

▶ SCRIPTURE READING

Matthew 5:14-16

SUMMARY:

You are the light of the world (Matthew 5:14a). This week students look at the famous Sermon on the Mount in the opening chapters of Matthew. Jesus reveals what it looks like to be a disciple of Christ. And it begins with light. It begins with the intention to be seen, to shed light in the darkness, and to point people in the right direction.

God's original mission to Israel was to be a light (Isaiah 42:6, 49:6). And what the disciples had experienced in Jesus had fundamentally changed them, compelling them to live as witnesses of the good news. Their lives became living, breathing evidence of the risen Christ. It is now our mission to carry on. When you become a believer in Christ, your experience of the saving work of Christ is no less powerful and compelling and fundamentally changes who you are. A follower of Christ is called to be a witness and a light in the darkness, to proclaim the good news of God's blessing to the entire world.

▶ DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- Talk to me about the most interesting thing you learned from this week's lesson.
- Do you know how to talk to your friends about your faith?
- What inspires you to talk about God or your faith with others?
- Are you committed to being a witness for God in all situations?
- Tell me your next steps based on what you've learned. How can I help?

▶ CORE VERSE

Matthew 5:16

▶ CORE CONCEPTS

I am committed to speaking and living out the truth of the gospel.

Witness: One who testifies regarding an event

▶ SCRIPTURE READING

John 20:19-23

SUMMARY:

This week students read the story of Jesus appearing to the disciples in a locked room after His resurrection. The disciples were told that they would be sent in the same way Jesus was sent. Jesus' impact while in human flesh was designed only to reach a limited number of people in a particular period. The Church would be sent to take the promise God fulfilled in Jesus and proclaim the good news of salvation through Christ to the ends of the earth.

But being sent implies purpose and intent. To be sent is to be sent on a mission with a specific purpose in mind. Just as the Father sent Jesus, so He now sends the Church. Believers in Christ are a part of a group sent on a Great Commission to make disciples who then go and make more disciples. This is not a suggestion or one of many options for believers in Christ, but a command. This is what it means to be a follower of Jesus—to walk as He did (1 John 2:6).

▶ DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- Talk to me about the most interesting thing you learned from this week's lesson.
- Do you know your specific mission in life? If so, what is it?
- How does sharing your faith fit into your specific mission?
- Tell me your next steps based on what you've learned. How can I help?

▶ CORE VERSE

Mark 16:15-16

▶ CORE CONCEPTS

I have been sent by God to share the gospel.

Mission: An important task or assignment with which a person has been entrusted

▶ SCRIPTURE READING

Acts 6-7

SUMMARY:

Is it really your responsibility to share the good news of Jesus? What if it is not your gifting? After all, didn't God give us all different gifts? Most people know the story of Stephen in Acts 6 and 7. Stephen wasn't one of the original 12 disciples, he wasn't a pastor or an apostle, or even some kind of gifted evangelist. He was simply a servant of the church and a gifted leader (Acts 6:5-8). Stephen understood the mission and his responsibility to proclaim the gospel when given the opportunity. And he knew that God had provided him everything he needed when the opportunity came. Stephen was just a regular guy with an incredible passion for Jesus and the gospel.

Everyone in the Church is a witness for the gospel in whatever way they've been called to serve. As your student continues to grow in his or her faith and knowledge of Christ, God will continue to provide opportunities to be a witness. Students are being encouraged to look for opportunities, to be faithful with the gifts they have been given, and be willing to step up when the time comes.

▶ DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- Talk to me about the most interesting thing you learned from this week's lesson.
- What do you think are your strengths?
- What do you think are your areas of weakness?
- How can you or do you help the mission of our church?
- Tell me your next steps based on what you've learned. How can I help?

▶ CORE VERSE

Ephesians 4:11-16

▶ CORE CONCEPTS

I have a unique gift and a responsibility to use it to share the gospel.

Evangelist: A person that travels from place to place proclaiming good news

PARENT GUIDE

Lesson 1.4: Grow

JOURNEY

WITNESSES

▶ SCRIPTURE READING

Matthew 13:1-9

SUMMARY:

If the gospel is true and Jesus is real and everything in the Bible is accurate, then why don't more people just believe? This week we talked about our role and God's role in the spread of the gospel. It is not exclusively about our gifts and abilities, but rather how God uses them. In 1 Corinthians Paul comments how the success of the church growing was entirely dependent on the favor and grace of God.

As we engage in the mission of God and go into the world as witnesses of the gospel, we are judged not by how many people believe as a result of our efforts or gifts, but by our faithfulness to the work God has called us to. Our efforts and abilities without the Holy Spirit working through us are meaningless. You will talk about Jesus to a lot of people in many contexts. Some will believe, many won't. But our job is to be faithful. It is about God's gospel and God's mission for God's glory.

▶ DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- Talk to me about the most interesting thing you learned from this week's lesson.
- How do you know that you are doing what God wants you to do with what He has given you?
- How dependent are you on God?
- How have you seen God use you already?
- Tell me your next steps based on what you've learned. How can I help?

▶ CORE VERSE

John 1:12-13

▶ CORE CONCEPTS

It is God who moves people to respond to the gospel.

Sovereign: Possessing complete power

PARENT GUIDE

Lesson 2.1: Paradise

JOURNEY

WITNESSES

▶ SCRIPTURE READING

Genesis 1

SUMMARY:

Paradise. As God spoke the world into existence, He did so flawlessly—creating an absolute paradise for humanity. And when it came to humanity, He created us to bear His image (Genesis 1:27, 31). So everything perfect and beautiful about God was to be reflected through us. This is actually where it all begins. It begins with what God desires of His creation and most of all, what He desires of us.

And yes, things went all wrong. The stain of sin masked God's beautiful creation. Enter Jesus. God incarnate would be humanity perfectly designed and He would instruct us to be perfect (Matthew 5:48). Be just like the Father—perfect.

But how is this possible when sin has eliminated the possibility of perfection? It is only because of Jesus and through Jesus that such beauty is even possible. This is the gospel. It is the story of God's image in man, tainted and veiled by sin, but revealed in glory through Christ. The command to be perfect is a command to make God's future kingdom a present reality.

▶ DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- Talk to me about the most interesting thing you learned from this week's lesson.
- How do you imagine God's original design for the world? What should the world be like?
- What makes our world so far from that original design?
- What is your reaction to knowing the way it should be versus the way it is?
- Tell me your next steps based on what you've learned. How can I help?

▶ CORE VERSE

Matthew 5:48

▶ CORE CONCEPTS

God's design for creation was goodness, beauty, and perfection.

Perfect: Reached or completed a goal as intended

PARENT GUIDE

JOURNEY

Lesson 2.2: Captivity

WITNESSES

▶ SCRIPTURE READING

Romans 1:8-32

SUMMARY:

In the story of ancient Israel, the people's insistence to live as they chose and ignore God's design and intention resulted in a weaker nation. As a consequence, Israel found herself in captivity. This week students read from Paul's letter to the Romans. Paul reminds us of what sin has done. Because of sin, humanity has indeed ignored the truth, exchanged righteousness for lies, and worships creation rather than the Creator. But God, in His desire to have an authentic relationship with us, allowed us to go our own way, make our own mistakes, and even make our own gods.

Paul describes how God allows the consequences to do the teaching. It is in captivity—where we see hatred, abuse, anxiety, injustice—that that we truly see the consequences of evil and the need for a savior. And in His great love and mercy for humanity, God did not leave us all out here to suffer. He made a way. Rescue is coming.

▶ DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- Talk to me about the most interesting thing you learned from this week's lesson.
- How do you feel or experience the consequences of sin?
- Where do you see the consequences of sin in the world?
- How do you see the love of God responding to the captivity of sin?
- Tell me your next steps based on what you've learned. How can I help?

▶ CORE VERSE

John 8:34

▶ CORE CONCEPTS

The perfection of God's creation was corrupted when sin captured our hearts.

Captive: Having no freedom to choose

PARENT GUIDE

Lesson 2.3: Rescue

JOURNEY

WITNESSES

▶ SCRIPTURE READING

Luke 4:16-30

SUMMARY:

This week's reading, although in the New Testament, takes us back to the Old Testament and the nation of Israel, which had been suffering in captivity for over 400 years. Enter Jesus.

The freedom we desire is found in Jesus. The rescue from sin we have been waiting for is in Jesus. The paradise we lost is found in Jesus. Rescue is not limited to our rescue from the slavery of sin. It is redemption. In other words, it is not just rescue from something, but rescue to something. The good news is the declaration that in Christ we can be brought back to paradise and back to perfection—the way God designed it to be. Our freedom from sin and our perfection are only found through faith in Jesus. God promised to rescue us—a promise the nation of Israel only dreamed about—and He fulfilled His promise in Jesus.

▶ DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- Talk to me about the most interesting thing you learned from this week's lesson.
- In what ways do you think Christ has rescued you?
- What are some things you have been protected from because of your relationship with Christ?
- How can you express gratitude to Christ for this?
- Tell me your next steps based on what you've learned. How can I help?

▶ CORE VERSE

Luke 4:18-19

▶ CORE CONCEPTS

God's promise to rescue us was fulfilled in Jesus.

Liberty: Freedom from oppression

PARENT GUIDE

JOURNEY

Lesson 2.4: Belong

WITNESSES

▶ SCRIPTURE READING

John 17

SUMMARY:

Following Jesus means walking away from the world. In fact, Jesus promises there will be trouble in this life (John 16:33). But Jesus never intended that Christians face life alone. If you take a look throughout the New Testament, you'll see that whenever the gospel is proclaimed, no one is ever alone. John 17 gives us a glimpse of Jesus' final moments in solitude before being arrested, put on trial, and crucified. It is in this moment that He prays for every believer throughout the rest of history.

Every follower of Christ belongs to something so much greater. The people of God are united in the same way that Jesus is united with the Father and the Holy Spirit. It is the kind of unity that cannot be broken. For believers in Christ, every race, gender, social status, economic condition, nation, and culture are united as one tribe under Christ. Together, believers are free from sin and called together to be the community of God's people on mission to proclaim the gospel's saving power through Christ.

▶ DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- Talk to me about the most interesting thing you learned from this week's lesson.
- Who is in your tribe?
- How do you and your friends help each other live for Christ?
- How do you help others know they belong in your tribe?
- Tell me your next steps based on what you've learned. How can I help?

▶ CORE VERSE

1 John 3:2

▶ CORE CONCEPTS

We are all invited to belong and contribute to God's tribe.

Tribe: A community bonded together in Christ

PARENT GUIDE

JOURNEY

Lesson 3.1: Pray

WITNESSES

▶ SCRIPTURE READING

Colossians 4:2-6

SUMMARY:

This week students are learning about the role and power of prayer in witnessing to others. Not only is our relationship with Christ dependent on prayer, but our ability to carry out His mission for His people is guided by prayer. This is precisely what Paul is telling the Colossian church in this week's reading. He teaches three specific things about prayer. First, he reminds them to be devoted to prayer (v. 2). Second, Paul points to prayer as a means of reliance on God (v. 3). And third, Paul prays for clarity so others can see Christ through him.

Prayer aligns us with the very heart of God. It helps us see others the way He does. Students are being encouraged to devote themselves to prayer, to be watchful and thankful for what God is doing, and to pray that God would give them the words to be clear as they share truth in love. Pray for your student, that God would open her or his heart to the needs of others and would create deeper and more impactful relationships that reflect Christ.

▶ DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- Talk to me about the most interesting thing you learned from this week's lesson.
- Who has been on your heart and mind lately?
- How has God shaped your heart and attitude for others?
- Who can I be praying about with you?
- Tell me your next steps based on what you've learned. How can I help?

▶ CORE VERSE

Colossians 4:3-4

▶ CORE CONCEPTS

Prayer unites my heart with God's to see opportunities to share the gospel.

Devote: Exclusively focus on something

PARENT GUIDE

Lesson 3.2: Share

JOURNEY

WITNESSES

▶ SCRIPTURE READING

Acts 16:25-31

SUMMARY:

In this week's reading we see Paul demonstrate a kind of awareness Jesus expects of us every day as His followers—and in an unlikely place. Paul and Silas were beaten and thrown into prison. Paul gives us a clear picture of what it means to be ready in every moment. Paul allowed God to use him and that circumstance to change the jailer's life forever. Every moment we encounter another person, whether pleasant or not, could be an opportunity that God has given us to change their life.

Jesus told His disciples to go and make disciples. As students go about their day, hanging with friends at school, playing sports, or just grabbing a quick coffee, we want them to think about how they interact with those around them. Encourage your student to look for the opportunities, pray that the Holy Spirit will provide boldness, and be ready to speak up when it's time. Your student might be the one God uses to change a someone's life for eternity.

▶ DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- Talk to me about the most interesting thing you learned from this week's lesson.
- Who has been on your heart and mind lately?
- How has God shaped your heart and attitude for others?
- Who can I be praying about with you?
- Tell me your next steps based on what you've learned. How can I help?

▶ CORE VERSE

Colossians 4:3-4

▶ CORE CONCEPTS

Prayer unites my heart with God's to see opportunities to share the gospel.

Devote: Exclusively focus on something

PARENT GUIDE

JOURNEY

Lesson 3.3: Kindness

WITNESSES

▶ SCRIPTURE READING

John 4:1-30

SUMMARY:

One of the most hated things about Jesus was the way He treated the people the Pharisees considered terrible sinners and the lowest members of society. The Jewish religious leadership could not tolerate Jesus' humble approach in His interactions with those who were not like Him.

Students are asked to think about their approach when talking about the gospel. What is more important, the point they are trying to make or the person they're talking to? In this week's reading, Jesus gives us the perfect example of how we ought to approach our conversations with others about spiritual matters—being entirely focused on the person and how the message of the gospel connects with their needs. It's not about just trying to close the deal.

For some people, their first impression of Jesus and introduction to the gospel might be your student. Remind him or her that actions used in creating relationships with others will communicate the gospel larger and louder than any words your student speaks.

▶ DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- Talk to me about the most interesting thing you learned from this week's lesson.
- How do your interactions with others resemble the Pharisees or Jesus?
- When was the last time you felt regret over how you treated someone?
- When was the last time you were unexpectedly gracious and kind to someone else?
- Tell me your next steps based on what you've learned. How can I help?

▶ CORE VERSE

Colossians 4:5-6

▶ CORE CONCEPTS

How we use our words matters as much as what words we use.

Gracious: Having a generous attitude and spirit

▶ SCRIPTURE READING

2 Timothy 2:14-26

SUMMARY:

We live in a world of instant gratification. The faster the better. It seems that in every way we have a greater capacity to have more and we have it faster than ever. Can such a mentality work when it comes to being a witness? In Paul's second letter to Timothy, he reminds Timothy to be patient. Be patient with those who will not listen and those who will purposefully cause trouble and controversies—patience for the sake of the gospel. Paul's encouragement to be patient applies to each of us as we continue on this journey of becoming an effective witness of the risen Christ.

Over the course of their lives, students will engage in all kinds of conversations. They may need supernatural amounts of patience as they slowly and carefully lead someone down a path that takes him or her to Christ. Still other conversations may be a one-shot opportunity. However, the same patience is required. This week students are talking and thinking about how preparedness also means using words that are gracious, that we should be others-focused, and that we should have an attitude of patience as we engage in conversation.

▶ DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- Talk to me about the most interesting thing you learned from this week's lesson.
- Have you ever given up sharing the gospel with someone?
- How do you balance sharing the truth with someone and respecting them when they aren't ready to hear you?
- How do you feel and react when you feel pressured?
- Tell me your next steps based on what you've learned. How can I help?

▶ CORE VERSE

Proverbs 25:15

▶ CORE CONCEPTS

Leading others to faith and trust in Christ often requires persistence and patience.

Long-suffering: Patience despite trouble

▶ SCRIPTURE READING

Acts 10:9-43

SUMMARY:

At its core, God's intention for the Church has always revolved around the gathering of His people, and more importantly the diversity of that gathering. The Church was always designed to be diverse. The nation of Israel once thought Gentiles were not only forbidden from entering the main center of the temple to participate in worship, but they were considered unclean. But Peter's vision in Acts 10 destroys this idea. The Gentiles are now heirs together with Israel, joined together as one Body and now both share in the promise in Christ (Ephesians 3:6).

There is beauty in diversity. To be diverse literally means to be different. But the Church is also a community. It is a unity of everyone together. This is the Church brought together by the gospel and placed under Christ, every nation, tribe, and language beautifully diverse and perfectly united. The gospel was never intended to be restricted to one people, but given to one people with the purpose of taking it to every people.

▶ DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- Talk to me about the most interesting thing you learned from this week's lesson.
- Have you ever felt unwelcome in a group of people? Explain.
- What have you learned about your friends' families and their traditions?
- How can we celebrate diversity as a family?
- Tell me your next steps based on what you've learned. How can I help?

▶ CORE VERSE

Ephesians 2:14-16

▶ CORE CONCEPTS

There is no culture or ethnicity excluded from the gospel message.

Community: A group of people who come together with shared values, experiences, or beliefs

PARENT GUIDE

JOURNEY

Lesson 4.2: Reach

WITNESSES

▶ SCRIPTURE READING

Acts 15:1-19

SUMMARY:

While last week students talked about how the promises of God may be for all people, is the gospel message suitable for all cultures and contexts? Or are we, at times, trying to fit a square peg into a round hole? Does the message have to change in order to connect people with Christ? This was precisely the question that Paul and Barnabas had to take on in the early church in the passage students studied this week.

It seems easy—almost natural—for us to either force people into the way we worship or, conversely, change the message because we are trying to be relevant. However, either end of that spectrum is missing the mark. The gospel message transcends time, space, and cultures. Our goal is to become like Peter and Paul—masters of understanding their audience and finding ways to speak truth in a way that does not compromise the message but connects to the hearts of people.

▶ DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- Talk to me about the most interesting thing you learned from this week's lesson.
- What did you have to change or give up from the normal culture when you decided to follow Jesus?
- What would you expect anyone else to change or give up when they follow Jesus?
- How do you determine if a behavior or practice is just culturally different than you're used to or an issue of sin?
- Tell me your next steps based on what you've learned. How can I help?

▶ CORE VERSE

Galatians 3:28

▶ CORE CONCEPTS

The promise of salvation is relevant in every culture and context.

Gentile: The designation of anyone not Jewish

▶ SCRIPTURE READING

1 Corinthians 9:19-23

SUMMARY:

Although God's intention for humanity is to be perfectly united in Christ, we maintain a wide variety of contexts and, therefore, an even wider diversity, making it all the more difficult sometimes to find the desire to share the gospel whenever we are presented with the opportunity. Once again Paul provides us with just the right example for how to carry out the mission in all contexts in this week's reading.

It would have been easy for Paul to consider himself somehow superior to others because of his knowledge, his status, and even his encounter with Jesus. Instead, he essentially puts himself in the shoes of the Corinthians. He remains a servant of others and displays a high degree of empathy for those he is ministering to.

This week's challenge is to follow the example of Paul as he follows the example of Christ. The challenge is to be empathetic towards others. Be humble. Seek out new contexts. Get beyond your comfort zone and seek out ways that you can be all things to all people so that through you, God may save some.

▶ DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- Talk to me about the most interesting thing you learned from this week's lesson.
- How often do you seek to learn about others and experience new contexts?
- Is there somewhere you've always been interested in going but haven't?
- How can you follow Paul's example to be all things to all people and still maintain your identity and commitment to Christ?
- Tell me your next steps based on what you've learned. How can I help?

▶ CORE VERSE

1 Corinthians 9:22-23

▶ CORE CONCEPTS

Sharing the gospel requires seeking out new contexts and befriending people who need Christ.

Context: The interrelated setting, environment, language, and conditions in which something or someone exists

PARENT GUIDE

Lesson 4.4: Understanding

JOURNEY

WITNESSES

▶ SCRIPTURE READING

1 Chronicles 12:23-37

SUMMARY:

Consider the nation of Israel: Israel wanted a king. They got Saul. But in order to flourish as the nation God had intended, they would need something better. They would need David. Despite David's strong backing of military might to become the next king, without a degree of wisdom his efforts would have been severely impaired. Enter the people of Issachar. Along with military might, you need intelligence. You need people who understand the situation, the times, the culture, etc. Without wisdom and understanding, enthusiasm and strength can only take you so far.

As people on mission for Christ, we, of course, must have enthusiasm, confidence, and strength. But we must also have wisdom and understanding. We must be students of the world around us. That means we have to get beyond our own comfort zone and learn about people unlike us and embrace these people as children created by an almighty God. It is not enough to simply know the gospel and how to talk about Jesus. We must continually seek to learn more about the people around the world and in our own backyard. We need to be able to step into any context and be ready to share the good news of Jesus Christ.

▶ DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- Talk to me about the most interesting thing you learned from this week's lesson.
- What do you think about most when you have the opportunity to share your faith?
- What are some questions you use that help you get to know other people?
- Whom do you know that is really good at listening and asking questions to get to know others?
- Tell me your next steps based on what you've learned. How can I help?

▶ CORE VERSE

Proverbs 4:7

▶ CORE CONCEPTS

I must continually learn and understand more about the cultures and contexts surrounding me.

Wisdom: Accumulated experience and knowledge used with good judgment

▶ SCRIPTURE READING

Zechariah 7; Matthew 23:1-12, 23-24

SUMMARY:

There is a special condition of the human nature that grants every person who has ever existed value and worth far beyond anything they could ever earn: dignity. Dignity as God sees it is the inherent value and worth we hold because we were created in His image. God cares so deeply about how we treat each other that He sternly warns us in Zechariah 7 and Matthew 23 of His judgment and justice when we violate the God-given dignity of others.

God cares about humanity, all people, enough to create us all in His own image. As bearers of God's image, every person should be treated with dignity and respect, no matter what color, economic status, age, sexual orientation, or religion. Students learned from this week's reading that some of the harshest criticisms in the Bible are directed towards those who ignored the plights of the weak and needy. Being a witness requires that we recognize the dignity of everyone.

▶ DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- Talk to me about the most interesting thing you learned from this week's lesson.
- How do you think and speak about other people?
- How do you determine what you think about someone else?
- What determines a person's dignity?
- Tell me your next steps based on what you've learned. How can I help?

▶ CORE VERSE

1 Peter 2:16-17

▶ CORE CONCEPTS

Being a witness requires that I see everyone, always, with dignity and respect.

Dignity: The God-given human condition of having value and worth

▶ SCRIPTURE READING

1 John 3

SUMMARY:

What is the difference between compassion and kindness or sympathy? The word compassion originates from the Latin word *compati*, com- “together” and *pati*- “suffer,” or “to suffer together.” Jesus Himself was compassion. He suffered with us. He entered into our suffering and felt our pain. Compassion is an expression of love. It is a supernatural force that moves someone to action. This week’s passage is one passage of many in Scripture that describes what it looks like for us to demonstrate God’s love through compassion.

John’s letters all focus on one thing: love. So often we treat love like it’s just a feeling. But in verses 17 and 18 we learn that love compels us to act. Loving God and loving others are not two separate things. We love God by loving others. So whenever we show compassion towards others, we show compassion to Jesus. However, the opposite is also true, that when we deny compassion towards others, we also deny compassion towards Him (vv. 41-45). That’s how much Jesus cares about everyone!

▶ DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- Talk to me about the most interesting thing you learned from this week’s lesson.
- Whom do you have compassion for?
- How do you demonstrate your love for other people?
- How could you become more compassionate?
- Tell me your next steps based on what you’ve learned. How can I help?

▶ CORE VERSE

1 John 3:17-18

▶ CORE CONCEPTS

Being a witness requires that I demonstrate love and compassion.

Compassion: To suffer alongside of or with someone

▶ SCRIPTURE READING

Psalm 82

SUMMARY:

In John 9, Jesus heals a blind man on the Sabbath and the Pharisees didn't like it. Jesus then used this opportunity to explain to them that He was the Messiah. Jesus directly quoted a passage from this week's reading. Psalm 82:6-7 are a harsh statement to those in power (the "gods") who defend the unjust and side with the wicked. The religious leaders in John 9 and 10 should have been experts in the Old Testament Scriptures and thus known exactly what they taught, including Jesus' reference to Psalm 82.

The ultimate goal of a witness is obviously to share the gospel. However, this is not all that God requires of us. We also need to defend the weak and powerless. Students may ask themselves, "Who am I?" They may not have any position of authority. But they can defend someone being bullied in school. They can volunteer their time, money, influence, or privilege in status to speak up for the dignity and rights of others. When they defend the weak and powerless, they are being true witnesses for Christ.

▶ DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- Talk to me about the most interesting thing you learned from this week's lesson.
- Why is it important to defend the weak and helpless?
- Why do we sometimes neglect the weak and helpless?
- What would you like for us to do to stand up and defend someone who needs help?
- Tell me your next steps based on what you've learned. How can I help?

▶ CORE VERSE

Proverbs 31:8-9

▶ CORE CONCEPTS

Being a witness to the helpless requires defending against injustice and amplifying their voice.

Afflicted: One who has been knocked down or weakened by force or illness

PARENT GUIDE

JOURNEY

Lesson 5.4: Refuge

WITNESSES

▶ SCRIPTURE READING

Psalm 36

SUMMARY:

Many colleges nowadays are creating safe spaces on campus, locations where students are sheltered from abuse and offensive ideas. But did you know that the church was the original safe space? Hence, a sanctuary. This should not surprise us, as throughout the Bible God is constantly called our refuge. Many of the Psalms were written by David, who relied heavily on God as his refuge. His life was in danger many times and he constantly cried out to God to save him from his enemies. And God was always faithful.

Students may also be facing hardships and persecution for being a witness for Christ. In America, students may be mocked and called names. In other countries, a witness could be imprisoned or even put to death. This week we focus on the refuge and strength found only in Christ.

▶ DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- Talk to me about the most interesting thing you learned from this week's lesson.
- How do you take shelter in Christ?
- Do you rest and find refuge in your own work or in your identity in Christ? Explain how.
- How do you encourage others to find refuge in Christ rather than circumstances?
- Tell me your next steps based on what you've learned. How can I help?

▶ CORE VERSE

Psalm 36:7-9

▶ CORE CONCEPTS

Refuge and shelter can be found in God alone, no matter what the circumstance.

Refuge: A place of safety, shelter, and protection; a sanctuary

PARENT GUIDE

JOURNEY

Lesson 6.1: Unique

WITNESSES

▶ SCRIPTURE READING

Genesis 1

SUMMARY:

In Genesis 1 we see the creativity of God on full display in His creation. The creation of humanity on day six is the climax of creation. God's desire for humanity was that we would be set apart from everything else and that we would bear His divine image. Although imperfect, finite, and now tainted, each person has in them attributes of God—things like a sense of justice, personality, wisdom, love, and the ability to create.

Although our thoughts and actions may not be completely unique in every conceivable way, as divine image bearers we are, in fact, incredibly unique. Each one of us is an original thought of God designed to reflect the originality of God. The uniqueness of each student is exactly how God intended for the gospel to make it to the ends of the earth.

▶ DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- Talk to me about the most interesting thing you learned from this week's lesson.
- What can you do that I can't?
- Do you know your unique qualities yet? What are they?
- How do you see yourself as a creative reflection of Christ?
- Tell me your next steps based on what you've learned. How can I help?

▶ CORE VERSE

Genesis 1:27

▶ CORE CONCEPTS

As image bearers of God, we have been created uniquely.

Imago Dei: Latin for image of God, a doctrine or theological concept which describes the human condition as being made in the image of God (Genesis 1:27)

PARENT GUIDE

JOURNEY

Lesson 6.2: Create

WITNESSES

▶ SCRIPTURE READING

Genesis 2

SUMMARY:

God wanted His image to be reflected in not only all that He created, but in all that we create as well. As image bearers of the divine Creator, we have been created to create. God gave Adam what is called the Creation Mandate. For Adam this meant working the ground. We each have been given a craft to cultivate specifically to glorify the Creator. This is precisely what God was talking about in Genesis 1:26 and 2:15.

Witnesses for the gospel do far more than just talk about Jesus. Witnesses use the gifts, abilities, talents, and desires—their entire lives—in order to create something that points back to and reflects the glory of God. Each of us has been specifically built as a co-creator charged with the divine responsibility to proclaim the name of Jesus and the power of the gospel.

▶ DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- Talk to me about the most interesting thing you learned from this week's lesson.
- How often do you work on your own projects outside of school?
- Who helps you develop your skills? Do you need someone to help you?
- How can you make sure that you are creating and producing in order to honor God instead of for your own success?
- Tell me your next steps based on what you've learned. How can I help?

▶ CORE VERSE

Genesis 2:15

▶ CORE CONCEPTS

As image bearers of God, we have been created to create.

Cultivate: Work done to prepare, acquire, or develop something

▶ SCRIPTURE READING

Matthew 25:14-30

SUMMARY:

You have been created in the divine image. In that likeness, you also have been given the ability to reflect that image with what you create. But this image we possess is not a privilege, it is a responsibility. The Creation Mandate given to Adam was more than just a task to complete, but a dedication to God of everything Adam was given as an act of worship. The mandate applies to us in the same way.

Because we are uniquely designed specifically by God and for God, we have the responsibility to recognize and refine our gifts, talents, and abilities, working to become more like Christ with every step and reflecting Him in more significant ways. There is great power in what God has given us because those gifts and talents are the means by which God can use us to change the trajectory of someone else's life and bring them back to Him. Our gifts and talents are the mechanisms or wiring for how each of us can best communicate the gospel and be a witness for Christ.

▶ DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- Talk to me about the most interesting thing you learned from this week's lesson.
- How can you be a productive with what God has given you?
- When was the last time you used your skills to share with others about Christ?
- What was the last thing you worked on that contributed to someone or something else?
- Tell me your next steps based on what you've learned. How can I help?

▶ CORE VERSE

1 Timothy 4:14

▶ CORE CONCEPTS

We are called to steward the abilities, resources, and opportunities God provides.

Faithfulness: Being diligent and loyal to the work for which God designed you

▶ SCRIPTURE READING

Colossians 3:1-11, 1 Timothy 4:6-16

SUMMARY:

Every musician, artist, athlete, business professional, or teacher knows practice is the only path to an improved, polished presentation. It is as though God did not finish the job when He created each student—He was just getting started. His goal is that each of us—His canvases—look increasingly more and more like Christ. Declaring faith in Christ does not end with verbal confession of Christ as Lord. It is only the beginning. In Colossians 3, Paul is reminding the Colossians that they are an unfinished canvas, daily being made more and more to look and act like Christ.

But just like any great work of art, it is meant to be displayed and admired, not hidden away. The gospel has incredible transformative power because of the power of the Spirit at work. But the only way people can take notice and admire Him is by us showing off our new selves—by clothing ourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience (Colossians 3:12, NIV). We must be people of forgiveness, love, and unity. We must be people that show off God's amazing works of art.

▶ DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- Talk to me about the most interesting thing you learned from this week's lesson.
- How does your mission to reflect the gospel impact the choices you make?
- What areas of our family life might give a false impression of what the gospel is truly about?
- How can you rid yourself of those things that don't represent Christ well and refocus on Him?
- Tell me your next steps based on what you've learned. How can I help?

▶ CORE VERSE

Colossians 3:10

▶ CORE CONCEPTS

Our lives bear witness to the gospel at work in us.

Renewal: Ridding of something old and worn out and replacing it with something new

PARENT GUIDE

Lesson 7.1: Fear

JOURNEY

WITNESSES

▶ SCRIPTURE READING

Luke 22:54-61

SUMMARY:

Fear is an extremely powerful emotion that can overcome and paralyze us. And fear can hinder us from being witnesses. Peter was one of Jesus' disciples and closest friends, but came face-to-face not only with his fear, but with the power fear had over him. Naturally, Peter would have been afraid of the horror of crucifixion. When we read about Peter in the book of Acts, he is out fearlessly proclaiming the gospel.

What happened? What caused such a drastic change in Peter? The resurrection. When Jesus rose from the dead, He conquered death once and for all. The Bible guarantees that we will suffer for the sake of the gospel. Jesus suffered. The disciples suffered. Christians throughout the world continue to suffer for the sake of the gospel. But we should not fear. Jesus defeated sin and death when He rose from the dead. Death is not final.

▶ DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- Talk to me about the most interesting thing you learned from this week's lesson.
- What risks do you face for living for Christ?
- What kinds of things do you fear?
- What do you do to encourage yourself in the face of fear?
- Tell me your next steps based on what you've learned. How can I help?

▶ CORE VERSE

Proverbs 29:25

▶ CORE CONCEPTS

We have no reason to fear going where God has called us to go.

Denial: A refusal to accept a truth or reality in order to avoid a negative feeling or action

▶ SCRIPTURE READING

Matthew 5:1-12

SUMMARY:

This week's reading is from Jesus' famous Sermon on the Mount, most specifically what is known as the Beatitudes (named for the Latin word *beatus*, which means "blessed"). Verses 10 through 12 end the Beatitudes by discussing the theme for this lesson: persecution. These verses tell us that those who are persecuted or insulted and mistreated because of their faith will be blessed. Not only that, it calls us to rejoice and be glad in suffering because our reward is in heaven and others have faced the same horrible treatment before us.

The Beatitudes are more than a list of good things Christians should do. They are an assurance that if we suffer for being Christians, it will be worth it. Those who realize their brokenness and need of God's help will receive it (v. 3). Those who do not fight to get ahead, who do not aggressively seek advancement and position, will ultimately receive the entire earth as their reward (v. 5). Jesus promised that although we may face hardships in this life, we will be blessed by God through the peace only He can provide. And ultimately, in the next life, we will reign with Him forever.

▶ DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- Talk to me about the most interesting thing you learned from this week's lesson.
- When have you experienced insults or abuse because of your faith?
- What have you learned from negative experiences caused by living out your faith?
- What blessings or peace have you experienced because of living out your faith?
- Tell me your next steps based on what you've learned. How can I help?

▶ CORE VERSE

Matthew 5:11-12

▶ CORE CONCEPTS

Jesus promised persecution, but He also promised blessing in our persecution.

Beatitudes: Jesus' sermon found in Matthew 5, named for the Latin word *beatus*, meaning "blessed" or "happy"

PARENT GUIDE

JOURNEY

Lesson 7.3: Sacrifice

WITNESSES

▶ SCRIPTURE READING

Luke 9:57-62

SUMMARY:

To be honest, Jesus seems completely unreasonable in this week's reading from Luke 9. Three men seek to follow Jesus, but He seems to shut them all down. There is a cost to being a witness for Christ. As we saw in our last lesson, we may even be persecuted for our faith and make the ultimate sacrifice for Christ. But this was a sacrifice that God Himself was willing to make.

Christ's sacrifice was more than we could ever imagine, bearing the sins of the world. For that, we owe Him everything. Jesus is trying to help those who desire to follow Him to know the costs. For students, it may not be leaving their family or giving up the comforts of their home, but committed followers are always asked to be willing to sacrifice in some way for the sake of the kingdom.

▶ DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- Talk to me about the most interesting thing you learned from this week's lesson.
- Do your actions demonstrate that you put God first? How?
- How do you make sacrifices for the sake of being a witness?
- Is there anything you are struggling to let go of?
- Tell me your next steps based on what you've learned. How can I help?

▶ CORE VERSE

Matthew 16:24-25

▶ CORE CONCEPTS

Being a witness will at times require significant sacrifice.

Follow: To act in accordance with someone's teaching and actions

PARENT GUIDE

JOURNEY

Lesson 7.4: Love

WITNESSES

▶ SCRIPTURE READING

Luke 6:27-36

SUMMARY:

John is called the apostle of love because he wrote of love so much in his Gospel and letters. He penned the famous John 3:16, which tells us that God sent us His Son to save us because of His great love for us. In this week's reading from Luke 6, we are instructed to love more than just our friends, family, and fellow Christians, the ones who love us back. Jesus commanded us to love everyone just because every person is valuable and made in the image of God.

God demonstrated this kind of love first. While we were still in our sin, we were enemies with God (see Romans 5). But God died for us because He loved us so much. This is how we are the greatest witnesses, not by loving people who are lovable, but by loving people the world sees as unlovable, giving to those who cannot give back, taking insults, and not fighting back. This is what it means to be true witnesses. This is what will show the world that Jesus lives within us.

▶ DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- Talk to me about the most interesting thing you learned from this week's lesson.
- How is loving others self-sacrificing?
- How can you demonstrate love to those who are unkind to you?
- How can we as a family be more loving and gracious to our neighbors?
- Tell me your next steps based on what you've learned. How can I help?

▶ CORE VERSE

Luke 6:27-28

▶ CORE CONCEPTS

We cannot properly communicate the gospel without first loving others.

Mercy: An act of compassion toward an offender or enemy