

# **LIFE OF CHRIST, PART 1**

**by Christine Walton**

**Grades 5-6  
Year 1  
Quarter 2**



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**Quarter 2**

**Bible Baseball**

**Singles**

Who baptized Jesus?  
Name one thing that happened immediately after Jesus was baptized.  
Name one of the ways Satan tempted Jesus in the desert.  
What was Jesus' first miracle?  
To whom did Jesus say, "You must be born again"?  
Name the region from which the woman Jesus talked to by the well came.  
Name two fishermen Jesus called to be His disciples.  
How many men helped a paralytic through a roof to see Jesus?  
How did the teachers of the law feel about what Jesus said to the paralytic?  
Why did a centurion need Jesus' help?  
When Jesus cast demons out of a man in Mark 5, where did he send them?  
Who asked Jesus to heal his dying daughter?  
Name one person who went with Jesus into the room where Jairus' dead daughter lay.

**Doubles**

In what river was Jesus baptized?  
Name two things that happened immediately after Jesus was baptized?  
How long did Jesus fast in the desert?  
Name two ways Satan tempted Jesus in the desert, or name one way Satan tempted Jesus and one way Jesus answered him.  
Who helped Jesus when Satan's temptations were over for a time?  
On what occasion did Jesus do His first miracle?  
Who asked for Jesus' help at this wedding?  
What Pharisee came to see Jesus at night?  
Quote John 3:16.  
Why were the disciples surprised to find Jesus talking to the woman at the well?  
Where did Jesus call Simon Peter to be His disciple?  
Name three fishermen Jesus called to be His disciples.  
What else did Jesus do for the paralytic let down through the roof besides healing him?  
On what day did Jesus heal the lame man by the pool?  
Name one thing Jesus did on the Sabbath that the Pharisees did not like.  
What is a centurion?  
Who came to Jesus to ask him to help the centurion?  
Where was Jesus when a terrible storm came up that threatened to swamp the boat?  
What did Jesus do to stop a terrible storm that threatened to swamp the boat?  
Give one evidence of demon possession seen in Mark 5.  
When Jesus asked the demon-possessed man his name, what did the demons answer?  
As Jesus walked to Jairus' house, who interrupted Him?  
What did this woman (question above) think she should do to be healed of her affliction?  
Name two people who went with Jesus into the room where Jairus' dead daughter lay.  
What was the physical problem with a demon-possessed man Jesus encountered after He healed two blind men?

## Triples

Name three ways Satan tempted Jesus in the desert, or name two ways Satan tempted Jesus and two ways Jesus answered him.

In what town and what area of the country did Jesus do his first miracle?

How many stone water jars did Jesus use in His first miracle?

What did the master of the banquet say to the bridegroom at the wedding in Cana?

Quote John 3:16-17.

At whose well did Jesus meet a Samaritan woman?

What kind of water did Jesus say He would give the woman at the well?

Jesus said that true worshipers will worship the Father in \_\_\_ and \_\_\_.

Where specifically did Jesus call Simon Peter to be His disciple?

Name four fishermen Jesus called to be His disciples.

Name two things Jesus did on the Sabbath that the Pharisees did not like.

Jesus used the example of a sheep falling into a pit in an argument about what?

Explain the reasoning the centurion used to argue that Jesus need not come to his house.

In what Gentile region did Jesus deliver a man from evil spirits?

Give two evidences of his (previous question) demon possession.

When the formerly demon-possessed man wanted to follow Jesus, what did the Lord tell him to do?

What question did Jesus ask when someone interrupted Him on the way to Jairus' house?

What position did the man with the dying daughter hold?

How long had the woman Jesus met on the way to Jairus' house been sick?

Name three people who went with Jesus into the room where Jairus' dead daughter lay.

What stern warning did Jesus give two blind men? Did they obey Him?

How did the Pharisees say Jesus drove out demons?

## Home Runs

Name three ways Satan tempted Jesus in the desert, and how Jesus answered him each time.

How many stone water jars did Jesus use in His first miracle, and how much did each jar hold? (six; 20-30 gallons or 2-3 *metretes*)

Jesus told Nicodemus that unless a man is born of \_\_\_ and \_\_\_ he cannot enter the kingdom of God.

When talking to Nicodemus, Jesus compared the Spirit to what?

When talking to Nicodemus, Jesus compared His being "lifted up" to what?

Near what town did Jesus meet the woman at the well?

Where did Jesus heal a paralytic who was let down through the roof of a house? (Capernaum)

Where did Jesus heal a lame man by a pool? (Bethesda)

How long had this man been an invalid? (38 years)

Where did Jesus heal the centurion's servant? (Capernaum)

Give three evidences of demon possession seen in Mark 5.

How specifically did the man ask Jesus to heal his dying daughter? (Mark 5:23)

Name four people who went with Jesus into the room where Jairus' dead daughter lay.

By what title did two blind men refer to Jesus? (Son of David)

# **JESUS' BAPTISM**

**Matthew 3:13-17**

## **Lesson Aim**

To teach students the significance of Jesus' baptism and the baptism of believers.

## **Memory Verse**

**This quarter, Matthew 5:21-32; this week, Matthew 5:21** - "You have heard that it was said to the people long ago, 'Do not murder, and anyone who murders will be subject to judgment.'"

## **Lesson Background**

[Parallel passages: **Mark 1:1-11; Luke 3:1-22; John 1:19-34**] Today's lesson on Jesus' baptism begins a two-quarter unit on the life of Christ. We will focus on Jesus' baptism presented in Matthew 3:13-17, but the preceding twelve verses are an integral part of the story as well. Christians are baptized to proclaim their identification with Christ - that they have been washed from their sins and have died to their old life, but been raised to a new life in Christ (Romans 6:1-5, Colossians 2:11-13). The cleansing property of water and the fact that the baptismal candidate goes under the water, where to remain would be death, and then is raised anew, symbolizes this. Jesus' command before He returned to heaven (Matthew 28:18-20) and numerous New Testament examples (Acts 2:38; 8:36-38; 16:30-33) attest to the significance of baptism.

Jesus' baptism served a somewhat different purpose than Christian baptism today. John objected to baptizing Jesus because he recognized Jesus' righteousness in comparison to his own sinfulness. At this point, he probably did not realize that Jesus was the Messiah, God's Son. As recorded in John 1:32-34, God revealed to John that the One upon whom the Spirit descended as a dove would be He who would baptize with the Holy Spirit, so before Jesus' baptism John apparently did not know He was God's Son; John even

apparently had some doubts later while he was in prison as to Jesus' identity, or at least the extent of His ministry (Matthew 11:2). Jesus convinced John to baptize him, however, to "fulfill all righteousness." He wanted to identify himself with sinful people who did need to repent and be baptized to show their repentance. God the Father showed His pleasure in what Jesus had done by speaking from heaven and sending the Holy Spirit upon Him, anointing and authenticating Christ's forthcoming ministry as Prophet, Priest, and King. Note the presence of all three persons of the Trinity here.

The Greek word βαπτίζω (*baptizo*), "to dip," can mean "to wash," but has a primary connotation of immersion, even being submerged, overwhelmed, or drowned. Your Christian students need to realize the importance of following the Lord in baptism, but far more significant is that your students first repent as John the Baptist urged, to "change their minds," to turn from sin to God. May He graciously work this change in their hearts.

## Lesson Procedure

Begin the lesson by asking your students, "Have you ever had a friend or relative who embarrassed you so much you didn't want to admit knowing him? That's what happened to Steve in *This Old Man*."

### THIS OLD MAN

"Look, guys. There he is again; that old coot I told you about."

Curiously Jared, Todd, and Steve followed Ty's pointing finger to eye the figure standing on the street corner. Wearing baggy pale blue polyester and a super-wide tie (bright red, no less!), an elderly man was handing out leaflets.

"That sign says, 'Re-pent.' I think he's one of those religious fanatics," Ty continued. "Just look at those striped running shoes! Really go with the suit, huh?"

The other boys joined in the laughter, except for Steve, who stared in horrified silence. He knew this old man. It was "Uncle Dick" who went to Steve's church. He'd even been over his house a couple of times to visit his parents. "Maybe his feet hurt him," said Steve.

"Yeah, right," Jared responded. "Let's go see what he's up to."

"Oh, no!" Steve thought frantically, "if we go over there Uncle Dick will recognize me. He'll probably shout 'hallelujah' or start in praying or something, and that will really go over great with these guys who don't even go to church. I could say I just remembered an errand I have to do for my mom, but that would be a lie. I guess God would want me to go over there and try to stop the guys from mocking, but I sure don't want to!"

"Hey, wait up guys! I know that old man. Don't make fun of him."

"Well, praise the Lord, if it isn't my young friend, Steve. Are these pals of yours, Steve? Howdy, fellas, my name is Richard Hogarth, but you can call me 'Uncle Dick.'"

"I knew it," Steve groaned to himself. "'Praise the Lord,' 'pals,' 'howdy, fellas'! Wait till we leave; the guys will never let me hear the end of it."

"Hey," said Todd, "What does that 'repent' sign mean?"

"Oh, no. I told them not to mock him," thought Steve, but Todd was serious.

At first the other boys smirked as Mr. Hogarth told them about Jesus, but, after a while, Steve could see they were seriously listening. Uncle Dick's love for God and for his listeners shone through his eccentricities.

"Well, sure glad I could meet your friends and spend this time together," said Uncle Dick.

"So am I," thought Steve. "So am I."

After reading the story, discuss the external (What people are “against” each other?) and internal (What is it hard for Steve to do?) conflicts in *This Old Man*. Steve identifies himself with a fellow Christian who embarrasses him. We should identify ourselves with Christ. Ask your students in what church ordinance do Christians publicly make profession of their faith in Christ. Discuss that although this may not be very difficult to do here, in some places baptism can result in severe ostracism by family and friends, and even perhaps in prison or death. Discuss why Christians should be baptized (see background notes). Be sensitive to the needs of your class. If several give strong evidence of knowing the Lord and yet have not been baptized, you may want to look up pertinent verses and devote significant time to this issue, but if most do not know the Lord, they need to follow John the Baptist’s admonition to repent. Obviously students should never be coerced or manipulated into making such a decision, which would only harden a non-Christian in his sin.

**DIG IN: Matthew 3:13-17 (also Matthew 3:1-12).**

It is important for your students to tackle the Bible for themselves and not be spoon-fed all the time. Therefore many lessons will use a guided study called **DIG IN**. Your enthusiasm and the way in which you approach this will help determine whether your students view this exercise as one more worksheet forced on them by a teacher or an opportunity to interact with the Word of God to see what the Creator of the Universe wants them to know! You may read the passage to the students first (New International Version or English Standard Version, please), especially if your class has poor readers, or just let them read the passage themselves, which might encourage them to take responsibility and make the passage “their own.” Students should work on the passage in pairs or small groups.

Different approaches can be followed to get “into” the passage. Students can ask the basic 5W+H questions of good newspaper reporting (Who, What, When, Where, Why, How) and/or examine the passage as a story - What is the setting(when and where)? Who are the main characters? What are they like? What is the conflict involved? What is the climax and resolution? This obviously will not work for all passages, but can shed light on some.

Questions usually can be answered from the text or background information above, but here are some sample answers to get you started:

Who: Jesus (and God the Father and the Holy Spirit) and John the Baptist

What: Jesus baptized by John

When: at the beginning of Jesus’ public ministry

Where: in the Jordan River near the Judean desert

Why was John baptizing? Presumably so that people could show their repentance, and to prepare the way for Jesus’ coming. In John 1:31, John gives the following reason: “. . . the reason I came baptizing with water was that he [Jesus] might be revealed to Israel.”

Why did John object to Jesus’ request? He realized his own sinfulness and Jesus’ righteousness.

What were the purposes of Jesus’ baptism? See Lesson Background.

How did God bless Jesus’ obedience? He sent the Holy Spirit upon Him and spoke from heaven, saying He loved His Son and was well pleased with Him.

What can we learn about God in this passage? God is a Trinity. Also lessons about His character.

Compare Jesus' baptism and a Christian's baptism:

<u>Jesus</u>	<u>Christian</u>
water	water
obedience	obedience
God blessed His obedience	God will bless a Christian's obedience
identification with sinners	identification with Christ

## Game

To have your students learn more about John the Baptist and to strengthen their facility in finding verses in the Bible, play the following game (Play this game rather than answering question 1 on page 2 of the "Dig In" worksheet): "Who was this John the Baptist, anyway? You and a partner have ten minutes to write down as many facts as you can about John. Your team will get one point for every correct fact and two points for every fact you get that no one else does. Check out these verses (Matthew 3:1-17; Luke 1:5-25, 57-80; Matthew 11:1-19; Matthew 14:1-12). Ready, set, go!"

Possible answers:

He lived in the desert (Matthew 3:1).  
He was prophesied about in the Old Testament (Matthew 3:3).  
His clothes were of camel hair and he wore a leather belt (Matthew 3:4).  
His food was locusts and wild honey (Matthew 3:4).  
He was brave and outspoken (Matthew 3:7-8).  
He was humble and obedient (Matthew 3:13).  
He was the son of Zechariah and Elizabeth (Luke 1:13).  
He would be a joy to his parents and great in the sight of the Lord (Luke 1:14).  
He was to be a Nazirite (Luke 1:15).  
He would be filled with the Holy Spirit from birth (Luke 1:15).  
He would bring people back to the Lord (Luke 1:16).  
In the spirit and power of Elijah he would turn fathers' hearts to their children (Luke 1:17).  
When Mary visited Elizabeth, John jumped in his mother's womb (Luke 1:41).  
Relatives wanted to name him "Zechariah" (Luke 1:59).  
Zechariah prophesied that John would be God's prophet (Luke 1:76).  
He was in prison (Matthew 11:2).  
He was not sure if Jesus was the Christ (Matthew 11:2).  
Jesus quoted Malachi 3:1 in reference to John (Matthew 11:10).  
No one born of woman is greater than John (Matthew 11:11).  
John is "Elijah" (Matthew 11:14).  
John didn't "eat or drink" (Matthew 11:18).  
John rebuked Herod (Matthew 14:3-5).  
John was beheaded (Matthew 14:6-10).  
John's disciples loved him (Matthew 14:12).





**Dig In!**

**Today's Passage:**

**Matthew 3:13-17**



**WHO?**



**WHAT?**



**WHEN?**



**WHERE?**

Why was John baptizing? (see also John 1:31)

Why did John object to Jesus' request to be baptized?

Why did Jesus want to be baptized? (not specifically in text; write down what you think and check later with your teacher.) How are Jesus' baptism and a Christian's baptism today the same? How are they different? Make a chart.

How did God bless Jesus' obedience?

What can we learn about God in this passage?

Personal application:

**Still Digging?** Here are extra questions on **Matthew 3:1-12**

Find out all you can about John the Baptist (see Matthew 3:1-17; Luke 1:5-25, 57-80; Matthew 11:1-19; Matthew 14:1-12)

What kind of person do you think John the Baptist was from the information given in Matthew 3?

What was John's job according to Isaiah? (Just think, Isaiah spoke about John hundreds of years before he was born!)

Who were the Pharisees and Sadducees? Use a Bible dictionary and/or concordance.

Why did John tell the Pharisees to go away? Didn't he want them to be baptized?

Do you think John was wrong to use such strong language ("brood of vipers")?

In Luke's gospel, John gets specific about ways in which peoples' lives will change if they really repent. In what ways does your life show repentance? Are there some aspects of your life that still need to change? (Or maybe you have never truly repented; be honest with yourself and God!)

What does John mean by his words in Matthew 3:11-12?

# **TEMPTATION IN THE WILDERNESS**

**Matthew 4:1-11**

## **Lesson Aim**

To encourage students to fight temptation with God's help, as Jesus did in the wilderness.

## **Memory Verse**

**This quarter, Matthew 5:21-32; this week, Matthew 5:22** - "But I tell you that anyone who is angry with his brother will be subject to judgment. Again, anyone who says to his brother, 'Raca,' is answerable to the Sanhedrin. But anyone who says, 'You fool!' will be in danger of the fire of hell."

## **Lesson Background**

[Parallel passages: **Mark 1:12-13; Luke 4:1-13**] At times it is easy to become discouraged in our fight against sin, but today's lesson should give us hope. Jesus, the spotless Lamb of God, lived a perfect life and hence was an acceptable sacrifice who died to pay the price for His people's redemption. Yet "we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are - yet was without sin" (Hebrews 4:15).

Sometimes when a person undergoes great testing he feels he must be out of God's will. This may be the case, but Jesus "was led by the Spirit into the desert to be tempted by the Devil" (the word *πειραζω* - *peirazo*, can mean *test* or *tempt*). Note also that this temptation occurred immediately following a great spiritual experience (His baptism) and before He was about to accomplish great work for God. These are times to be especially wary of the Devil's work.

The word *devil* (ὁ διαβολος - *ho diabolos*) means *slanderer*, and Satan here tries to malign Christ's character. "If you are the Son of God . . ." (cf. Matthew 3:17, "This is my Son . . ."). Note that people also taunted Jesus with this phrase when tempting Him to come down from the cross (Matthew 27:40). Satan may have been casting doubts on Jesus' deity or trying to get Him to use His powers for His own benefit (Since you are the Son of God, why don't You use your power to satisfy Your own needs?).

For the first temptation (i.e., the first recorded here; Satan had been tempting Jesus throughout the forty days), Satan tries to get Jesus to make bread from stones (the stones may have even resembled bread). In other circumstances Jesus used his power to do miracles (e.g., turning water into wine), but here, obeying Satan to gratify His own physical desires, the miracle would have been wrong. Satan often attempts to have people rationalize their sin. If we had been Jesus we probably would have thought, "God must be pleased with me. I've fasted for forty days, but that's enough. I'm hungry and it certainly won't hurt anyone if I turn these stones into bread."

The Devil also takes what is good and twists it. He misquotes Scripture in an attempt to convince Jesus to jump from the pinnacle of the temple. Scholars remain uncertain as to the exact location of this point. One suggestion puts it one hundred fifty feet from the bottom of a ravine. Some feel Satan wished to engender in Jesus a desire for the adulation of the crowds as they would watch this spectacle. Gaebelien suggests that the temptation was to demand protection as proof of God's care. Whatever the appeal, Christ did not give in.

Finally, the Tempter gets to the heart of the matter and asks Jesus to worship him in exchange for all the kingdoms of the world. Satan, the "god of this world," may have thought he had the power to do this; he is also the "father of lies" and probably had no intention of fulfilling his part of the bargain, even had he been able to (Satan's promises to us are just as empty). Jesus is the Lord of the universe. He did not need Satan to give Him the kingdoms of this world. But the allurement here, as in Matthew 16:21-23, was for Jesus to deny the cross. Satan also wants us to "take the easy way out" and presume that the end justifies the means, but the true disciple must not compromise (Matthew 16:24-27).

What can we learn from the way Jesus met Satan's temptations? First of all, he gave the Devil no quarter. There was not the smallest compromise with the enemy. Jesus obeyed His Father absolutely, in every single detail. Secondly, he fought Satan with God's Word. Jesus knew Scripture well enough that He could not be fooled by Satan's misinterpretations or verses taken out of context, and he had memorized Scripture to the point that He could counter every attack with an appropriate verse.

We will never regret obeying God. When Jesus obeyed, God provided for His needs (Matthew 4:11). Because Jesus never sinned, He can work in our lives to keep us from sinning. We will never on earth follow Christ perfectly (I John 1:10), but by His grace may we more and more be conformed to His image.

## **Lesson Procedure**

Begin the lesson by asking your students the following:

"Did Jesus ever sin?" [Discuss and then look up Hebrews 4:15] "What if Jesus had sinned once, just a tiny little itty bitty sin that didn't 'hurt anyone'?" [Discuss] "Jesus died for sinners, but in order for God to accept His sacrifice, He had to live an absolutely perfect life. If Jesus had sinned, He would have deserved death, and then His death could not have paid for other people's sins."

“Who is Satan?” [Have your students use their Bible dictionaries to answer this question.] “Did Satan want God’s plan to redeem sinners to work? No, he hates God and Christians, and he thought that if only he could get Jesus to sin he would stop God’s plan. Let’s see how he did this, and see what we can learn about meeting temptations in our lives.”

**DIG IN: Matthew 4:1-11.**

Who - Jesus and the Devil

What - Jesus tempted by the Devil

When - Shortly after Jesus’ baptism

Where - In the desert (wilderness)

Questions - See Matthew 4:1-11

**ROLE PLAY**

Sometimes it is easier to do what is right in a tempting situation if we have thought ahead about what our response will be. Have your students role play different predicaments they might face, showing how they could respond in a Christ-honoring way. Have your students act out problems you think they would be likely to face (allow them to suggest some); those below consider students of different social backgrounds and maturity and are merely suggestions. Try to have students not just give the “right answer,” but consider how things would be in real life.

“Satan wants us to sin, too. He is unlikely to appear in person, but every day we face temptations to do what Satan rather than God wants us to do. Sometimes it helps to plan ahead and think what we would do in different situations. Of course, we do not always know how we will act, but we should know what would be the right thing to do in a particular circumstance and want to do what is right with God’s help. Sometimes something that seems impossible for us to do when we look ahead becomes possible if God allows us to face it, for He gives us grace to do so at the time. Act out some situations in which you might be tempted.”

- Your friend asks you how to do a problem on the math take-home test.
- At a sleepover party, two of the kids start telling dirty jokes.
- Your friend asks you if he/she can make a copy of the new music tape you got.
- Your friend’s older brother, who you know sells drugs, says he’ll pay you well if you deliver a package for him.
- Your friends are planning to take a bike hike farther than your parents allow you to go.
- Your friends are gossiping about a new kid at school (or about any student, teacher, or parent).
- A non-Christian at school asks you why you seem so happy all the time.
- You are asked to a party, and when you arrive you find that no adults are home and the kids are watching an R-rated movie on TV (or role-play that you know this ahead of time).
- Your parents want to take you out to eat because your schoolwork has been improving, but they do not know about your recent two F’s in science and the book report you forgot to turn in.
- Your church is collecting clothing to give to the poor, but, even though you have plenty, you like your clothes and don’t want to give any away.
- You are hurting badly from your parents’ recent divorce, when a kid at school, who has always been mean to you, makes a very nasty comment about you mom (or dad), a comment all the worse because it is partially true.





**Dig In!**

**Today's Passage:**

**Matthew 4:1-11**



**WHO?**



**WHAT?**



**WHEN?**



**WHERE?**

Why did Jesus go into the desert?

List Satan's three temptations and Jesus' response to each.

Why would Jesus have been tempted to turn stones into bread? (Note - the rocks in the area might even have looked like bread.)

Could he have done this?

Why would it have been wrong for Jesus to do this?

Why would Jesus want to jump from the pinnacle of the temple?

What trick did Satan use in his second temptation?

Do you think Satan could or would have given Jesus all the kingdoms of the world?

If Jesus had bowed down to Satan, what would He have not been able to do for us?

With what intention and what technique did Jesus meet His temptations?

Personal application: By what are you tempted? Plan how you can fight Satan's temptations.

Do you ever think, "I'm strong; I can do what's right. I won't give in to temptation." Good for you; you want to do what God wants, but you cannot do this on your own. You need the help of the Holy Spirit. He lives in you if you are a Christian. Ask God to help you do what's right; ask other people to pray for you, too. And don't get discouraged and give up when you do sin (see I John 1:8-10). One good way to fight temptation is the way Jesus did: quote Scripture. But first you have to know the Bible, which means you must read and memorize God's Word as Jesus did.



# **JESUS' FIRST MIRACLE**

**John 2:1-11**

## **Lesson Aim**

That your students will realize that God can give them a wonderful, exciting life.

## **Memory Verse**

**This quarter, Matthew 5:21-32; this week, Matthew 5:23-24a** - "Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar."

## **Lesson Background**

Which of the following sets of adjectives would you use to describe the Christian life: "uninvolved, insipid, flat, dull" or "joyous, exciting, exhilarating, intoxicating"? Many would choose the former, but, as today's Bible story demonstrates, Jesus came that we might have life to the full (John 10:10).

"There is a time to weep and a time to laugh, a time to mourn and a time to dance" (Ecclesiastes 3:4). Jesus enjoyed communing with His Father, yet He spent time interacting with other people. Once He was even accused of being a glutton and drunkard (Matthew 11:19). In last week's lesson, we saw Jesus alone, fasting in the desert, but here Jesus and His disciples (possibly not all twelve at this point) share in the joy of a friend or relative's wedding.

The story of a wedding in Bible times begins with the betrothal, a commitment taken as seriously as the marriage itself. At the end of the betrothal period, the groom would arrive at the bride's home unannounced and take her in a torch-lit procession back to his home, where the ceremony would occur,

followed by several days of feasting and entertainment celebrating the new couple's union. Family and friends would be responsible for the feast, and failure to make adequate provision for the guests would be a disgrace remembered for years.

Of course, this is just what happened in today's story. The wine ran out. Although the word οἶνος - *oinos* can mean *grape juice*, here, as in almost all biblical references, it is obviously at least somewhat intoxicating. Note the comment of the master of the banquet: "Everyone brings out the choice wine first and then the cheaper [or lesser, worse] wine after the guests have had too much to drink [the word here implies intoxication], but you have saved the best till now." Wine was usually diluted with water and the Bible has strong prohibitions against drunkenness (Proverbs 20:1; 23:29-35; 31:4-5; Isaiah 5:22; I Timothy 3:8), yet wine is often viewed in Scripture as a symbol of blessing (Isaiah 55:1; Amos 9:14; Jeremiah 48:33).

The setting was Cana in Galilee, a small village probably located about ten miles from the Sea of Galilee. Mary, realizing the awkward situation, asked Jesus to help out. Concerned about the success of the wedding, did she also see this as an opportunity for her Son to show Himself for Who He really was? (How difficult it must have been for Mary to be the mother of her Lord!) The NIV well captures the tone of Jesus' gentle rebuke (verse 4), literally translated, "Woman, what to me and you? My hour [this term when used by Jesus usually refers to a time of critical import, most often to his death; see John 7,8,12,13,17] is not yet come." This miracle is called the first of His signs, which would also seem to rule out the boyhood miracles, such as raising playmates from the dead or bringing clay doves to life, recorded in the pseudepigraphal gospels.

We must be careful not to allegorize Scripture, but John 2 contains striking parallels that are certainly applications of the passage and may even have been directly intended by the Lord. Some have seen as significant that the miracle takes place at a wedding, harkening to the marriage metaphor so prominent in Scripture. This is debatable, but the water into wine analogy stands out clearly. Wine, here, as in several places in Scripture, typifies the new life found in Christ. Jesus changes the Jewish ceremonial washing water in the twenty-to-thirty-gallon jars to wine, hence the old, external superficial cleansing to the new, inward life of the Spirit (see Mark 7:14-23; Ephesians 5:18; Acts 2:14-21). Christ gave/gives abundantly as becomes a King and what He gives is not dull and commonplace, but enlivening, precious, the very best. But if we want God's blessings we must obey Him. What if the servants had not done what Jesus said or had only filled the jars part way? However, they did obey and Christ revealed His glory, with the result that the disciples put their faith in Him (verse 11). May Christ show His glory to and through us so that people may be drawn to wonderful life in Him.

## Lesson Procedure

Open the lesson by asking your students, "What do you think of when I say 'wine'? Is wine something good or bad?" [Discuss and then have your students each look up one or two of the verses listed in paragraph #4 of the Lesson Background; give a mix of verses listing the good and evil aspects of wine, have your students decide the category into which they fit, and list them under the appropriate column on the board. Then help them summarize the Bible's teaching on wine. Also bring out the differences in culture (wine was the usual beverage drunk at meals) and the fact that it was usually greatly diluted.]

Continue your discussion as follows: "There was one occasion where, in Bible times as in some cultures today, wine was considered essential. Can you guess what that was? Yes, at weddings. Wedding customs in Bible times were the same as today in many respects, but there were differences. A village wedding would be a fun family time as well as a great occasion, and would often last several days. The bride

would not know the exact time of the wedding, but she and her friends would wait at her house for the bridegroom to come and get her. Sometimes he would come at night, and the bride and groom and their families and friends would walk to the wedding in a torch-lit procession.

**DIG IN: John 2:1-11.**

Who - Jesus, His mother, disciples, wedding party and guests.

What - Jesus turns water into wine.

Where - At a wedding in Cana of Galilee.

When - Early in Jesus' ministry; on the "third day."





**Dig In!**

**Today's Passage:**

**John 2:1-11**



**WHO?**



**WHAT?**



**WHEN?**



**WHERE?**

What was the problem Mary told Jesus about?

The Bible does not say, but in what tone of voice do you think she told Jesus about the problem? Do you think she thought Jesus would do something about it? Give reasons for your answers.

Jesus answered her literally, "Woman, what to me and to you?" (verse 4). Does this sound like Jesus will help? In what way do you think He said these words? Does verse 5 help your answer here? What is the "time" or "hour" to which Jesus refers?

How did Jesus solve the problem at the wedding?

Whom did He tell to help Him solve the problem? What do you think would have happened if they did not obey Jesus, or if they had obeyed incompletely by filling the jars only part way?

What did the master of the banquet tell the groom about the quality of the wine?

What was the result of this first sign Jesus performed?

What might the water and wine represent symbolically?

Your friend thinks Christians don't have any fun. How does this passage contradict that notion?

Personal application:

Idea: The next time you go to a party, don't think, "How can I have a good time?" but "How can I glorify God here? How can I help others come closer to God, or at least help them have an enjoyable time?" Of course, you can enjoy the music, enthusiastically play the games, and feast on the food, but "look not only to your own interests, but also the interests of others" (Philippians 2:4). Perhaps you and your friends could plan a party with all kinds of delicious food and exciting activities with a specific purpose of outreach to non-Christians.

# **NICODEMUS**

## **John 3:1-21**

### **Lesson Aim**

That your students will understand the meaning and necessity of being born again.

### **Memory Verse**

**This quarter, Matthew 5:21-32; this week, Matthew 5:24b** - “First go and be reconciled to your brother; then come and offer your gift.”

### **Lesson Background**

The term *born again* has become so familiar to twenty-first-century Americans that it has become a cliché almost devoid of meaning. When Jesus first told Nicodemus that no one could see (the Greek word implies discernment) the kingdom of God without being born again, the effect was startling. The term (γεννηθη ‘ανωθεν) can mean either *born again* or *born from above*, but Nicodemus obviously took Jesus to be indicating the former (verse 5).

What kind of person was Nicodemus? Much has been made of this Pharisee’s coming alone by night as indicative of his timidity, but he may have merely been seeking privacy. Fearful or not, Nicodemus seems to have been a sincere seeker. As a result of his encounter with the Lord, Nicodemus became a disciple willing to stand up for Him (see John 7:45-52; 19:38-42). In verse 2, Nicodemus spoke respectfully to Jesus and said he believed God was with Him. As He so often did (see, for instance, next week’s lesson on John 4), Jesus bypassed polite tangents and got to the heart of the issue (verse 3). When the Jewish ruler incredulously questioned Him, the Lord explained further the necessity of being twice born. Some commentators have seen the term *of water* in verse 5 to mean baptism or the water of the Word, but the

meaning that keeps clear the parallel of physical and spiritual birth is that water refers to the amniotic fluid present at birth. Nicodemus was not stupid. He knew Jesus was talking about something more than physical birth, but was unsure of Christ's exact meaning, and was also possibly considering the implications for his own life. If Nicodemus were to become a baby, he could no longer depend on himself; he would have to give up his self-righteous pride and his trust in the power and class privilege of being a Pharisee. Like a young child, he would be immature, ignorant, and in need of constant care, but also capable of tremendous growth and bearing a distinct resemblance to his father.

In verse 8, Jesus introduced Nicodemus to another word picture, the comparison between the work of the wind and the Spirit (*wind* and *Spirit* are the same word in Greek, *pneuma* - πνευμα). As the wind is unpredictable, unknown in its origin and destination, but powerful and undeniable in its effects, so is the Spirit who can break rock-hard hearts as easily as the wind can uproot trees. Like the wind, the Spirit will exert a force against those not going in the same direction and speed as He.

Continuing to use rich imagery, Jesus likened Himself to the snake Moses lifted on the pole in the desert (see Numbers 21:4-9). We, like the Israelites, are in rebellion against God, infected with the deadly venom of sin. We are unable to save ourselves. But Christ became sin for us (II Corinthians 5:21), was lifted up (the term, *hypsōo* - ὑψωω, refers to Jesus lifted up on the cross - John 8:28; 12:32-34 - and exalted in heaven) on a pole to die that anyone who "looks to him" will live. To the Israelites and to many today, this seems a foolish remedy. However, the poison is deadly and there is no other antidote. You must look to Christ; you (and the word is plural in verse 7; it does not just refer to Nicodemus) must be born again.

How much God loved the world to give His one and only Son to die for His people! (Note: the verses discussed here, John 3:16-21, may have been spoken by Jesus or may be a later editorial comment by John.) Yet men loved darkness rather than light because their deeds were evil. God is just as well as loving. Whoever does not believe stands condemned already. Pray that your students will understand these truths and by His grace become new creatures in Christ (II Corinthians 5:17).

## Lesson Procedure

Begin the lesson by presenting a hypothetical situation to your students. "What if someone told your dad or mom that in order to be promoted in his or her job, he or she would have to go back to school. This would not seem strange. Many times a person needs to get further training to advance in his or her career. But what if your parent were told he or she had to go back to kindergarten? That would seem ridiculous!" [Discuss why this would be so; having your students consider this question will help them understand how Jesus' question probably struck Nicodemus.] "How would your parent feel if he or she were told that instead of going to kindergarten, he or she had to become like a little baby?" [Discuss the dependence of babies and how radically different their parent's life would be from what it is now]. "These questions may seem silly, but Jesus told a man named Nicodemus something that seems even more strange. He told him that he had to be born again."

**DIG IN - John 3:1-21.**





**Dig In!**

**Today's Passage:**

**John 3:1-21**



**WHO?**



**WHAT?**



**WHEN?**



**WHERE?**

verses 1-2 - What can we learn about Nicodemus from these verses? (later see John 7:45-52 and 19:38-42 for more information about Nicodemus)

verses 3-7 - Nicodemus did not understand what Jesus meant by being *born again*. What do you think He meant? Why would this be hard for Nicodemus to do? Of course a baby cannot be born by himself, and neither can one be born again unless God works (Note: the word *water* in verse 5 probably refers to the amniotic fluid present when a baby is born). Make a chart comparing and contrasting physical and spiritual birth. Here are some other verses that talk about being born again: II Corinthians 5:17; Titus 3:5; I Peter 1:23; John 1:13; Galatians 6:15.

**PHYSICAL BIRTH**

**SPIRITUAL BIRTH**

verse 8 - Think of at least three ways the wind is like the Spirit (the word for wind and Spirit is the same in Greek - *pneuma* - πνευμα).

verses 9-11 - Summarize these verses in your own words or tell one fact you learn from them.

verses 14-15 - Jesus refers here to the story found in Numbers 21:4-9. Read this passage and fill in the chart comparing the situation of the Israelites with ours today.

Israelites	us
rebelled against God	
dying from poison	dying from
could not save themselves	
snake on a pole	
If they looked to the snake they would live	

verses 16-18 - What do these verses mean by *perish* and *condemned*? How can one be saved from this condemnation? **What does it mean to believe in the Son?**

verses 19-21 - Green plants are *phototropic*. This means that they will grow toward the light. Cockroaches and termites, on the other hand, will flee when light is shined on them. What do these verses say about men and light? What kind of light is being talked about here? Are you more like the green plant or the cockroach?

John 3:16 is one of the most well-known verses in the Bible. Memorize it if you have not already done so.

Personal application: Have you ever looked to Jesus to save you from the deadly poison of sin? Are there visible changes in your life as a result of the unseen work of the Spirit? **Have you ever been truly born again?** Do not answer this question here unless you wish, but think about it seriously. Perhaps you are unsure of the answer. You may wish to ask your pastor, parent, or teacher to help you understand what it means to be a Christian, but **do not** make a quick decision or say something to please an adult; do not ignore this question, either. The decision whether or not you will follow God is the most important one you will make in your life (yes, more important than whom you will marry, where you will go to school, and what job you will have when you are older). Only God can make you a new creature (John 3:8); you cannot do this yourself, but you can ask Him to give you the desire and cause you to be born again.

If you are a Christian: Healthy babies need food in order to grow (I Peter 2:2-3). Are you eating the kind of spiritual food (God's Word) that will help you grow as a Christian? The wind exerts a force on us no matter which way we go unless we are moving at exactly the same speed and in exactly the same direction as it is. The Spirit will resist those who go in a direction other than God's, urge on those who hold back, and hold back those who rush ahead.



# **THE SAMARITAN WOMAN**

**John 4:1-42**

## **Lesson Aim**

That your students will recognize Jesus as the Messiah, the source of living water, who seeks people who will bear witness to Him and worship Him in spirit and truth.

## **Memory Verse**

**This quarter, Matthew 5:21-32; this week, Matthew 5:25** - “Settle matters quickly with your adversary who is taking you to court. Do it while you are still with him on the way, or he may hand you over to the judge, and the judge may hand you over to the officer, and you may be thrown into prison.”

## **Lesson Background**

Today’s lengthy Scripture contains many wonderful truths, but may be difficult to cover thoroughly in one class period. Therefore, feel free to concentrate on parts that particularly relate to the needs of your students, although they should read the entire passage, in which we can learn about: Who Jesus is (He actually declares His Messiahship in verse 26), true worship and living water, witnessing for Christ, and loving people who are different from us.

Jesus loves people from all different cultures. Presumably to avoid unnecessary conflict with the Pharisees, Jesus went with His disciples to Galilee, taking the shortest route, which passed through the region of Samaria. In Samaria, He stopped at Sychar, a small village near Shechem and about a half mile from Jacob’s well, which is at the foot of Mount Gerazim. Most Jews would not travel through this region because of their violent hatred for Samaritans (verse 9; Luke 9:51-56; 10:25-37), but Jesus even extended His trip to stay with them an extra two days. The enmity was long-standing. In 722 B.C., the Assyrians had captured the northern kingdom of Israel, deported many of the Israelites, and resettled the land with people from other

vassal countries in order to stem future uprisings. These people intermarried with the poorest Israelites who remained in the land, producing the Samaritans, a racially mixed people with a syncretistic religion combining the worship of Jehovah with devotion to Baal and other foreign deities (II Kings 17:28-41). The Samaritans had opposed the rebuilding of the wall when the captives returned in 539 B.C., and in Maccabean times even dedicated the temple on Mount Gerazim to Zeus. They rejected all Scripture except the five books of Moses.

No wonder that animosity had grown between the Jews and Samaritans, but the Lord cared for people from both groups and was willing to do what was right no matter what others might have thought. It would have been considered odd for a man to talk to a woman in public (verse 27), but for a Jewish man to speak to a Samaritan woman of such moral character would be unthinkable. (Some commentators think she came to draw water at the sixth hour - 12:00 noon according to Jewish time reckoning - to avoid other women who would be likely to come to the well during the cooler morning or evening hours). Yet Jesus cared enough for the woman to oppose convention and talk to her about God when he was tired and thirsty (do we use bodily weakness as an excuse for not telling others about God?).

We can learn much from His approach to this woman. He asked her for something, putting Himself in her debt, which helped her open her defenses. Rather than immediately overwhelming her with theological argument, Jesus questioned her about everyday things to draw her out, making thought-provoking statements to lead her to an interest in spiritual things. Rather than trying to “drag a horse to water,” Jesus made her thirsty so that she would yearn for the living water. The woman misunderstood Jesus, assuming that “living water” meant “fresh, running water” (verse 11), but Jesus was persistent. She tried to justify herself (in verses 12 and 20, the idea is that “we Samaritans are as good as you Jews”), but Christ gently confronted her with her sin (verses 16-18). The Lord touched a vulnerable point, and the woman tried to sidestep the issue by retreating into esoteric religious questions. Jesus answered her questions, but then brought her back to the important issues at hand.

In John 4, Jesus tells us much about Himself. He is the Messiah, the long-awaited Redeemer of Israel and, as the Samaritans confess, the Savior of the world (verses 25-26, 42). He is the source of living water (note also John 7:37-39; He not only forever quenches His people’s thirst, but allows them to become a source of living water!). Like the Samaritan woman, may we tell others, no matter who they are, of our wonderful Lord, and may we worship Him in spirit and in truth.

## **Lesson Procedure**

Begin the lesson by asking your students, “How do you think Jesus feels about prejudice? Remember the song, ‘Red and yellow, black and white, they are precious in His sight’? How do we know this is true?” [Discuss] “How do you treat people who are different from you? Do you make fun of them or are you kind? Would you ask them to your house? Would you go to their house and eat their food, even if it were different from what you are used to? When Jesus was on earth, how did Jesus treat people who were differently from Him? Today’s lesson talks about this and about several other very important things. Before we read today’s passage, we must consider two things: the importance of water and the identity of the Samaritans?” [Discuss using material from the Lesson Background]

**DIG IN - John 4:1-42.**

## **Related Music**

“I’ve Got a River of Life” (L. Casebolt, Maranatha Music, 1990).







Dig In!

**Today's Passage:**

**John 4:1-42**



WHO?



WHAT?



WHEN?



WHERE?

**Jesus isn't prejudiced (verses 1-10)**

verses 1-3 - Where was Jesus going, and why?

verses 4-5 - Who were the Samaritans? Why do you think Jesus traveled through Samaria?

verse 6 - What can we learn about Jesus from this verse?

verses 7-10 (see also verse 27) - Name two reasons why people might have thought it odd for Jesus to talk with the people in verse 7?

In what tone of voice do you think the woman made the statement in verse 9?

In what tone of voice do you think Jesus spoke in verses 7 and 10?

How does this passage help you understand the parable of the good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37)?

Personal application: What can we learn from the way Jesus treated the Samaritan woman? Do you treat people kindly as He did? Are there people with whom you won't associate because they are different from you (the black kid? the fat kid? the ugly kid? the Asian kid? the handicapped kid? the white kid? the "stupid" kid? the "weird" kid? the "uncool" kid? the little (size or age) kid? the adult? the smelly kid? the kid from a foreign country?)? Are you nice to these people when alone but embarrassed to be with them when others are around? How does Jesus want you to act?

Personally plan to do one thing to get to know a "different" person better. As a class, plan to get together with kids from another culture or ethnic group.

**Water and worship (verses 7-24)**

verse 10 - What did Jesus mean by "living water" (see also John 7:37-39)?

verse 11 - What kind of water was the woman thinking about?

verses 10-15 - Compare Jesus' idea of water and the woman's idea of water.

<b>Woman</b>	<b>Jesus</b>
water	living water
thirst again	
	inward
must work and draw from well	
	spiritual

verse 16 - Why do you think Jesus asked the woman to get her husband?

verses 17-19 - What did Jesus tell the woman? How did He know this?

verses 19-20 - Where did the Samaritans worship? Where did the Jews worship?

verses 21-24 - Where and how did Jesus say people should worship? What do you think He meant by this?

Personal application: Do you have a spring of “living water” within you (verses 13-14)? Do you worship God in spirit and truth (verse 23)? [Do not say “yes” automatically because you think it’s expected of you, but think over these questions carefully.]

### **Who is Jesus? (verses 25-42)**

verses 25-26 - Who did Jesus say He was?

verses 28-31 - What was the first thing the woman did after she met Jesus? What was the result of what she did?

verse 32 - What kind of food was Jesus talking about in verse 32?

verses 35-38 - What are sowers and reapers? What kind of harvest is Jesus talking about?

verse 40 - Why was it odd that the Samaritans asked Jesus to stay with them (see verse 9)?

verse 42 - Give two reasons why the Samaritans believed in Jesus. Who did they say Jesus was?

### **Still Digging**

Jesus used the opportunities He had with people to confront them with who He is. In Jesus’ encounter with the woman at the well, we can see patterns that can help us tell people about Jesus. Read John 4:6-26 and try to find the following:

Excuses Jesus could have used for not talking with the woman.

How Jesus turned the talk from everyday things to talk about God.

Times when the woman brought up tangents (ideas that only related a little bit) to avoid talking about her relationship to God.

How Jesus confronted the woman with her sin.

How Jesus confronted her with God.



# **FIRST DISCIPLES CALLED**

**Luke 5:1-11**

## **Lesson Aim**

That your students will see the importance of “fishing for men” and being willing to leave all to follow Christ.

## **Memory Verse**

**This quarter, Matthew 5:21-32; this week, Matthew 5:26-** “I tell you the truth, you will not get out until you have paid the last penny.”

## **Lesson Background**

[Parallel passages: **Matthew 4:18-22; Mark 1:16-20; John 1:35-51**] Picture the scene: waves lapping against the shore, brawny men washing their nets, and people crowding around an itinerant preacher. Help your students imagine what it would have been like. Were birds calling? Were the boats freshly painted, or was the paint peeling and the boats dilapidated? Was it warm or cold? What did it smell like? It did not smell salty, for Lake Gennesaret, also called the Sea of Galilee or the Sea of Tiberias, was a fresh-water lake, 700 feet below sea level, about seven miles wide by thirteen miles long. We do not know many of these details, and do not want to posit as true what is not, yet all too often students see Bible stories as divorced from reality and need to realize that these events, with all their attendant sights, smells, and sounds, happened to real people and have relevance for your students’ lives as well as for the actual people involved.

Jesus, in order to speak better to the people crowding around Him to hear God’s Word, got into Simon’s boat, sat down, and taught from there (How different would this story have been if Simon, disgruntled at his lack of successful fishing, had denied Jesus the use of his boat?). When the Lord had finished speaking, He told Simon to “put out into deep water and let down the nets for a catch.” To expert fisherman Simon, this must have seemed absolutely crazy. He and his men had worked hard all night (the proper time for fishing) and caught nothing; what could a carpenter know about fishing? Nevertheless, in

spite of his doubts, on Jesus' word Simon obeyed and was blessed abundantly. Confronted in this miracle by the reality of Who Jesus was, Simon recognized his own sinfulness and fell at Jesus' feet. This should be our response in the presence of a holy God. Jesus ignored Simon's plea to "go away," telling him to stop being fearful. From then on, Simon would "catch men."

Simon's response to the Lord was one of total commitment. He left everything and followed Him. Simon knew that if Jesus could provide instantly what it would have taken the fishermen days to find, He could be counted on to supply all his needs. Is our confidence in God or ourselves and our own abilities? Do we find our security in our jobs, our friends, doing the "accepted thing," or in God? Simon Peter was a true disciple; listening to Jesus, he obeyed and followed Him, even leaving the huge catch of fish because following Christ was more important than enjoying His gifts.

The Lord told Simon that from now on he would catch men. The analogy between fishing and evangelism can be pushed too far, but some parallels are instructive. The fisherman must know the habits of different kinds of fish, where they are found, at what time they will be the most responsive, what sort of bait or lure will be most successful, and what type of hook or net to use. Some fish slip out of the net or off the hook, but many can be caught. Fishing can be hard work, but anyone can be a fisherman, and the unskilled may on occasion catch more than the experienced angler. Training and practice are certainly valuable, however; one should not be noisy or inept and scare the fish away. Fishermen often need assistance in their task; readily Simon asked the help of his partners to bring in the large catch. However, only Jesus can bring the fish. If we ask Him to do so and if we are totally committed to Him, He will bless abundantly.

## **Lesson Procedure**

Open the class with the Fishing Game. Before class, cut a number of various-sized fish from different-colored construction paper. Punch different-sized holes in each fish's mouth and bend the mouth of each fish at a right angle to its body. Have your students try to catch these fish with a bent paper clip tied to a string. The other end of the string may be attached to a stick or pencil as a fishing rod. To make the game more challenging, place the fish on a moving record turntable.

Talk briefly about fishing and how fishing in biblical times was hard work with nets, not a lazy Saturday-morning pastime. Later, after your students have "dug in" to the passage, use this game and real-life fishing as illustrations of evangelism (different types of fish, some fish easier to catch than others, some people better fishermen than others, but anyone can try, the joy of a successful "catch," etc.). For now, however, try to set the stage by having your students imagine the scene about which they are going to read.

### **DIG IN - Luke 5:1-11.**

Types of fish - albacore, anchovy, bass, bluefish, bonita, carp, catfish, clownfish, cod, dogfish, dolphin, eel, flounder, goldfish, guppy, haddock, halibut, herring, inconnu, jellyfish, kingfish, lantern fish, lionfish, lungfish, mackerel, marlin, minnow, narwhal, octopus, oscar, perch, pike, plaice, porpoise, ray, salmon, sardine, shad, shark, swordfish, trout, tuna, whale, whitefish. [Note that jellyfish are not true fish, octopi are mollusks, and dolphins, narwhals, porpoises, and whales are mammals, thus technically are not fish, though all live in the water.]



Dig In!

**Today's Passage:**

**Luke 5:1-11**



**WHO?**



**WHAT?**



**WHEN?**



**WHERE?**

verses 1-3 - What was Jesus doing? Why did He get into the boat?

verses 4-5 - Why did Jesus' command seem crazy to Simon?

verses 6-7 - What was the result of Simon's obedience?

verses 8-10 - What was Simon's reaction to this miracle? Who else was surprised by the miracle?

verse 10 - What two things did Jesus tell Simon? Why do you think He said these things, and what did He mean by the second?

Personal application: What does it mean for us to leave everything and follow Jesus? Does God want everyone to leave their occupations and preach on the street corner? Simon realized that if Jesus could supply a large catch of fish, He could provide for all his needs as well. Would you trust God to take care of you if your parents lost their jobs, or even if your parents died? Is your security in your abilities, what people think of you because of the way you dress, the places you go, or the way you act, or is it in God?

How can we “catch men”?

What do you need to have and need to know to catch fish and to “catch men”?

For fun, see how many types of fish you can name (score one point for each fish, two points if no one else thought of your fish).

Draw a class mural of different kinds of fish.



# **HEALING THE PARALYTIC**

**Mark 2:1-12**

## **Lesson Aim**

That your students will be encouraged to trust Jesus, the almighty God who forgives sins and heals, and to help bring their friends to Him as well.

## **Memory Verse**

**This quarter, Matthew 5:21-32; this week, Matthew 5:27** - “You have heard that it was said, ‘Do not commit adultery.’”

## **Lesson Background**

[Parallel passages: **Matthew 9:1-8; Luke 5:17-26.**] “Praise the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits - who forgives all your sins and heals all your diseases” (Psalm 103:2-3). This certainly could have been the praise of the paralytic in today’s Bible story. Although disease is not necessarily caused by an individual’s sin (John 9:1-3), they are integrally intertwined in Scripture. For instance, leprosy, that ravaging, isolating, progressively numbing, incurable disease, is used as a picture of the deeper, insidious sickness of sin. In Mark 2, Jesus is revealed as the answer to both problems, for, as the teachers of the law were unwilling to admit, Jesus is God.

Our story takes place in Capernaum. A large crowd had gathered in and outside a house where Jesus was preaching. Four men appeared carrying a paralytic, but the likelihood of their getting to see Jesus seemed nil (imagine the paralytic’s feelings of hopelessness at seeing the crowd). Determined to bring their friend to Jesus, the men dug (literally “scooped out”) through the flat roof of the house in order to lower him down on his mat in front of the Lord. Roofs were usually made of wooden beams covered with thatch and

compressed dirt, sometimes with tiles between the beams, and were often used as additional living space. “. . . Jesus saw their faith . . .” The men were resourceful, persistent, hard-working (dragging a man up to a roof and then digging through it required energy), and were not afraid to make a mess or entail cost (someone had to pay for a new roof!) so that one they cared about could come to Christ (Are we as willing to undergo trouble to bring our friends to Jesus?). “. . . Jesus saw their faith . . .” The Lord did not see the dirt and tiles falling all over, He did not see the disorder and disruption - He saw their faith.

Rather than immediately healing the paralytic, Jesus sought out the more profound problem - the man’s sin. To be healed from a dreadful disease or condition is wonderful, but only temporary (lasting one’s lifetime or less). Forgiveness of sins has eternal consequences. The teachers of the law were right; only God can forgive sins. Anyone could blaspheme and say that he could forgive sins, however, so to show that He had the authority (the word combines the ideas of the might and right to do so), Jesus healed the paralytic as well. The result? Everyone was amazed and praised God. May we do likewise for His grace in our lives.

## **Lesson Procedure**

Begin the lesson by asking your students to imagine what it is like to be paralyzed. How would their lives be the same and how would they be different than they are now? What activities would change and what ones would be the same? How might their relationships with people change? After your discussion, take your students through this familiar story in inductive fashion, using the **DIG IN** worksheets. Give the students a chance to act out their version of the story at the end of class, emphasizing the feelings and reactions of those involved and the gratitude of those whose lives had been touched by Jesus.



Dig In!

**Today's Passage:**

**Mark 2:1-12**



WHO?



WHAT?



WHEN?



WHERE?

verses 1-3 - You are a set designer for a play or film based on Jesus' life and are writing notes to a co-worker for what type of scenery to use here. Describe the scene. What do the houses look like, for example?

verse 3 - Where were the men taking the paralytic? What obstacle did they face? How do you think the paralytic felt when he saw the huge crowd?

verse 4 - How did the friends help the paralytic see Jesus? Did their solution create any problems?

verse 5 - How did Jesus "see their faith" (see James 2:14-26)? If the man came to be healed, why did Jesus tell him his sins were forgiven?

verses 6-7 - Was what the teachers of the law were thinking right or wrong? Why?

verse 8 - What does this verse show us about Jesus?

verses 9-12 - Do you think it is easier to heal or forgive sins? Why do you think Jesus asked this? What does the healing show about Who Jesus is (see again verse 7)?

verse 12 - What was the result of this miracle?

Personal application: Does Jesus forgive people today? Does Jesus always forgive people? Does Jesus heal people today? Does Jesus always heal people? Do you believe God can work powerfully in your friends' lives? How can you "bring your friends to Jesus"?

### **Take a Break**

We know how the story ended, but how do you think the paralyzed man felt before Jesus healed and forgave him? What would it have been like not to be able to walk, perhaps for a long time, perhaps since birth? Was his faith strong or did his friends convince him to see Jesus? Was he disappointed when he saw the crowd outside the house? What do you think happened after the incidents of Mark 2? Remembering, of course, that you are just guessing, write a play or story about the man and his friends, concentrating on the time before and after the Bible story. You may write as a group (have a secretary and different people contribute suggestions) or individually. If you write a play, act it out.

# **HEALING THE LAME MAN**

**John 5:1-18**

## **Lesson Aim**

To recognize that Jesus, the Son of God, heals and stood against the traditions of men to do the will of God.

## **Memory Verse**

**This quarter, Matthew 5:21-32; this week, Matthew 5:28** - “But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart.”

## **Lesson Background**

Jesus again became the center of controversy as the compassion of God came into conflict with the traditions of men. The healing took place near the Sheep Gate at a pool called Bethesda, which means “house of mercy.” The traditional location of the pool is beneath the present site of the Church of St. Anne in northwest Jerusalem, where archaeologists have uncovered a colonnade on four sides of a pool (which also would have been covered). People apparently attributed miraculous powers to this pool, for a great number waited to bathe there, including one who had been an invalid for thirty-eight years (see verse 7). The explanation regarding the healing virtue of the water in verses 3-4 is not found in early manuscripts, and when it does appear, it occurs with numerous variants.

It is instructive to compare this story with the healing in Mark 2. Both show Jesus to be God and bring Him into conflict with the authorities. However, in Mark, a man and his friends sought Jesus and He responded to their faith, while here Jesus (twice) looked for the man and healed him, apparently without any faith being exercised on his part. The Lord asked the man if he wanted to get well (the answer to which

might not be as obvious as it seems), and the man, rather than responding directly, related in a discouraged fashion his efforts to solve his problem on his own. Jesus did not argue or sympathize with him, but simply healed him. Both stories relate sin and sickness, but while the invalid's problem seemed to stem directly from his own offenses (verse 14), this was not necessarily so in the case of the paralytic. Jesus forgave the paralytic and presumably the man in today's story as well, whom He warns to sin no more lest something worse befall him (verse 14). Did this admonition anger the man and cause him to retaliate by giving the Pharisees evidence against Jesus? It seems hard to believe that he would not have known their attitude toward Him. Yet Jesus found the man in the Temple, presumably praising God for his healing, and perhaps he was out of gratitude just trying to be helpful to the religious authorities with no comprehension that they would use his testimony against his Healer.

The Sabbath was a major issue of the day and the Pharisees had created hundreds of minute regulations about how to avoid breaking God's fourth commandment. One had to be careful how one spit, for example, because if the spittle rolled in the dust, that would be plowing a furrow and that was work, hence a violation of God's law (see the following for examples of Sabbath controversies in Scripture: Matthew 12:1-14 (also Mark 2:23-3:6; Luke 6:1-11); Luke 13:10-16; 14:1-6). Jesus not only broke the Pharisees' rules but encouraged someone else to do so. We should not fear conflict or going against the traditions of men to accomplish the work of God. The Lord used the Sabbath controversy as an opportunity to proclaim His deity. In John 5:17, He professed to be continuing the creative work of God, His Father. The Jews, recognizing the audacity of His claim, tried to kill Him. They would have been right to be horrified at Jesus' statement in verse 17 except for one thing; Jesus really is God and He is the One who created and defines the Sabbath. May we boldly stand for Him no matter what the opposition.

## Lesson Procedure

Begin the lesson by having a student read Exodus 20:8 and discuss what it means to keep the Sabbath holy. Do not delve extensively into this issue here, but give examples of how the Pharisees "fenced the law" (made strict regulations so people would not come near to breaking God's rules). A modern-day example might be parents who refuse to allow their teenager go to any party because they fear parties where drugs and alcohol are served.

God's rule:	Do not misuse the name of the Lord your God.
Pharisees' rule:	Do not say God's name at all.
God's rule:	On it [the Sabbath] you shall not do any work
Pharisees' rule:	Do not roll spit on ground; walk no farther than a "Sabbath day's walk," and so on.

### DIG IN - John 5:1-18.



Dig In!

**Today's Passage:**

**John 5:1-18**



**WHO?**



**WHAT?**



**WHEN?**



**WHERE?**

verses 1-4 - Draw a quick sketch on the back of this paper of the scene of today's story (leave enough time for the rest of your Bible study).

verses 3-4 - Verse 4 and part of verse 3 are skipped (see the note at the bottom of your Bible page); why were these verses omitted and how did they get in some manuscripts in the first place (see also verse 7)?

verse 5 - How long had the man been an invalid? Write down some of the things he might have been thinking and feeling as he lay by the pool.

verse 6 - Why do you think Jesus asked the man this question?

verses 7-9 - "Jesus healed the man because of his great faith." Explain why you agree or disagree with this statement.

verses 10-12 - Why did the Pharisees object to Jesus healing the man? What does this show about what they considered important?

verses 13-15 - What did Jesus' warning show about the cause of the man's illness? Do you think the man told the Jews who Jesus was out of ignorance or to get him in trouble (defend your answer).

verses 16-18 - How did Jesus' answer to the Pharisees' objections anger them even further?

Compare and contrast the healing in Mark 2 of the paralyzed man lowered through the roof and the healing of the invalid by the pool of Bethesda.

Mark 2	John 5
	invalid healed by Jesus
illness not necessarily caused by sin	
Jesus forgave the man's sins	Jesus warned the man not to sin
	no one helped the man find Jesus
Jesus said "Get up, take your mat and walk"	Jesus said "
man sought Jesus	
man healed because of faith	
teachers of the law angry because:	Pharisees angry because:

Personal application: Jesus cared about the man's spiritual condition as well as his physical health(verse 14). Are you obeying God in thanksgiving for all He has done for you (or maybe you do not know Jesus and need to ask Him to make you well spiritually)? Jesus obeyed proper authority but stood up against man-made rules and traditions to do God's work. Are we willing to do this?



# **SABBATH CONTROVERSIES**

**Matthew 12:1-14**

## **Lesson Aim**

That your students will view the Sabbath as a day to glorify God and serve others.

## **Memory Verse**

**This quarter, Matthew 5:21-32; this week, Matthew 5:29** - “If your right eye causes you to sin, gouge it out and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to be thrown into hell.”

## **Lesson Background**

[Parallel passages: **Mark 2:23-3:5; Luke 6:1-11.**] If a small child were queried as to his favorite memory of a trip to an art museum, he would be apt to ignore the Manets and Rembrandts and concentrate on the ice cream cone he had eaten or the guard’s shiny buttons. Similarly, the Pharisees “strained at a gnat and swallowed a camel,” nit-picking at a perceived violation of the law while failing to recognize the Lord of glory among them.

Ever vigilant to catch Jesus in an offense, the Pharisees upbraided Him for allowing His disciples to pick grain as they walked through a field. This was a lawful activity (Deuteronomy 23:24-25), but the Jewish leaders objected to its occurring on the Sabbath day, viewing it as the work of reaping (picking the grain) and threshing (taking off the outer husk to eat the edible kernel). The Pharisees “fenced the law,” creating numerous minute restrictions lest a person break God’s general command. Thirty-nine classes of activity had been designated as forbidden on the Sabbath.

Jesus responded calmly and firmly to his critics, questioning their whole approach to the Law, which focused on the letter rather than the intent. He pointed out that David ate consecrated bread reserved for the priests (I Samuel 21:1-6) and that normal priestly duties involved “work” on the Sabbath. In a special way, God was present in the Temple where the priests worked, but now someone greater (the word is neuter in the earliest manuscripts but can still refer to Christ) was there; God Himself was in their midst.

The Pharisees, however, were blind to this. They hoped the Lord would perform a miracle, not so God would be glorified or for the benefit of a suffering person, but to catch Him in violation of the law. Rabbinic law did allow for the saving of life on the Sabbath, but the relief of lesser maladies could wait twenty-four hours lest work be done. Jesus showed the foolish cruelty of men who allowed more compassion to be shown to a sheep than a man. Jesus healed the man with the shriveled hand, but rather than being thankful and praising God, the Pharisees plotted how to kill Christ.

What is our attitude toward the Sabbath? Do we truly want to serve the Lord or do we use self-made rules to excuse our own selfish behavior or to condemn others who are doing good? May we glorify the Lord of the Sabbath on this and all days of our lives.

## **Lesson Background**

Begin by discussing briefly with your students the idea of the Sabbath and what it means to keep the Sabbath holy. Read Exodus 20:8-11 and Deuteronomy 5:12-15. Point out that the Old Testament Sabbath was on Saturday, while most Christians consider the first day of the week when Jesus rose from the dead as the Sabbath. Keep your discussion here brief, but continue after the **DIG IN** Bible study if desired. Allow your students to discuss the issue freely, but be sure not to undercut parental ideas of proper Sabbath observance.

**DIG IN - Matthew 12:1-14.**



Dig In!

**Today's Passage:**

**Matthew 12:1-14**



**WHO?**



**WHAT?**



**WHEN?**



**WHERE?**

verses 1-2 - Why did the Pharisees object to Jesus' disciples picking grain?

- a) They were trespassing on a farmer's field.
- b) Their laws said one should not reap or thresh on the Sabbath.
- c) Even though they did not take much, picking grain was stealing.

Look at the end of this worksheet for the correct answer and to finish this question.

verses 3-8 - How did Jesus respond to those who criticized Him?

verses 3-4 - How do you think the story Jesus told from I Samuel 21:1-6 (read this passage) answered the Pharisees' complaint?

verse 5 - How do the priests desecrate the Sabbath, and why are they innocent?

verses 6-8 - Who is the One greater than the temple? What else does He call Himself?

verses 9-10 - Why did the Pharisees ask Jesus if it was lawful to heal on the Sabbath?

verses 11-12 - Summarize Jesus' response to the Pharisees in your own words.

verses 13-14 - What was the Pharisees' reaction to Jesus' healing of the man with the shriveled hand? How do you respond when someone is honored for doing good? Are you jealous like the Pharisees or do you praise God for them?

Personal application: Consider how the Lord wants you to "keep the Sabbath holy." What are your motives for what you do or do not do on this day? Don't be judgmental toward those who want to please God but differ from you in specifics on this issue (Matthew 7:1-5). [Verses on the Sabbath: Exodus 20:8-11; Deuteronomy 5:12-15; Luke 11:39-42; Colossians 2:16-17; I Corinthians 16:2]

verses 1-2 Answers and more questions:

The correct answer is b; a and c are incorrect because the Israelites were allowed to take a small amount of food from a field (Deuteronomy 25:24-25). The Pharisees' objection was that the disciples did this on the Sabbath. They saw picking the grain and rubbing off the outer inedible husk as reaping and threshing, farming activities that were among the thirty-nine types of work they had decided would break the Sabbath. God told His people not to work on the Sabbath, but the Pharisees "fenced the Law," making up many tiny rules to be sure the Israelites would not break God's rule. Do you think this worked and kept people from breaking God' laws? Can fencing the law ever be helpful? Do rules ever keep people from doing good? Think of ways that people "fence the law" today.

# **CENTURION'S SERVANT HEALED**

**Luke 7:1-10**

## **Lesson Aim**

That your students will realize the necessity of having faith in Jesus, as the centurion did, and also emulate his other good qualities, such as compassion and generosity.

## **Memory Verse**

**This quarter, Matthew 5:21-32; this week, Matthew 5:30** - “And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to go into hell.” [Be sure to explain the meaning of this verse to your students so there is no misunderstanding]

## **Lesson Background**

[Parallel passage: **Matthew 8:5-13**] When writing a story, an author may describe his characters outright: “Mr. Jones was selfish and cruel,” or show his characters’ personalities by their actions: “Mr. Jones turned his back on the hungry child and noisily smacked his lips as he devoured the huge sandwich.” In continuing to present Jesus in His authority as God to heal and perform miracles, Luke also subtly paints a beautiful portrait of the centurion in Capernaum. The man cared for his dying servant and for his neighbors. Those who knew him respected him highly and were so grateful for his contribution toward the building of their synagogue that they eagerly acted as intermediaries begging Jesus’ help. (What impression have we made on our neighbors?) Even beyond his kindness, compassion, and generosity, however, the centurion is praised for his humility and faith.

Those in authority, accustomed to obedience from their subordinates, often privately feel capable of handling any situation on their own and are utterly staggered when confronted by circumstances beyond their control. When the centurion's servant lay dying, he knew where to turn. Surprisingly, he did not come demanding help (remember, from outward appearances Jesus was a mere carpenter and itinerant preacher, while the centurion was an important officer in the Roman army in charge of fifty to one hundred soldiers). Rather, in great humility, not even daring to invite Jesus into his house, and in great faith, the centurion turned to the Lord. Whether or not the centurion recognized that Jesus was God, he realized that Jesus had far more power than he and was easily capable of healing his servant without even being present. If he, the centurion in a subordinate station, was obeyed, how much more should Jesus be? Jesus was amazed at the centurion's faith, greater than any He had found even in Israel, which had the advantage of having the Scriptures and of being God's chosen people. May this kind of faith, as well as love, be found in us, too.

## **Lesson Procedure**

Begin the lesson with a game of "Centurion (Simon) Says." Tell your students what a centurion was and then, to point out the concept of an authority's ability to command absolute obedience from those under him, play "Centurion Says." You or the student chosen as Centurion perform different bodily actions such as touching toes, hopping, or flapping arms. For each action, the Centurion says, "Centurion says, 'do this'" (or he mentions the action, "Centurion says, 'touch your nose'"). The students must follow each command preceded by the words, "Centurion says," but must not obey if only the command is given, or they are out of the game. Commands should be given rapidly or at varying speeds in an effort to fool the players. Players must obey the Centurion's spoken command even if he is performing a different action at the time. For example, to fool the players he might say, "Centurion says, 'touch your head'" when he is touching his shoulders.

**DIG IN - Luke 7:1-10.**



Dig In!

Today's Passage:

Luke 7:1-10



WHO?



WHAT?



WHEN?



WHERE?

Put a check next to the adjectives that describe the centurion according to this passage and write the number of the verse that shows this next to the characteristic. Only check traits that you can prove from the passage, not ones you think may have been true. You should find five.

- |   |       |  |       |
|---|-------|--|-------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> well-respected | _____ | <input type="checkbox"/> funny           | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> poor           | _____ | <input type="checkbox"/> handsome        | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> humble         | _____ | <input type="checkbox"/> had great faith | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> kind           | _____ | <input type="checkbox"/> joyful          | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> brave          | _____ | <input type="checkbox"/> neat            | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> generous       | _____ | <input type="checkbox"/> very smart      | _____ |

verses 4-5 - Why did the elders of the Jews want Jesus to help the centurion? Did he deserve Jesus' help?

verses 6-8 - Why did the centurion not ask Jesus to come to his house? Put his "lesser to greater" argument in your own words. Over what does Jesus have authority?

verse 9 - Why would the people of Israel be expected to have more faith than the centurion?

verse 10 - Was the centurion right in his estimation of Jesus? Is He worthy of our trust?

Personal application: The love and faith of the centurion were evident to others. Do people see Christ in us? Do you trust Jesus? Are there areas in which you need to trust Him more?



# **STILLING THE TEMPEST**

**Mark 4:35-41**

## **Lesson Aim**

That your students will recognize that Jesus is God, Creator and Controller of the wind, waves, and Master of anything they encounter in their lives.

## **Memory Verse**

**This quarter, Matthew 5:21-32; this week, Matthew 5:31** - “It has been said, ‘Anyone who divorces his wife must give her a certificate of divorce.’”

## **Lesson Background**

[Parallel passages: **Matthew 8:23-27; Luke 8:22-25**] Many times in life we are confronted by the unexpected. The disciples, traveling with Jesus across the Sea of Galilee, encountered a furious squall that threatened to swamp their vessel. Desperate, they turned for help to the Lord, Who was asleep on the cushion in the back of the boat. [Contrast Jesus’ weakness here (the need for sleep; He must have been very tired to sleep through such a storm) with the subsequent demonstration of His power and authority]. “. . . Don’t you care . . . ?” his disciples said. How often do we likewise accuse the Lord of unconcern or even animosity toward us. But the Lord not only deeply loves His children, He has the power to back up that love and to work all things together for good (Romans 8:28). Jesus spoke and creation responded; the wind died down and it was completely calm. Jesus then chastised the disciples as well for their unbelief. The disciples were terrified as they began to have some inkling of who Jesus was. Do we really believe Jesus is God, with all the implications that entails? Do we trust Him with our lives and believe that He is capable and willing to help us, even in the “storms of life”? May it be so.

## Lesson Procedure

In order to understand a story properly, students need to have personal knowledge of terms used and occurrences in that story. The more closely their background of experience parallels the events and details of a story, the better they can understand and relate to it. A child who has ridden and cared for a horse can comprehend *Black Beauty* better than a child who has seen a horse on a farm, who in turn has a better understanding than one who has seen the animal on television. Most of your students have probably never been on a small boat in a storm (and you cannot very well provide this experience, nor would you wish to!), but you can have them share with each other whatever they have known of traveling by boat, or storms they have experienced even on land. Have them include all their senses; what did the storm sound and even smell like? If possible, show a film clip of a realistic storm at sea. You may also wish to have your students discuss any dangerous situations in which they may have been involved and their feelings at the time.

**DIG IN - Mark 4:35-41.**

## Related Music

Sing songs about Jesus' power over the storms of nature and the "storms of life": "My Anchor Holds" (*Trinity Hymnal*, #617); "A Shelter in the Time of Storm" (*Trinity Hymnal*, #619); "Eternal Father, Strong to Save" (*Trinity Hymnal*, #630).



Dig In!

**Today's Passage:**

**Mark 4:35-41**



**WHO?**



**WHAT?**



**WHEN?**



**WHERE?**

verses 35-38 - If you were an artist painting a picture of this scene, what details would you include? Name as many specifics as you can.

verses 38,40 - Where was Jesus when the storm came up? What does this show about Jesus? Where did the disciples turn when they needed help? Did they act in faith?

verse 39 - How did Jesus solve the disciples' problem?

verse 41 - Answer the disciples' question (Who is this?). What does the fact that Jesus controlled the wind and the waves show about Him? (Read other verses about God's control over nature: Colossians 1:16-17; Psalm 89:8-9; 93:3-4; 106:8-11; 107:23-31)

Personal Application: To whom do we turn in trouble? Do you sometimes feel that God doesn't care about you? This passage shows that Jesus loves His disciples (those who follow Him) and has the power to take care of them.



# **THE GADARENE DEMONIAK**

**Mark 5:1-20**

## **Lesson Aim**

That your students will realize that Jesus is stronger than demons and, if they are Christians, that they should tell others what the Lord has done for them.

## **Memory Verse**

**This quarter, Matthew 5:21-32; this week, Matthew 5:32** - “But I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife, except for marital unfaithfulness, causes her to become an adulteress, and anyone who marries the divorced woman commits adultery.”

## **Lesson Background**

[Parallel accounts are found in **Matthew 8:28-34 and Luke 8:26-39.**] Jesus Christ is Lord, not only of the natural realm, the Controller of the wind and the waves, but of the supernatural as well. Tired from a long day of teaching and healing, having just stilled a furious squall, Jesus now reaches the shore of the Sea of Galilee, only to encounter in the region of the Gerasenes two demon-possessed men (Matthew’s account makes it clear that two men were present, even though the other Synoptic Gospels focus on only one person). The man exhibited characteristics distinctive of demon possession. He was extremely strong, so that no person could subdue him or even bind him with chains (Mark 5:3-5). He was isolated from most of society, living in a ceremonially unclean place (verses 2-3) and had self-destructive tendencies (verse 5).

When the man saw Jesus, he fell at His feet. The demons, who recognized Jesus’ identity (cf. Acts 19:15), spoke (actually shouted) directly through the man (verses 9-10). Jesus, in turn, told the spirit to come out of the man, and when the spirit did not immediately leave, asked his name. The spirit answered, “My

name is Legion.” A Roman legion was an army unit originally containing approximately 6000 men, and hence came to mean any such large number. The demons begged Jesus not to send them out of the area and so he sent them into a large herd of pigs, which then rushed headlong down a steep bank to drown in the lake.

Those tending the pigs ran off to tell the news, and people from the town and countryside came to see what had happened. Finding the man clothed and in his right mind, they pleaded with Jesus to leave their region. Some say that the people wanted Jesus to leave because of the financial loss of the pigs (they point out that Jews should not have been keeping pigs in the first place, but this was a region inhabited by Hellenistic Jews, who long ago had stopped practicing the laws and traditions of the Jewish faith). This may be true in part, but Luke indicates a greater reason (Luke 8:37) - they were afraid. A man who could cast out demons, causing two thousand pigs to hurtle into a lake, was beyond their realm of experience. He could not be controlled, and they were satisfied with their complacent existence. Do we also fear the power of God and try to keep Him at a comfortable distance?

Jesus did not stay where He was unwanted. As He was leaving, the man who had been delivered begged to go with Him, but Jesus told the man instead to testify to others about the Lord’s mercy in his life. “So the man began to tell in the Decapolis [ten Hellenistic Jewish cities southwest of the Sea of Galilee] how much Jesus had done for him.” May we also spread the news of all the Lord has done for us.

To many, the idea of demon possession found in today’s passage may seem remote, but as our society turns farther and farther from Christ, occult activity, once thought limited to far-off lands and tales told by missionaries, may end up on our doorstep. Of course, some people have blown demonic activity out of all proportion, blaming demons for all sorts of things with no biblical warrant. However, Satan and his cohorts have real power, and we ignore it to our peril. We must be prepared, filled with Christ’s Spirit, and walking in close, prayerful fellowship with and obedience to the Lord if we are to conquer in this area. Dealing with demons is beyond the province of this Sunday School curriculum, but do read books on the subject and/or speak with those who have had experience in this area. It is important to warn your students against things that could involve them in the occult, however innocently they might engage in the activity (see the **DIG IN** worksheet for examples of such activities). We need not fear the Devil or his demons, who will one day be punished eternally (Jude 6; Revelation 20:1-3,10). Jesus indeed is victorious over Satan. Praise Him!

**DIG IN - Mark 5:1-20.**



Dig In!

**Today's Passage:**

**Mark 5:1-20**



WHO?



WHAT?



WHEN?



WHERE?

verse 1 - This was in a region inhabited by Hellenistic Jews. See *Gerasenes* in your Bible dictionary.

verse 2 - What are evil spirits (demons)? What does it mean that this man had an evil spirit inside him?

verses 3-7 - What can we learn about demon possession from this man's behavior (how did he act, etc. Give at least four specifics)? Do all demon-possessed people act this way? Do you think this man was happy (Satan promises good but delivers evil)? What did the demon know about Jesus?

verses 9-10 - What did Jesus ask the evil spirit?

verse 10 - How did the evil spirit answer? What is a legion (see your Bible dictionary)? Why did the evil spirit call himself this?

verses 8-13 - How did Jesus deal with the evil spirit?

verses 14-17 - How had the man changed? Why do you think the people asked Jesus to leave their region (see Luke 8:37)? Do you know people like this, or are you like this?

verses 18-20 - Look up *Decapolis* in your Bible dictionary. What did Jesus tell the man to do? Did he obey Him?

Personal application: If you are a Christian, do you tell others about what Jesus has done for you?

You may never encounter a demon, but as our society turns more and more away from God, people are becoming more open to occult activity. **Stay away** from anything that might bring you into contact with demons. Such things include Ouija boards, hypnosis, astrology, witches, good luck charms or amulets, fortune-telling, false religions such as eastern or Native American religions or voodoo, some types of rock music, drugs, books about the occult, New Age techniques such as meditation (different from what the Bible means by meditation), visualization, spirit friends, and channeling. This does not mean that anyone who has ever played with a Ouija board is demon-possessed, but these are *very dangerous* activities. Some Christians blame all sorts of things on demons that are just the person's own sin, but demons do exist. If you know a person who is involved with the occult, warn him against it, and if he persists stay away from him if possible. Do not try to help him yourself, but talk to a mature Christian about the situation. To deliver a person from Satan's power requires much prayer and wisdom. Fighting against the Devil is no game, but Jesus is stronger than Satan and all his hosts, and if we are walking with the Lord we needn't be afraid.



# **HEALINGS IN CAPERNAUM**

**Mark 5:21-43; Matthew 9:27-34**

## **Lesson Aim**

That your students will realize that Jesus can meet the needs of those who put their faith in Him.

## **Memory Verse**

**Review Matthew 5:21-32.**

## **Lesson Background**

[Parallel passages are in **Matthew 9:18-26** and **Luke 8:40-56.**] Many times we become blasé about the miracles and healings in the Bible. Familiarity has bred contempt, and we have difficulty putting ourselves into the shoes of biblical characters. Yet we must try to do so, and communicate the reality of these events to our students. In today's passages, five people from different social backgrounds, with differing needs, all in faith seek Jesus, who heals and delivers them from various afflictions.

We first encounter Jairus, one of the synagogue rulers. Synagogue rulers, laymen who had administrative responsibilities, looked after the building and supervised worship, deciding who would pray, read Scripture, and the like. Such a socially prominent individual would be censured for having any association with Jesus, but in his desperate love for his daughter, Jairus humbled himself, falling at Jesus' feet and begging him to heal her. To his great relief, Jesus agreed to go with him. Imagine his anxiety, then, when Jesus stopped to help someone on the way.

The woman Jesus helped did not have Jairus' social position; in fact, if as is surmised, her affliction was a uterine hemorrhage, she would have been a social outcast, considered unclean and forbidden access

to Temple worship (Leviticus 15:25-33). For years the woman had suffered (the Greek word *παθουσα* - *pathousa* indicates pain) under the care of many doctors, spending all she had but only getting worse. At the end of her resources, she, too, turned to the Lord, reasoning that if she could only touch His clothing she would be healed. The woman may have thought she could get away in the crowd unnoticed, but Jesus knew that this woman's touch was different from the many who jostled Him. Realizing what had happened, the woman, like Jairus, fell at Jesus' feet. Jesus may have brought the woman into the open to make her stand up for her faith, so others could see she had been healed and accept her, and/or so He could establish a relationship with her. Whatever the reason, Jesus tenderly called her "daughter" (the only time in the Bible He so refers to someone) and told her that her faith had healed her.

Meanwhile, men had come from Jairus' house to tell him his daughter had died. The Bible does not record Jairus' emotions, but one can imagine his heartsick disappointment, possible anger, and despair. Yet whatever Jairus felt for a time, the Lord gave him hope. At Jesus' encouraging words, "Don't be afraid; just believe," Jairus took the Lord to his house. Fear and faith are opposites. If we trust the Lord and love Him, there will be no room in our hearts for fear (I John 4:18). At the house, they were greeted by the loud wailing and flute-playing of professional mourners who laughed at Jesus' contention that the child only slept (Luke makes it clear that the girl was dead; her spirit had actually departed, but sleep is often used as a euphemism for death in the Bible, and Jesus knew her condition was only temporary). Ignoring their taunts, Jesus went with his most trusted disciples and the child's father and mother into the room where she lay. There He commanded her in Aramaic to get up, which she did. Compassionate even to the smallest detail, Jesus then told them to give her something to eat.

"As Jesus went from there, two blind men followed him, calling out, 'Have mercy on us Son of David.'" The title is a messianic one, indicating the blind men's belief in Christ. After going indoors (probably to avoid the crowds), Jesus questioned the men about their faith and restored their sight. As with Jairus, Jesus sternly warned the men not to tell what had happened, but they disobeyed and spread the news throughout the whole region. It is not clear why Jesus sometimes forbade people to talk of His miracles and at other times encouraged them to spread His word. Presumably the Lord did not want people to follow Him for His miracles alone, nor would He want to precipitate confrontation with the authorities concerned over His growing popularity. In regions where He was less well-known and where the religious leaders had little influence, this opposition did not seem to be a problem, which may be why Jesus encouraged the Samaritan woman at the well and the Gadarene demoniac to tell others about Him.

Jairus, the woman with the issue of blood, and the two blind men all showed faith in Jesus. In the last instance of Jesus working in today's passages, a man's friends show faith by bringing him to the Lord. The man was unable to speak (the word *dumb* - *κωφον* - *kophon* can also indicate deafness, depending on the context, cf. Matthew 11:5; Mark 7:32; Luke 7:22). Jesus delivered the man from the demon, and he then spoke (sickness may be, but of course is not necessarily demon-related). The Pharisees, rather than rejoicing at this miracle, said that Jesus drove out demons by the prince of demons (Jesus later shows the foolishness of this contention; see Matthew 12:22-29).

Five people from different social circumstances with differing afflictions all turned to Jesus, who met their various needs. The Lord did not heal all the people in Israel, no more than He does today, but He is a compassionate God who will do what is best for His people if we turn to Him in faith.

## **Lesson Procedure**

Ask your students to try to “put themselves into” today’s Bible stories, to imagine the thoughts and feelings of those involved. You may wish to have students share their experiences with seriously ill people, but be sensitive to pain in situations where the Lord has not healed.

**DIG IN - Mark 5:21-43; Matthew 9:27-34.**





Dig In!

**Today's Passages:**

**Mark 5:21-43; Matthew 9:27-34**



**WHO?**



**WHAT?**



**WHEN?**



**WHERE?**

As you read these passages, try to picture the people as real, live human beings (they were) who ate, talked, worked, played, and had feelings as you do.

**Mark 5:21-43** (see also Matthew 9:18-26 and Luke 8:40-56)

verses 21-24 - Why did Jairus ask Jesus for help? What do you learn about Jairus from these verses? See your Bible dictionary to find out about synagogue rulers.

verses 27-31 - Why was this woman's touch different from that of the crowd around her? Do you think Jesus knew who had touched Him?

verses 32-34 - Why do you think the woman wanted to go away unnoticed? Why might Jesus have wanted to bring her out into the open? Have you ever been reluctant to tell others about what Jesus has done for you (explain)?

verses 35-36 - How do you think Jairus felt about the woman's interruption, especially when the men told him his daughter had died? How do you react when your plans are interrupted? Did Jesus have control of the situation? Is Jesus in control of your life as well? What did Jesus tell Jairus to do (verse 36)? Do you face difficult situations with fear or faith?

verses 37-40 - Middle Eastern custom calls for loud crying to show sorrow for the death of a loved one. Some of those wailing were probably professional mourners hired to give public expression to the family's grief. Matthew says the child's spirit had left her, but Jesus would "wake" the child from her sleep, a word often used in the Bible as a metaphor for death. How do you think Jairus felt when he heard the mourners?

verse 40-43 - We know what happens, and it is easy to see this like a cartoon where a character gets run over by a car flatter than a pancake and immediately pops up good as new. But this is real. The girl really died. Try to imagine what it was really like, as if this had happened to one of your friends (she was about your age).

verse 43 - Why might Jesus have told them not to let anyone know about this; note Jesus' concern, even over getting the girl food.

### **Matthew 9:27-34**

verse 27 - How does what the blind men say to Jesus show their faith in Him?

verses 28-30 - What part did faith play in this miracle? Was it also important in the healings of the sick woman and Jairus' daughter (if so, show where)?

verses 30-31 - Why do you think Jesus forbade the blind men to tell about the miracle? Why do you think they disobeyed Him?

verses 32-34 - How was this man's condition the same and different from the demon-possessed man of Gadara? (Note: *dumb* means the man could not talk, not that he was stupid; demons can cause sickness, but, of course, not all sickness is caused by them.) To what did the Pharisees attribute the man's deliverance?

### **Activity**

Write a newspaper account about one or more of the events in the passages above, or write diary entries before or after one of the miracles, as if you were a friend or relative of the person involved.