say: *When you see God at work, let this become your invitation....*

Teaching Guide

Unit 2: 1 Peter—For Christians Under Pressure Lesson 7: The Cost of Being a Christian

Lesson Focus

Students will learn that the blessings of being a Christian are exceeded by the temporary trials we face because of our faith.

Focal Text

1 Peter 1:1-12

Memory Verse

“These tests have come to prove your faith and to show that it is good. Gold, which can be destroyed, is tested by fire. Your faith is worth much more than gold and it must be tested also.” (1 Peter 1:7)

Connect with Life

1. Invite the class to discuss the relative value of a diamond versus that of a piece of coal. Note they are both made of the same element—carbon. The difference is time and pressure. Call attention to the topic of the coming lessons on 1 Peter: “For Christians Under Pressure.”

2. Give each person an index card and a pencil. Ask them to write on the card the greatest cost they have paid or difficulty they have experienced for being a Christian.

Guide the Study

3. Ask someone to read aloud 1 Peter 1:1-2. Instruct the class to turn their cards over and write the following outline.

- I. We are _____ (1:1-2).
- II. We are _____ (1:3-9).
- III. We are _____ (1:10-12).

4. Present this background material on the setting and the people to whom Peter wrote this letter.
The letter, written by Peter, addresses the Jews and Christians living away from their homeland.

Christians of that day were suffering under persecution. Most likely their persecution was not from the Roman rulers but rather from local authorities and employers who objected to their new religion. In the midst of their difficult circumstances and suffering, Peter was encouraging his readers with good news that they were chosen by God.

Ask the class to write Chosen by God in the first blank.

5. Ask: *What does being chosen or set apart for holy living mean?* Receive responses. Then explain that “set apart” refers to individuals who accept Christ as Savior, receive salvation, and become a part of His church. It also refers to being made clean by the blood of Jesus when He forgives us of our sins.

6. Request the class to write in the blank of the second line, Blessed by Hope. Explain that the term *hope* used in the Bible does not refer to a vague wish or something that is far from certain. In the Bible, hope is a promise of something certain or real. Encourage the class to listen carefully as someone reads aloud 1:3-9. Suggest they listen for reasons for hope which Peter gives in these verses. Write responses on the board or allow members to write on their card: Reasons for Hope:

- Jesus was raised from the dead (v. 3).
- We will receive the great things we have been promised (v. 4).
- We will be saved from the punishment of sin (v. 5).
- We can be happy even if we face sorrow and tests (v. 6).

Point out that hope for all these reasons is for the present time as well as the future.

7. Ask a volunteer to read aloud 1:10-12. In the blank of the third line, write Receivers of God’s Loving-Favor. Comment that the prophets, or early

preachers, told of God's loving-favor which was to come. They were looking toward the fullness of salvation in Christ. The angels wanted to see this salvation, too (v. 12b). But we are the ones—those of us who have seen and heard and believed Jesus—who are the recipients of the full knowledge of the Lord Jesus and His love gift of salvation.

Note that the persecuted Christians needed to be reminded of the great privilege of having salvation. Remembering this fact would help them remain faithful in the face of the pressures of life.

Encourage Application

8. Ask the class each to look at the cards they were given earlier. Ask if someone would like to share what he/she has written. Invite comments about how they were able to deal with times when being a Christian has cost them something. Then consider present difficulties that members of the class may be facing by being a Christian.

9. Lead in a closing prayer for Jesus' attitude as they consider the costs in living as a Christian.

Supplemental Teaching Ideas

Connect with Life

1. Tell about a place in the world where persecution of Christians is a common practice. (For example, in Indonesia, Christians' homes and churches are being burned, and many have lost their lives.)

Then ask: *Is being a Christian worth what it costs?* Lead those who respond to explain their answers.

Encourage Application

1. Close with silent prayer, encouraging each member to consider the question and their responses and commitments.

2. Use a few minutes to review the vocabulary words in Word List.

Teaching Guide

Unit 2: 1 Peter—For Christians Under Pressure Lesson 8: Focus Your Life on Christ

Lesson Focus

Students will learn that living the Christian life calls for focusing our lives on the qualities and actions of Jesus.

Focal Text

1 Peter 1:13 to 2:3

Memory Verse

“As new babies want milk, you should want to drink the pure milk which is God's Word so you will grow up and be saved from the punishment of sin.” (1 Peter 2:2)

Connect with Life

1. Ask: *Have you ever been to a Little League baseball game and heard some parents yell at their youngster, “Keep your eye on the ball!”? Little ones need to be reminded not to be distracted by things going on around them. They need to stay focused on the ball if they want to hit a home run or get a base hit.*

2. Remind the class that the churches to which Peter was writing were losing their focus. They were facing great difficulties because of persecution. These problems caused them to lose sight of the greatness of God that they had known in Christ. In today's lesson, Peter tells his readers how they can maintain their focus in their Christian walk.

Guide the Study

3. Before the class session write *Focus Your Life on Christ. . .* across the top of a large sheet of paper or a marker board. Under that heading, write these four lines (leaving room between each for other writing):

By _____

By _____

By _____

By not _____

4. Encourage the class to listen closely as someone reads aloud 1 Peter 1:13. Ask them to identify the three means Peter gives by which they could remain focused on Christ. Write these in the blanks in the first three lines of the outline. (Getting your minds ready, keeping awake, and setting hope on the loving-favor [grace] of Jesus)

5. Invite a discussion of the meaning of these three means. Share this background information as needed:

• “*Getting your minds ready*” has the idea of preparing for action. It refers to the whole person. When we control our minds, we free our whole person from distractions so we can do the work of Christ.

• “*Keeping awake*” has the idea of discipline. “*Discipline*” means control of oneself in obedience to God.

• “*Hope*”—not a vague wish, but a promise of certain fulfillment—is based on the knowledge that the salvation we have experienced now is only partial. The fullness of our salvation will come in the future when all things are fulfilled in Christ. Having hope helps us keep in mind the long-term work of God.

6. Ask the class how doing what Peter suggested would have helped the persecuted church deal with pressures in their lives. Invite comments on how these can also help us keep our focus as Christians today.

7. Have someone read aloud 1 Peter 1:15-17 and tell the class to listen for Peter's main instruction (a call to holiness).

Invite comments on what is meant by being “holy.” Receive responses before defining “holy” as meaning “to be set apart or consecrated to God.”

Invite the class to identify ways Peter suggested Christians can be more holy (be holy in every part of your life; honor God with love and fear).

Note that when our thoughts and actions are like God's, we are being holy as He is holy.

8. Ask the class to read silently 1 Peter 1:18-2:1. Note that Peter calls Christians to focus their lives and to live in holiness by living in love. Drawing attention to verse 22, comment that obeying the truth purifies our whole being. When this happens, we are free to love with a love that comes from our hearts. This kind of love is self-giving love to others for their benefit.

9. Point out that Peter suggested in 2:1 that a person can live out this love by not doing four things. Ask the class to identify these while you write their responses in the blank next to By not... (hating and lying, pretending to be someone you are not, always wanting something someone else has, and saying bad things about other people).

Inquire: *How is this different from the way people of the world live?*

Encourage Application

10. Point out that what has been written on the sheet of paper or board is a guide to how to live a holy life in Christ. Read it aloud together and ask members to consider how they need to grow in these areas. Ask how living this way can help them deal with the pressures of life.

11. Close with a prayer of commitment to live lives more focused on Christ this week.

Supplemental Teaching Ideas

Connect with Life

1. Ask the class to describe what happens when a camera is out of focus. Next, ask what happens when a person's vision is out of focus. Follow with this question: *What are some of the problems this poses?* (stress, pain, lack of usefulness, distraction)

2. Remind the class that the theme of these lessons from 1 Peter is "For Christians Under Pressure" and the topic of this lesson is "Focus Your Life on

Christ." Point out that *focus* is often connected with the idea of discipline. Discipline and focus are vital for athletes, musicians, students, and others concerned with improving performance or learning. Peter was showing his readers how to focus their lives in the midst of difficulties.

Encourage Application

1. Lead the class to consider what commitments they need to make to focus completely on Christ this coming week.

2. Review and clarify the vocabulary words in the Word List for this lesson. Ask students to use the words in a sentence.

Teaching Guide

Unit 2: 1 Peter—For Christians Under Pressure Lesson 9: Being a Part of God’s Work

Lesson Focus

Students will understand that as part of God’s spiritual building—the church—we participate in His mission—to bring His love and salvation to all people.

Focal Text

1 Peter 2:4-10

Memory Verse

“You are to be as living stones in the building God is making also. You are His religious leaders giving yourselves to God through Jesus Christ. This kind of gift pleases God.” (1 Peter 2:5)

Connect with Life

1. Using Legos as building blocks, construct a building and display it on a table at the front of the classroom. Draw attention to it, and tell this case study: *A missionary family tells of bringing home a box of Legos belonging to their three sons every time they returned to the U.S. for furlough. Building things with Legos was their sons’ favorite pastime. As the years went by, the box of Legos grew and later was passed on to their grandchildren.*

2. Remind the class that these lessons from 1 Peter teach about facing difficulties that come with living as Christians. In today’s lesson, Peter emphasizes that Christians are “living stones” in God’s spiritual building and, as such, are an important part of His work in the earth.

Guide the Study

3. Invite someone to read aloud 1 Peter 2:4-6. Note that Peter invited his readers to come to Christ whom he called a “living stone.” Then referring to verse 6, ask: *Who would be the*

“Stone of great worth” mentioned in this verse? (Christ) Explain that in verse 5 the “building of God” refers to the church.

4. Ask the class if they know what the most important stone in a building is (the foundation stone or sometimes called a cornerstone).

Then ask someone to compare a foundation stone in a building to the role of Jesus in building the church. (A foundation stone must be strong and able to hold the building straight. Jesus is the strong foundation on which we can build our lives. When we build our lives on Jesus, we will not fall, whatever storm may come.)

5. Referring again to verses 5-6, point out that Jesus is a living stone and so are individual Christians.

Ask: *What is it that we need never fear if we put our trust in Jesus? (being ashamed)*

Comment that putting our trust in Jesus means accepting Jesus by faith for Who He is and living by that faith in Him. Peter here was telling his readers that as they met rejection, they would stand strong and not be put to shame.

6. Invite someone to read aloud verses 7-8. Note that Peter continues the image of building stones in these verses.

Ask: *What causes people to “trip over” Jesus today? Receive responses. Explain: The truth about Jesus causes people to stumble. No other salvation exists except in Jesus Christ. Many people find it hard to believe that their good works or embracing a religious creed will not bring them happiness in this life or eternal life in the future. (Refer to John 14:6)*

7. Write the question Who Am I? on the board. Invite someone to read verses 9-10 while other members listen for phrases that identify who we are. Write the phrases under the question. (A chosen group of people, the King’s religious leaders, a holy

nation, God's possession)

Point out that Peter wanted his readers to understand how privileged they were to be God's people. Part of that privilege was telling others how God "has called you out of darkness into His great light" (v. 9).

8. Present this background information about verse 9: *Darkness describes the condition these Christians were in before they knew Christ. Their sins separated them from God. Accepting God's love and forgiveness moved them into God's light.*

Encourage Application

9. Call attention again to the Lego building. Remind the class that Christians are important in God's plan to build the church. Ask the class to describe how their church should function and does function as a spiritual house.

10. Lead the class to describe how believers should function as a chosen group of people.

Supplemental Teaching Ideas

Connect with Life

1. Ask: *Have you ever asked yourself the question Who am I? and What am I doing here?*

Then ask: *Why did you ask yourself these questions?*

Receive responses, then comment that sometimes people spend a lifetime never getting answers to these questions. In today's lesson, Peter helped the persecuted Christians identify who they were. He wanted them to remember where they came from, where they were going, and who they were. Remembering this would help them be strong in the face of persecution.

Encourage Application

1. Give each class member an index card and a pen or pencil. Instruct each person to list specific things they can do to function and/or grow as a living stone in the coming week.

Close with a prayer of commitment to let Christ be the foundation stone of their life.

2. Call out the four words from the Word List and ask for volunteers to give definitions. Request them

to use each word in a sentence related to today's lesson.

Teaching Guide

Unit 2: 1 Peter—For Christians Under Pressure Lesson 10: Instructions on How to Live

Lesson Focus

Students will learn Christians should live in their world in a way that people who know them will see God in their lives.

Focal Text

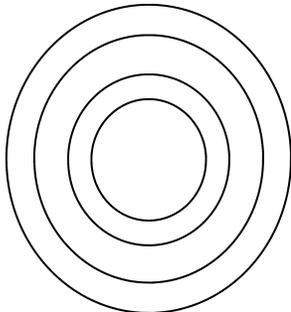
1 Peter 2:11 to 3:8

Memory Verse

“Show respect to all men. Love the Christians. Honor God with love and fear. Respect the head leader of the country.” (1 Peter 2:17)

Connect with Life

1. Before class write across the top of a large sheet of paper or on a marker board: Our Aim: Living Right before the World. Under that, draw a large “target” with four concentric circles with space for writing within the inner circle and between each of the other circles (see illustration). In the center circle, write Matthew 28:19-20 and Witness. In the next circle, write 1 Peter 3:1-8 and Being Good Spouses. In the next circle, write 1 Peter 2:18-25 and Being Good Workers. In the outer circle, write 1 Peter 2:13-17 and Being Good Citizens.



2. Invite someone to read aloud Matthew 28:19-20. Point to the center circle and comment that our witness about Christ is the main reason we should live right before the world.

3. Remind the class that one feature of Peter’s letter to the scattered Christians was to instruct them how to live under persecution. In all their relationships—as strangers, citizens, slaves, and as wives and husbands—they were to live as those who belonged to Christ.

Guide the Study

4. Request someone to read verses 11-12. Ask: *What reason does Peter give for guarding the way we act around people who do not know God?* (to give a positive witness about Christ)

Note Peter’s gentle reminder that this world is not our home—we are strangers here. As such, we should live as heavenly citizens rather than follow the way of the world. Lead a discussion on the influence of the crowd. Ask if any members ever had their parents say to them when they were leaving home, “Remember who you are,” or “Don’t forget whose child you are.”

5. Point to the outer circle and ask the class to read 1 Peter 2:13-17 which tells us to be good citizens. Lead the class to discuss these questions:

- *What is the function of government authority?*
- *How is freedom in God not the same as freedom from responsibility?*
- *What are some good deeds Christians can do to witness of Christ to others?*

6. Point to the next circle and invite the class to read 1 Peter 2:18-25. Explain: *This is not a defense of slavery, but a guide for how Christian slaves were to conduct themselves.*

Using background information from the Study Guide (refer to p. 42), state that slavery was common during that time. Historical records reveal there were as many as 60 million slaves then. When slaves realized their salvation in Christ, they knew their true value, dignity, and equality. But what were they to do? Peter advised them to actively and vigorously return good for evil. They were now

serving God, not just man.

7. Suggest that we can apply these instructions as a call for Christians today to be good workers. Note that certain laws restrict the ways a Christian may share a verbal witness at work. But the way we live before our fellow workers and employers is usually a better witness than what we say.

8. Point to the center circle that represents the most intimate of our relationships: Marriages and families. State that 1 Peter 3:1-8 addresses the marriage relationship. Invite someone to read these verses aloud.

Note that the structure of society at that time placed men in authority. Drawing attention to verses 1-6, request someone give a summary of the advice Peter gave to women who, like Christian slaves, had found their value and significance in Christ. (They were not to seek significance on the basis of superficial quality. They were to have a gentle and quiet spirit. They were to love God and live pure lives, which would be a good example for their husbands.)

9. Drawing attention to verses 7-8, ask: *What was the advice Peter gave to husbands?* (They were to treat their wives with honor.)

Note that being husbands gave them no special status; both husbands and wives shared together in the gift of life in Christ Jesus. Request class members to read aloud together verse 8 which describes the results of living as Peter suggested.

Encourage Application

10. Give each member an index card, and ask each to write on his/her card the following information:

To be a better witness, I will:

—Be a good citizen by _____

—Be a good worker by _____

—Be a good spouse/parent by _____

Suggest they place their reminders somewhere that they will look at often in the coming week.

11. Close in prayer, asking God's help to be positive witnesses in all relationships.

Supplemental Teaching Ideas

Connect with Life

1. Present this introduction material to today's lesson: The early churches were a small band of people made up of slaves, women, and some people slightly more privileged than they. These church members wanted to change the world around them to have the values of equality and freedom in Christ. The early church had no power, yet they had the greatest power of all—service in the name of Christ. Peter knew such service in love brings changes in relationships and is a strong witness for Christ.

Encourage Application

1. Invite a discussion of these questions:

- *How can a Christian's work habits be either a positive or negative witness?*
- *Why are our families and marriages often the most difficult places to live our witness?*

2. Divide the class into groups of four. Provide each group with a list of this lesson's vocabulary words with definitions. Explain: *When I start the timer, you will have three minutes to use all four vocabulary words in one sentence.* After time is up, each group will read aloud the sentence they wrote. Affirm each group with applause or words of encouragement for their good work.

Teaching Guide

Unit 2: 1 Peter—For Christians Under Pressure Lesson 11: Trusting God in Suffering

Lesson Focus

Students will understand that Christians are to be ready to face opposition with a humble attitude, remembering the example of Jesus.

Focal Text

1 Peter 3:13 to 4:2

Memory Verse

“Christ suffered and died for sins once for all. He never sinned and yet He died for us who have sinned. He died so He might bring us to God.” (1 Peter 3:18a)

Connect with Life

1. Comment that since Peter addresses Christians who are suffering, our thoughts naturally go to the people undergoing persecution in our own time. Reports from various parts of our world announce that our brothers and sisters in Christ suffer psychological and physical pain that is part of their everyday lives. Display copies of various newspaper and magazine articles about people suffering for their faith. If you have web access, go to www.persecution.com to learn about Christians being persecuted around the world.

2. Ask: *How is a Christian to live in response to opposition?* Comment that today’s lesson from 1 Peter can help us meet opposition in a healthy way. Refer to these points, which are displayed on a large sheet of paper or on a marker board:

Do what is good.

Keep a clear conscience.

Follow Christ’s example.

Live by the will of God.

Guide the Study

3. Remind the class that in the culture of Peter’s day, Christians faced opposition from religious

leaders, neighbors, and even the government.

Invite someone to read aloud 1 Peter 3:13-15. Draw attention to the suggestion, Do what is good. Invite a class member to summarize the attitude and actions a Christian should have toward others who oppose them because of their faith. (Do not be afraid or troubled; keep your heart focused on God; be prepared to answer questions about Christ; be respectful.)

Note that a good defense often goes a long way in helping non-Christian show tolerance. A good defense is also an opportunity to witness.

4. Refer to the second suggestion, Keep a clear conscience. Request a class member read aloud verses 16-17.

Ask: *What would the Christians gain if they acted toward the non-Christians in an argumentative or angry way?* Receive responses, then comment that they were to act in such a way that no charge could be brought against them for bad conduct. Peter’s words to them were very practical: If opponents accuse you, they will see your good conduct, and they will be ashamed.

5. Now read together as a class verses 18-22 and discuss the third suggestion: Follow Christ’s example. Draw attention to verse 18 by asking: *How did Jesus’ action show His attitude toward those who opposed Him?* (He was innocent, yet He suffered for us who are sinners.)

Then ask: *In what way do you think Peter’s statement, “His body died but His spirit was made alive” (v. 18), was an encouragement for his readers to meet persecution with confidence?* (Jesus was put to death as a human being, a human being just like them. But Jesus was resurrected and in Christ their resurrection is a real thing. These words meant that no matter what happened in persecution, even death, all is overcome in Christ.)

6. After reading verses 18-22, note that verses 19-

20 are difficult to understand. Peter says that Jesus' death was a witness to the spirits of people who rebelled against God long before Jesus came to earth. The story of Noah was familiar to Peter's readers. He was someone who obeyed God and was ridiculed by his neighbors and friends. The story of Noah was also an object lesson about baptism. Baptism is a symbol of God's salvation through Christ, just as Noah's boat symbolizes salvation from the flood.

7. Now invite the class to read 1 Peter 4:1-2 to understand Peter's final suggestion, Live by the Will of God.

Ask: *In what way can we "be ready" or prepare ourselves to suffer?* (Responses should include having the same attitude as Jesus, defending our faith with kind words, not giving up out of discouragement, being assured of victory.)

Encourage Application

8. Share this case study and invite responses: *Everyday during Marvin's lunch break, his co-workers discuss various topics. Often the subject of discussion turns to areas of life that Marvin is uncomfortable discussing. Sometimes his co-workers ask in a ridiculing way, "Since you're a Christian, let's hear what you think about this topic." Their questioning always seems to push Marvin into a position of defending his faith.*

Ask: *How would you encourage Marvin to respond?*

9. Close with a prayer for Christians who face extreme opposition to their faith, especially for Christians in other parts of the world. Encourage the class to commit to pray this week by name for the Christians featured in the articles about persecution.

Supplemental Teaching Ideas

Connect with Life

1. Explain that people of Peter's day faced, and people of today still face, opposition which causes them to suffer because of their faith. Comment on opposition which missionaries face in today's world. Point out that today's lesson will help us explore how Christians should deal with suffering which comes when others oppose our faith.

Encourage Application

1. Lead the class to discuss the following two questions from *Things to Think About* in their Study Guide:

- (1) Have you ever suffered for doing good? If so, tell about the experience.
- (2) In what ways can suffering help a Christian?

2. Ask if any class member is facing opposition at work, at home, or in their neighborhood for which other class members can offer prayer support. Close with a prayer for class members who are suffering because of their faith.

3. Review new vocabulary words from the *Word List*.

Teaching Guide

Unit 2: 1 Peter—For Christians Under Pressure Lesson 12: Why Christians Suffer

Lesson Focus

Students will understand that Christians are to willing to suffer for their faith because God will be faithful to care for them.

Focal Text

1 Peter 4:12-19

Memory Verse

“So if God wants you to suffer, give yourself to Him. He will do what is right for you. He made you and He is faithful.” (1 Peter 4:19)

Connect with Life

1. Collect stories from newspapers, mission magazines, and missionary prayer letters that report on various types of suffering Christians are experiencing in the world today. If you have Internet access, look at www.persecution.com.

Ask: *Why do Christians sometimes suffer rejection, ridicule, and bodily harm?* Responses should include the fact that Christian values challenge cultures and religions. The Good News sometimes divides family allegiance. The proclamation of Jesus as the Son of God and the only way of salvation and eternal life is seen as exclusive.

2. State that Peter wrote to the early Christians that suffering was a normal matter to be expected as they followed Christ. Today’s lesson will lead us to commit to a greater willingness to serve Christ no matter the cost.

Guide the Study

3. Display the following four outline points on a large sheet of paper or marker board.

1. Be Ready (1 Peter 4:12)
2. Bitterness or Blessing (4:13)

3. Purify Character (4:14-16)
4. According to God’s Will (4:17-19)

4. Direct attention to the first point of the outline, “Be Ready.” Read 4:12 aloud, and discuss the following points:

- *Sufferings and trials are a reality of the Christian life.*
- *God uses trials and sufferings to purify us.*

5. Direct attention to the second point of the outline, “Bitterness or Blessing.” Enlist someone to read 4:13 aloud. Discuss these items with the class:

- *How can rejoicing come during a time of trial and suffering?*
- *How was the suffering of Jesus turned into a blessing?*
- *Emphasize that God can take the bitterness and ugliness of life and turn it into a beautiful time of fellowship and love.*

6. Direct attention to the third point of the outline, “Purify Character.” Invite a volunteer to read 4:14-16 aloud. Discuss with members:

- *Our character is to mirror the character of Christ.*
- *Suffering may happen because you are a Christian, not for wrongdoing.*
- *Being dishonored for Christ is no dishonor.*

7. Direct attention to the fourth point of the outline, “According to God’s Will.” Read 4:17-19 aloud.

Discuss with the class the following points:

- *Christians do not merit salvation because of our own good works.*
- *Salvation is a gift offered to us in Christ.*
- *When faced with suffering, we should turn everything over to God.*

Encourage Application

8. Distribute the following summary of today’s lesson as a handout for review during the week.

- a. God turns suffering to good. God does not

cause suffering, but Christians can trust God to use suffering in their lives to minister to others and to be a witness for Him.

- b. Suffering is normal for the Christian life. Living for Christ will bring us into conflict with those who oppose Christ, and suffering resulting from that conflict is an expected part of being a Christian.
- c. Suffering in the name of Christ is to be “for Christ,” not resulting from evil we do.
- d. Suffering for Christ can be a good thing. Our goal is to help others respond to Christ.

9. Instruct members to consider people whom they know who need encouragement as they face difficulties because of their faith in Christ. Lead in a prayer of commitment for greater willingness to serve Christ no matter the cost.

Supplemental Teaching Ideas

Connect with Life

1. On a sheet of paper or marker board, make a Pain Chart. Put the numbers 1-10 across the paper or board. Starting with the number 1, put a smiley face; and at number ten, draw a painful face. Invite the members to look at the pain chart and give experiences of life that would rate from a 1 to a 10.

Then ask them to give experiences Christians endure to follow Christ, rating them from a 1 to a 10.

Ask them where they think most American Christians' experience would fit. Tell them that today's lesson will help us commit to serving Christ no matter what the cost.

Encourage Application

1. Ask: *What do you consider to be normal for the Christian life? Does that normality include suffering for Christ?* Lead in a prayer that each member of the class would not hold back from suffering for Christ, even if it means rejection, ridicule, or economic loss.

2. Spent a few minutes letting members share answers to the questions under *Things to Think About* in the Study Guide. Review the new words on the *Word List*.

Teaching Guide

Unit 2: 1 Peter—For Christians Under Pressure Lesson 13: Instructions to the Church and Its Leaders

Lesson Focus

Students will learn that being a healthy church calls for leaders and members to be humble servants, faithful toward and trusting in God.

Focal Text

1 Peter 5:1-11

Memory Verse

“Keep awake! Watch at all times. The devil is working against you. He is walking around like a hungry lion with his mouth open. He is looking for someone to eat.” (1 Peter 5:8)

Connect with Life

1. Ask the class to suggest characteristics of a healthy person. The characteristics should include eating habits, exercise, and lifestyle issues. Be sure to explore the idea that health is not just how a person looks, but also includes the internal parts not seen by the casual observer.

2. Share this story: *A recently retired couple moved to a lakeside home where they kept horses and enjoyed boating on the lake. Both husband and wife were strong, outdoors people, and this life seemed perfect for them. Then one day as they were pulling their boat out of the water, the wife fell and cracked four ribs. Further tests at the hospital revealed that she had severe osteoporosis, a deterioration of the bones. This was shocking news because she looked so well and strong. How could anyone look so healthy and yet be sick?*

Guide the Study

3. Create three groups of members and give each group one of these assignments.

•Read 1 Peter 5:1-4 and draw a picture of what

they think a godly leader would look like. Show positive characteristics by how the person is drawn.

•Read 1 Peter 5:1-4 and develop a personality profile of what a godly leader would be like.

•Read 1 Peter 5:1-4 and develop a job description for what a godly shepherd would do to care for the sheep.

Let each group share the results of their work. Emphasize that leadership is a function of service, not a position from which one rules over others.

Invite responses to this statement: *Authentic authority comes voluntarily from the people the leader leads.*

4. Invite someone to read aloud 5:1-6. On a large sheet of paper or marker board, write the heading Good Shepherd. Under the heading, write the following action words: feeding, tending, caring. Ask members to list ways a good shepherd would accomplish the actions of feeding, tending, and caring. Then discuss how being humble can build healthy leaders.

5. On another sheet of paper or on the marker board, write the heading Good Follower. Referring to verses 5-6, lead the class to list characteristics of good followers. Discuss ways good followers would build a healthy church.

Invite members to respond to this statement: *Following trusted leadership is an act of service to Christ.*

6. Invite a volunteer to read 5:7-9 aloud. Lead members to recount the various commands Peter gives for maintaining a strong church. (Give worries to God, be watchful and stand against the devil, be encouraged because you are not suffering alone.)

Point out that a healthy church casts its cares, its challenges, and its existence on God. This does not mean it is without responsibility. The

church should stand against the devil and be strong in faith, remembering that the devil seeks to weaken the church and Christians.

7. Ask if anyone can describe what it means to overcome a challenge in life. Then read 5:10-11 aloud and encourage the class to listen for what God has promised us. (He will keep us in the right way and give us strength. We will share his greatness forever. He is the One in charge of our life.)

Encourage Application

8. Invite volunteers to share something they have learned from their parents or church leaders who exemplified the qualities of a good leader or a good follower.

9. Invite the class to think of some challenges their church faces and to consider what they as individual Christians need to do to help their church become strong and healthy.

10. Close the class by praying for the pastor, church staff, and other leaders of the church.

Supplemental Teaching Ideas

Connect with Life

1. Comment that few of us in America know what it means to become the focus of rejection and persecution by the society around us. But today's church does face challenges. Should our worship services be traditional or contemporary? Should we focus on a children's ministry, build a gymnasium, move to the suburbs?

Invite responses to the following question often asked by prospective church members, "What can this church provide for our family?"

Encourage Application

1. Return to *Things to Think About* in the Study Guide and invite members to share their thoughts. Close with a prayer that the local church and the persecuted church worldwide will meet the challenge to be faithful in the midst of suffering.

2. Review the new words on the *Word List* by writing the words on the board and asking members to explain their definitions from memory.

Teaching Guide

Bonus Christmas Lesson Good News!

Lesson Focus

Students will consider the biblical account of Christ's birth and how they can share the story with others.

Focal Text

Luke 2:8-20

Memory Verse

"Today, One Who saves from the punishment of sin has been born in the city of David. He is Christ the Lord." (Luke 2:11)

Connect with Life

1. Before class, arrange a manger scene on a table at some focal point in the room. If possible, display pictures of the city of Bethlehem, or invite someone who has visited Bethlehem to show photos or a short clip of their video of the city.

2. Make the transition to the lesson by adding this comment: *God's greatest gift was a Savior Who came to be born into a real family in a real town named Bethlehem. Bethlehem was located about five miles south of Jerusalem and was called "the city of David." In today's lesson, we will see how Mary and Joseph discovered that good news awaited them in Bethlehem when God broke into their lives by giving them their new child.*

Guide the Study

3. Present this background information: *Caesar Augustus ruled the Roman Empire at the time of the birth of Jesus. It was the golden age of Rome, when her power was the greatest. In order to keep a record of the people, from time to time a census was taken. Men needed to return to the home of their ancestors. For Joseph, that city was Bethlehem. Mary accompanied him on the*

journey.

4. Reveal the setting of the first Christmas by reading aloud Luke 2:1-7. Ask: *What were some of the struggles Mary and Joseph had on the first Christmas?*

Then invite class members to compare their struggles with the struggles in our lives during the Christmas holidays.

5. Ask someone to read Luke 2:8-14 aloud. Ask: *When you think of shepherds, what status do they have in society? What significance is it that God chose to reveal the birth of His Son first to people of low status?*

Receive responses, then comment that Jesus' birth was for all people, including kings and shepherds. Stress that all cultures of people, all levels of society, and all races and nationalities need God's great gift. The gift of God's Son, Jesus, perfectly meets the needs of every person.

6. Referring to verse 11, ask the class if they can find three titles Jesus would be known as. Then write the titles *Savior*, *Christ*, and *Lord* on the board. Present this background material: *Telling the shepherd that Jesus was to be the Savior emphasized that Jesus was going to do things for people they could not do for themselves. The title of Christ, similar to the Old Testament term of Messiah, meant someone who had the role of Priest and King of Kings. Being called Lord showed His majesty and authority.*

7. Consider the scene on the hillside. Following the message of hope from a single angel, a multitude of angels joined in praising God. Note that both heaven and earth were touched by the birth of Jesus. God received the highest praise and honor. And to all those willing to receive God's great Good News were given the promise of peace.

Invite the class to turn to Isaiah 9:6 and read the Old Testament prophecy that a "Prince of

Peace” would come.

8. After reading aloud together verses 15-16, comment that God’s Word can come to many people who choose to do nothing about it. The shepherds, however, decided to go “see what has happened...that the Lord told us about” (v. 15).

Ask: *How would you describe the decision and action of the shepherd?* (They showed their faith; they trusted the message made to them by the angels.)

9. Ask a class member to read the final verses (vv. 18-20) as others look for different responses people had on hearing the testimony of the shepherds. Write brief notes on the board as responses are given. (Those who heard the message were surprised. Mary hid all the words in her heart.)

Then ask: *What was the shepherds’ response to the night’s events?* (They were full of joy and were thankful.) Note that they went back to their sheep on the hillside, but their lives were changed forever.

10. Arrange for someone (a class member or invited guest) to represent the shepherds (perhaps to dress up as a shepherd) and talk about that special night of Jesus’ birth. Plan to talk about being in the field, seeing and hearing the angels, seeing the baby Jesus lying in the manger. Bring out the emotion of the events. Instruct the person to let the closing statement be: *I cannot believe God chose me to share the Good News.*

Encourage Application

1. Invite the class to consider their Christmas celebration. Is it a “collection of clutter” or a “broadcast of good news”? Comment that the Christmas season is a time when people give gifts to each other. The greatest gift of all is one that can be shared. Ask members to identify someone in their life who needs to hear the good news about Christ. Close in prayer that Christmas will be good news for everyone.

Supplemental Teaching Ideas

Connect with Life

1. Invite the class to consider the most unique gift

they ever received at Christmas. Make the transition to the Bible study by suggesting that when God became flesh, He chose to do so by entering the lives of a humble couple. Angels announced His coming to shepherds to reveal that the gift of hope was for all people. State that today’s lesson is about the most unique gift ever given, Jesus Christ.

Encourage Application

1. Invite the class to discuss ideas how the Good News about Jesus can be shared with others during their Christmas holiday celebrations. Close with a prayer of thanksgiving for the gift of God’s Son and the joy, hope, and peace He brings to our lives.

2. Challenge members to watch for God at work this week. Say: *When you see God at work, let this become your invitation....*

3. Review the new words on the *Word List* by writing the words on the board and asking members to explain their definitions from memory.