



God Is...



Devotional Unit

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Devotional Unit

Theme: God is...

Introduction:

This unit is a Devotional Unit and has the general theme: “God Is...” The focus here is that God is anything that we need. He is ever-present, there never was a time when God did not exist and there will never come a time when God will not exist. The unit consists of three sections, each section having 20 lessons (devotional messages).

Section One contains messages for teachers. This section focuses on personal as well as professional issues that we may encounter as teachers. It is intended that this set of devotionals will bring the assurance to each teacher who reads, that God can solve all of our problems.

Section Two of these devotionals is intended for teachers to use in class worship or in class discussions with teens. These devotionals focus on some teen issues for example, academic and behavioral issues such as drug abuse/addiction issues, sexuality and self identity issues. It is the intent of this writer that these devotionals will inspire and help teens to work through at least some of the issues they may face.

Section Three is intended for students to use on their own or in their families. These devotionals focus on issues important to adolescents such as self-esteem, their identity as Christian youth, addictions and human sexuality. The devotional messages in this unit highlight relevant Bible passages and inspirational stories and experiences which it is hoped will inspire all who read.

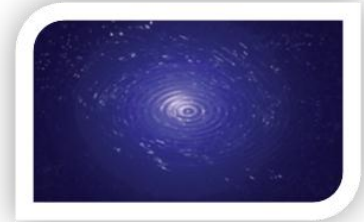


Theme: God is Sovereign

Scripture: "Be still, and know that I am God." Psalm 46:1-11

So much noise and so little time! In today's world, we are bombarded with instant messages, ubiquitous communications, blaring music, and unlimited information. Perhaps you've allowed this noise to fill every waking moment of your life. If so, it's time to click off the radio, the television, the computer, the iPad, and the cell phone - for awhile.

Try this experiment: the next time you are driving alone in your automobile, do so without radio, CDs, or cell phones. And then, have a quiet talk with God about His plans for your life. You may be surprised to discover that sometimes the most important answers are the ones you receive in silence.



Dear Teacher,

Remember that God is sovereign! He can speak peace into your troubled heart. You need to spend time alone with God to build back your shattered nerves and ruffled spirit after a rough day in the classroom, or more importantly at the start of the day before you meet the day's challenges - take time to be still and allow God to instruct you.

Adapted from: Purpose for everyday living for teachers. (2007) New York: Simon & Schuster, Inc.



Topic: God is Your Provider

Scripture: But my God shall supply all your needs according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus. Philippians 4:19

Long before you knew you had a need God knew and made provision to supply that need. Abraham responded positively to the most difficult task God had assigned him. He was to take his only beloved son, the long desired son, the son of promise, and sacrifice him on Mount Moriah. Although the instructions made absolutely no sense to Abraham, by faith he went, trusting that God would provide. The same God, who had given Isaac to him, could surely provide another child. God honored Abraham's faith and provided a lamb for the sacrifice so that he would not have to kill his son.

Teachers as you continue the difficult task of educating young minds, be encouraged, God has already supplied all you need to carry out your daily activities. There may be times when you feel like you have bitten off more than you can chew, that your job is impossible, that God could not seriously require you to sacrifice your time and resources to try to motivate students who have no interest in learning. Remember God's biddings are His enabling and He has already provided all that you need to successfully carry out this mission. Trust God! He is your Provider!





Theme: God is Love

Scripture: "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have everlasting life." John 3:16



Mrs. Thompson stood in front of her fifth grade class on the very first day of school, and she told them a big lie. Like most teachers do, she looked at her students and said that she loved them all the same. But that was not true, because there in the front row, slumped in his seat, was a little boy named Teddy. Having watched Teddy the previous year and noticed that he didn't play well with the other children, that his clothes were messy and that he constantly needed a bath, she concluded that this little boy was unlovable. Mrs. Thompson took delight in writing big "F" at the top of Teddy's papers.

But her attitude changed when she took the time to review Teddy's records from grades one to four. Then she recognized that life had dealt this young boy some terrible blows, top of the list was the death of his mother, to whom he was very attached. With a mixture of guilt and shame Mrs. Thompson began to take an interest in Teddy, offering him the help and support he needed to be successful. Over the years Teddy became very successful and Mrs. Thompson his second mom.

Dear Teacher,

God expects you to represent Him in your classrooms. He expects you to look beyond your students' faults and see their needs. This is how God sees you, and in turn He wants you to pass on the grace He has extended to you to your students. From their day-to-day encounters with you they should leave your classroom having experienced the love of God through you.



Theme: God is Your Strength

Scripture: "But David found strength in the Lord his God..." 1 Samuel 30: 6

Things were not going so well for David. He was running for His life from his own king. He lived among people whom he used to fight and kill and who didn't trust him. He had to pretend to be insane to escape with his life, and then he found the city where he and his men plundered and took families captive.

David was most likely feeling like a failure at that point. He couldn't serve the king he wanted to serve and the nation he loved. The Philistines wouldn't have him. And since roving bandits kidnapped his family and the families of his men, even his loyal troops were starting to consider him more of a liability than an asset.



David hit rock bottom. But he still found strength. It wasn't because he had a new plan. It wasn't because he looked deep inside himself for an inner resolve. He found his strength in God! Teacher, are you at your wit's end? Do you see your circumstances as being hopeless as David did? Do you feel personally spent like David did? Remember God's love and protection and provision are infinite! Cast all your cares upon Him, for He does care about every aspect of your life!

Let God be your strength when you are down and out and feel you cannot carry on.



Theme: God is Your Problem-Solver

Scripture: "When he was about to enter Egypt, he said to his wife Sarai, 'Look, I know what a beautiful woman you are. When the Egyptians see you, they will say, "This is his wife." They will kill me, but let you live. Please say you are my sister so it will go well for me because of you, and my life will be spared on your account'." Genesis 12: 10-12

The journey God called Abram to undertake wasn't safe. Abram had to pass through the lands of many unfriendly kings. As Abram's danger grew, especially in the land of the mighty pharaoh, so did his fear. Pharaoh was the sort of man who took whatever he wanted. Abram was afraid Pharaoh would want his wife, Sarai, and kill her husband to have her.

Abram had a choice: he could renew his trust in God who promised to see him through, or he could attempt to solve the problem in his own strength and wisdom. He chose the latter. It was a perfectly understandable reaction; things felt out of control. But in relying on his own shrewdness, Abram made a royal mess of things. He forsook his wife, prostituting her to save his own skin.



Dear Teacher,

When your classroom or your life is spinning out of control, like Abram you too must decide what solutions you will seek for your problem. Will you trust God to see you through or will you trust in your own wisdom? When we trust in our own resources, we draw a very strict limit around the solutions that are available to us. Many of those solutions are worse than the original problem. Let us learn to rely on God. He is our great problem-solver and His solutions do not back-fire!



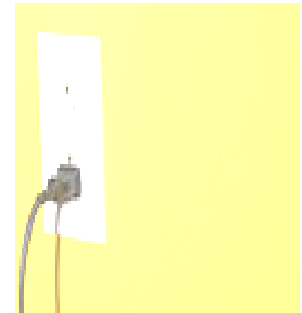
Theme: God is Your Supply Source

Scripture: "For my God shall supply all my needs according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus." Philippians 4:19

In the wilderness, the traveling Israelites were in danger of starving. So God provided manna, a bread-like substance that the Israelites could gather in the morning for their daily sustenance. There would always be enough, God promised. There was just one rule: The Israelites couldn't store the manna. They had to gather only as much as they needed each day and trust that God would provide the next day. The Sabbath was the exception; they could gather a double portion the day before to get them through the day of rest.

But some of the Israelites couldn't bring themselves to trust God. They gathered extra manna and hid it away for later. And it got wormy and rotten in just one day.

God was teaching the Israelites, as He wants to teach us today, not to trust in our own resources. He is your great provider, even before you knew you had a need, God was already supplying that need.





Theme: God is Your Energizer

Scripture: "They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength, they shall mount up with wings as eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint."

Isaiah 40: 31

As the end of the school year approaches many teachers suffer from "burn-out" - sheer exhaustion! This is the time of year when many teachers' morale and emotions are running low. Their initial enthusiasm and excitement from August are long forgotten, and the hope and vision they had for a stress-free year has been clouded by the hard work of their everyday tasks. They're facing problems they never imagined at the start of the school year, and overcoming them often seems like a lost cause.



The book of Ezra tells us about a similar experience the Israelites faced when God called them to rebuild the temple in Jerusalem. When first presented with this mission, the Israelites were ecstatic, gladly contributing their time and resources to the project. The people were focused on their calling and excited about doing God's work. Eventually however, the enthusiasm waned and the prophet felt like he was left carrying the bucket.

Dear Teacher,

Are you at that point, where you are so exhausted you just want to see the back of those kids? When you get to that place God promises that He will re-energize you, you only need to lean on His everlasting arms.



Theme: God is Your Sustainer

Scripture: "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith..." 1 Timothy 4:7

Excellence can prove very taxing on a teacher. The conscientious teacher who wants to always give his/her best sometimes experiences a feeling of inadequacy by the time June rolls along. He or she feels that he/she has not given everything he/she has to give. He/she is never satisfied with what he/she has done throughout the year. Such a teacher might be thinking, "I didn't get to know my students' personalities well enough. I prioritized mutual respect, but not bonding and making personal connections. I was too serious and wasn't silly and fun enough. I was too snappy, too quick to pass judgment and get angry. I didn't finish the world history unit. I did not do that math project. We didn't do reading logs, for the love of Pete how did I neglect to have my kids write down the books they read in class?"



With all of these negative thoughts swirling around in the teacher's head, he/she is prone to think, "It's the end of the world, and I am a failure! I should have my teaching license revoked!"

If you are one of those "perfectionists," cheer up teacher! It is not the end of the world. The year was a success. You may not have accomplished all you wanted but you did accomplish much. Where you have fallen short, ask God to make up for you; He is your sustainer and He will see you through to the start of the new school year.



Theme: God is Omniscient

Scripture: "Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature?" Matthew 6:27



Many of those persons who live in storm prone areas become fearful each time a storm threatens. But stop to think about it for a moment There are really only two possible outcomes: either the storm will come and do damage, or it won't. And your worrying doesn't affect the outcome. In fact it makes it worse, no matter what. The truth is that in a few days it will all be over, and if nothing bad happens you'll regret having spent your time being anxious over nothing. And if something bad does happen you will regret having wasted your last few days of peace worrying over something you had no control over.

The same is true of the emotional storms of life; we worry over things that will probably never happen, instead of trusting God. We cannot worry and trust at the same time. We cannot prevent some of the bad experiences of life but we can control our reaction. Why not choose instead to prepare for every eventuality and leave the rest in God's hand? Try to maintain your joy no matter what happens. Then you will be able to look back and say, "Yep, I had the right attitude, the right mindset. I made the most of every day. I don't know what's going to happen, but I know the One who knows - the Omniscient God - and that is enough!"



Theme: God is Faithful

Scripture: "It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed, because His compassions fail not. They are new every morning: great is Thy faithfulness." Lamentations 3: 22-23

Peer through the small window in the wall of the Roman jail. See the man in chains? He is an aging man with stooped shoulders. That's Paul, the imprisoned apostle. His chains never come off. The guards never leave. And he is probably wondering if he'll ever get out. . . .

By the time we find Paul in his cell, he has been beaten, lied about, storm tossed, rejected and neglected. Ah but at least he has the church. At least he can take comfort in the thought of the unified Roman congregation he helped strengthen, right? Hardly! The Roman church is in trouble . . . Power-hungry preachers occupy the parsonage.



You expect such antics out of non-believers, but Christians preaching for personal gain? Paul is facing a major crisis. And who knows what Emperor Nero will do? He feeds disciples to the Coliseum lions for lunch. Does Paul have any guarantee the same thing won't happen to him? Paul is not naïve. He knows the only thing between him and death is a nod from the moody Nero. Paul has every reason to be stressed out. But he isn't. Rather than count the bricks of his prison, he plants a garden within it. He itemizes not the mistreatments of people, but the faithfulness of God!

Dear Teacher,

As you face your prison of circumstances, imitate the Apostle Paul. Instead of enumerating all the unfair treatment you have received from unreasonable school administrators and ungrateful parents, why not focus on God's faithfulness?

Adapted from "Live Loved: Experiencing God's Presence in Everyday Life" by Max Lucado



Theme: God is the Giver of all Good Gifts

Scripture: "In every circumstance of life be thankful; for this is God's will in Christ Jesus respecting you." I Thessalonians 5:18

Have you ever thought that God uses all kinds of experiences, even those you find upsetting, to bless your life and cause you to grow? He sure does! So be thankful. . . .

For the litter that you too often have to pick up, for it means your students have plenty to eat, and can afford to buy from shops.

For the feeling of tiredness at the end of the day, for it means you have been serving God in ministry and you have employment.

For your wage even if teachers elsewhere get more, for it means you don't have to rely on delegation and seek support as do so many Christian teachers elsewhere.

For your old textbooks and computers as it means you have reliable electricity and some IT facility, and you do have desks, chairs, books, shelter and viable facilities when others have minimal.

For the sound of your alarm clock, as it means you are fit and healthy enough to be in meaningful work, and you can go and serve God with your Christian colleagues on the team, and you have the privilege of working in a paid ministry vital to God's kingdom.

For your critics and detractors, for Jesus worked in the midst of the same, and because God will use them to bring out the best in you and somehow work all things for good because you are a believer. So be thankful for the small things we often take for granted. They are God's gift to you.





Theme: God is Your Example

Scripture: "If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but have not love, I am nothing." I Corinthians 13: 1-3

God is love and you dear Christian teacher represents God to your students. Do they experience the love of God through their daily encounters with you? If you teach and explain everything well to your students, but don't love, you are nothing but the creaking of a rusty gate.

If you are fluent with the latest best practice in contemporary education, but don't have love, you are nothing - your effort is in vain.

So no matter what you may say, and what you do, you are quite bankrupt without love.

Love is patient when needing to explain again and again to students who just don't get it.

Love is merciful when others find fault with you.

Love doesn't envy when colleagues get recognition and you don't.

Love isn't proud, and doesn't boast about your achievements.

Love is flexible and allows you to change your plans to meet the need of others.

Love does not shout at students or talk down to them.

Love isn't you and your needs first in your classroom.

Love doesn't gossip about the failures of students and colleagues.

Love looks for the best in all students and colleagues.

Love never dies.

All curriculum, textbooks and methods of pedagogy will pass away, but only love will remain forever.





Theme: God is a Good Listener

Scripture: "Lord speak for I am listening." I Samuel 3:8

As Christians we delight in telling God a lot of things, all the things that are not going right in our lives and all the things we stand in need of, but we seldom stop to listen to what God has to say to us. Do not expect God to send an angel to your classroom window today to announce, "Hail Teacher, full of grace, the Lord is with thee. . . ." But you can confidently expect that within the routines and roller coaster day that you face today He will speak and not be silent. Not knowing what He will say makes the day holy, and the mystery is when, during your hectic schedule, He communicates with you. God will speak to you of things like courage, patience, trust, faithfulness, prudence, and pride, to name a few. Will you have the integrity to stand apart from the mockery of colleagues or a particular parent, or one of your students?



Can you manifest patience with that exasperating student, or will your agitation spill out? Are you going to keep your predecessor on supervision duty waiting, or will you arrive on time for your shift? Perhaps today you will choose not to dwell on lines of thought that are vengeful, cruel, or sleazy. You can choose to clasp onto noble thoughts and daydreams.

Your seemingly insignificant choices powerfully affect all those around you. You are building up brick by brick, day by day, the kingdom. Your day is significant. Your life matters. Today matters. You are so loved! God fondly watches over you. He speaks to you within your day. Are you listening?



Theme: God is Love

Scripture: "But if anyone causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to have a large millstone hung around his neck and to be drowned in the depths of the sea. Woe to the world because of the things that cause people to sin! Such things must come, but woe to the man through whom they come!" Matthew 18:6-7

Teachers, we have the ability to bless or curse our students this year. Our words, actions, and attitudes will build up or tear down their self-worth, their desire to learn and their willingness to participate. Rigidity stifles learning. Rules are a guideline--not a brick wall. We, as leaders, must determine whether the student is showing immaturity or rebellion with each infraction. Immaturity is to be trained. Rebellion is to be disciplined. If we discipline harshly against students who are immature and unclear on what we are expecting, we will create bitterness in their hearts. They will feel that it makes no difference whether they try or don't try to obey. To them, the response from the teacher is the same. If being good doesn't pay, then why make the effort?



Discipline in love will require each teacher to consider the individual as well as the rule. The same consequence can correct one student and crush another. Some teachers feel that the student gets what he deserves. He asked for it, so he got it! However, correction followed by restoration must be our ultimate goal. To correct means to change behavior for the purpose of restoring right relationships within the classroom. The more we isolate and reject a student, the more we encourage him to isolate and reject us as teachers. Circumstances outside the classroom may be at the root of today's misbehavior. Remain aware of mood changes due to family or social issues. Sometimes mercy is in order. A lighter punishment mixed with love and understanding may bring more correction at these times than the "normal" response.

Dear God, Give me the sensitivity to understand the individual needs of my students. Convict me when I am too stern. Teach me to love every student unconditionally and truly correct them, rather than just punish them.



Theme: God is Trustworthy

Scripture: "Be anxious for nothing." Philippians 4:6

Matilda was a cheerful maid, who worked for a wealthy woman, who was a chronic worrier. One day the mistress questioned her overly plump and disgustingly cheerful maid. "Matilda, do you have any money in the bank?" "No, ma'm, but I get along on what I get."

"But, Matilda, suppose you get sick? Or suppose we should lose our investments, and would have to let you go, and suppose you wouldn't be able to find another job?" At that point, the wonderful Christian maid interrupted with a blunt sermon in her own style, "Suppose, suppose, suppose! That's all you ever do! There's no supposing in my Bible! My Bible says, 'Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever.'" And then, in a final burst of beautiful exhortation, the maid declared, "That's your trouble, Mrs; you is doing so much supposing and not enough reposing!"



Philippians 4:6 commands, "Be anxious for nothing." This actually means "Stop perpetually worrying about everything." Also, "Stop perpetually worrying about even one thing."

A frantic mother called her pastor one day. She had a bad case of "nerves." He thought he heard a child's voice over the phone, so he asked, "Is your child as upset and worried as you are?" "Why, of course not," she replied. "But why not?" he asked. "I suppose she puts her trust in me, and lets me do the worrying," she answered.

"Then make transference, try to think of yourself as a child of God, and just as your child puts her trust in you, you put your trust in God."



Theme: God is Patient

Scripture: "God is not slack concerning His promises but is patient with us. . . ."

2 Peter 3:9



Teachers, there are many days when you feel impatient with the kids, like the three thousandth time you have reminded them to put their names on their papers, and you are still faced with the inevitable task of handwriting scrutiny to determine the authorship of four random papers. You want to chastise them, ("How many times have I told you?") But have you stopped to think, how many times have I done that to God? How many times has He corrected you with loving-kindness only for you to turn around and make the exact same mistakes over and over again, sometimes even willfully! What if Jesus treated us that way: "This is the last time I'm going to tell you to do this. Next time, forget it, I'm not helping you. Don't come crying to me when the consequences fly in your face." His patience is endless, and that is how He calls us to be.

His grace is the model for how we are to treat others, rendering favor when we don't have to and changing our focus from giving students what they "deserve" to seeing them how God sees them. That doesn't mean there are no consequences. God is a just God, He is a God of order and not of chaos, and He speaks repeatedly in His word about how children must be taught obedience and respect. But our place is not to condemn and criticize; it is to lift up our students. When you deal with a particularly challenging student or parent, rather than saying, "This kid doesn't care, his parents don't care, I give up, I'm not dealing with it anymore," why not try to pray for them instead that God would work through you to bring positive change? That's really hard to do sometimes, so perhaps we should pray for our own attitude to change more than anything!



Theme: God is Good

Scripture: "Praise ye the Lord . . . Praise the Lord, for the Lord is good." Psalm 135:1-3



On Tuesday, January 12, 2010 an earthquake (7.0 on the Richter scale) hit Port-au-Prince, Haiti, destroying numerous buildings and killing more than 300,000 persons. Many of them were buried under the concrete rubble. At first recovery efforts were slow, for experts from other countries had to be flown in to help. People began to be unearthed, some alive, some dead. By the third day, hope started to fade. It was known that without food and water and often injured, people would begin to die under that rubble.

On day seven, a miracle occurred. An eight year old boy was unearthed alive! This miracle received a lot of media attention. As the little boy was lifted into the air, his face was seen beaming and his hands were lifted up to heaven as he praised and thanked God. His attitude touched many of the onlookers. It seemed more important than the miracle itself.

This young boy who was buried so deep that it took seven days to get to him, should have been hungry, thirsty, weak, and terrified. No doubt he wondered where everyone was. Did he panic? Was he conscious of day or night? Did he cry? Yet as he was lifted up and out, his face showed no evidence of torture or fear. He was eternally thankful to be out.

Dear Teacher,

God has performed a greater miracle in your life. He has pulled you out of the rubble of sin caused by another earthquake, Satan's temptations. But unlike the little boy who did not know if he would ever be rescued, you know that Jesus died to rescue you. This knowledge should help you to face the difficult days at school, to live with faces beaming with gratitude to God so that your students and all who you come in contact with may know that God is good.

Adapted from the Devotional book for women - Blessed (2013)



Theme: God is Your Rescuer

Scripture: "For we know that all things work together for good . . . "Romans 8:28

The story is told of a traveler who was ship-wrecked and was washed up onto the shore of the beach in a remote, desolate island. He roamed for miles and miles to see if he could find any other human being, but there was none. Eventually he accepted his lot and tried to make the best of a bad situation. He spent days searching for materials that he used to build a little shack to protect him from the elements and to secure the few possessions he was left with.

One day when he returned from hunting for food to his horror he found his little shack burnt completely to the ground. He became very angry and frustrated. He shook his fist at God blaming Him for this great tragedy. Early the next morning, he heard the sound of an approaching ship. He ran out excitedly to meet the vessel. When they reached him the captain announced that they had come to rescue him. Puzzled, he asked, "How did you know I was here?" The captain replied "We saw your smoke signal." The grateful man recognized that after all, his burnt shack was not the great tragedy he initially thought it was, rather it was his greatest blessing. It was his rescue signal!



Dear Teacher,

When you are at your wit's end, when your little shack has been burnt to the ground, do not despair, it might just be God's way of rescuing you.



Theme: God is the Answer to Your Heart's Deepest Cry

Scripture: "O Lord of hosts, if you will indeed look on the affliction of your servant and remember me and not forget your servant, but will give to your servant a son, then I will give him to the Lord all the days of his life."

I Samuel 1: 11



During Eli's time of priesthood, Israel had been ruled by judges for more than two hundred years. Yet the governing authority was about to change, and Hannah would play a key role in ushering Israel into the era of kingship. But at that point, she was a woman in agony. Childless year after year, she shared her husband with a rival who had already borne him several children.

In her distress, she turned to the Giver of all life. Her pain was so deep that she wept and moved her lips with no sound emerging. She prayed with such passion, Eli assumed she was acting under the influence of alcohol. Yet she was not drunk, but was pleading passionately for God's intervention.

When we are in pain, the world offers plenty of substitutes to dull our hearts—we can turn to food or drink, worldly pleasures, sports and entertainment, or even bury ourselves in busy schedules. But as Hannah discovered, prayer opens the way for God to work. Hannah's story shows us where we should go: To God, who can transform our desperation into hope. He is always waiting to listen and bring us into His fullness of joy.



Theme: God is the Finisher of Your Faith

Scripture: "Looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith" . . .

Hebrews 12:2

In 1952, Florence Chadwick attempted to swim the chilly ocean waters between Catalina Island and the California shore. She swam through foggy weather and choppy seas for fifteen hours. Her muscles began to cramp, and her resolve weakened. She begged to be taken out of the water, but her mother, riding in a boat alongside, urged her not to give up. She kept trying but grew exhausted and stopped swimming. Aides lifted her out of the water and into the boat. They paddled a few more minutes, the mist broke, and she discovered that the shore was less than a half mile away. "All I could see was the fog," she explained at a news conference. "I think if I could have seen the shore, I would have made it."



Take a long look at the shore that awaits you. Don't be fooled by the fog of the slump. The finish may be only strokes away. God may be at this moment lifting His hand to signal Gabriel to grab the trumpet. Angels may be assembling, saints gathering, demons trembling. Stay at it!

Stay in the water! Stay in the race! Stay in the fight! Give grace one more time. Be generous one more time. Teach one more class, encourage one more student, forbear one more difficult parent, swim one more stroke. God will give you the grace to finish your race.

Adapted from "Live Loved: Experiencing God's Presence in Everyday Life" by Max Lucado.



Student Lessons

Theme: God is Omnipotent!

Scripture: "The heavens declare the glory of God and the firmament sheweth his handiwork." Psalm 19: 1

"For he spake and it was done; he commanded, and it stood fast." Psalm 33:9

Have you ever thought of how big God is? You don't need to look very far! Just take a look at the skies on a clear summer night. Gaze at all the stars and constellations and ask yourself who controls all these planets and earth? Who guides them in orbit? Think about all the megastars that you know about and admire: Lebron James, Venus Williams, Beyonce, Oprah, etc., put them all together and they still would not match up to God! God is huge! He is awesome! He makes something out of nothing. He holds this massive universe in His Hands!



How big is God? Look at the video clip "*Scale of Universe 2.*" The video is located in the resource video section. This video will give you an idea of God's awesomeness:

Wow! That is how big God is, and yet He is small enough to live within your hearts and mine! Don't you think that you can trust such a powerful God with the issues that you are facing right now? The same God who spoke this massive universe into being has not lost any of His power. The big surprise is He wants to hang out with you! What an honor! Consider yourself very special.



Theme: God is Your Everything!

Scripture: "For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain." Philipians 1:21

Take a few seconds and complete this sentence:

For me, to live is _____ and to die is _____.



Sort of a tough assignment isn't it? Yet what you write in those two blanks tells a lot about you: your perspective, your hopes, your dreams, and your destiny. For the Apostle Paul, those spaces were easy to fill in. Unfortunately in today's world the sentence would probably read more like the following examples:

- For to me, to live is fun, fun, fun and to die is like bummer.
- For to me, to live is money and to die is the *Great Promotion*.
- For to me, to live is youth and to die is, well, never going to happen.
- For to me, to live is popularity and to die is being released from the pressure.
- For to me, to live is boring and to die is probably not much different.

Paul knew that his life was not his own, so he didn't treat it as such. He gave up popularity, wealth, and power to dedicate it to Christ. In his mind, it was a win/win situation. A longer stay on earth meant more time to advance the Kingdom of God. A shorter stay meant less time to wait to receive his heavenly reward and be in the presence of his Savior. When this verse was written, Paul was in chains and facing his death all because he served Jesus. In the midst of all these hardships, his basic attitude was: "It's all good!" At face value, that seems crazy. Yet when you step back and examine his view of life, it makes sense. He was much more concerned about the spread of the gospel than his own personal happiness. When you let go of your own claims and rights on life and give it all to Christ, you suddenly become very free indeed.

Do you realize that *God is your everything*? A life lived outside of Christ is hopeless. Like the Apostle Paul, could you honestly say that "To live is Christ, and to die is gain?" Think about it, what is one change you need to make in your spiritual life to be more like Paul?

Source: <http://www.dare2share.org/devotions/whose-life-is-it-anyway/#sthash.fatbSCRC.dpuf>



God is Your Standard

Scripture: "Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is: his good, pleasing and perfect will." Romans 12:2

We are agents of God's kingdom, but God doesn't issue us a uniform when we join up. Instead, just like everyone else, Christians have to make choices about how we're going to dress. Often, fashion and trends have an important part to play in those decisions.

Should fashion even be an issue for Christians? While there's nothing wrong with wearing clothes that happen to be in style, we have to think about the reasons for the choices we make.

Sometimes buying trendy clothes might not be the best use of money. Sometimes what's in style doesn't fit with Christian standards of modesty. And sometimes we may be trying to use fashion as a way to be liked and accepted. Instead, we need to build our self-esteem on the fact that we are God's children: that He created us and we have a special part to play in His kingdom. Even without a Secret Agent uniform, that should make us feel pretty special!



Nothing is wrong with seeking to fit in with a group. It's not wrong either to wear the same jeans or the same shoes that all your friends are wearing. What's wrong is to base your self esteem on external things such as jeans or shoes or labels. Real value comes from within. God created you, a wonderful, special human being. Even though we're all fallen and devalued by sin, Jesus loved and died for each one of us, and He wants to recreate His image within us. You don't ever need to worry about labels. To God, you're a designer item.



Theme: God is Forgiving

Scripture: "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." 1 John 1:9

God has made salvation for His people pretty simple. God asked us to accept the fact that we are messed up and that we cannot live without God in control. God then wants us to invite Jesus Christ as our Savior. We are saved. God, however, does not want us be saved only. He saved us for a reason, because He loves us so much.



Since He loves us, God wants to be in a relationship with us in the hope that we will love Him back as we get to know Him. When we get hooked up with Jesus, we will notice some changes in our lives. We try to change to please the people we love. And, more importantly, the people we love tend to "rub off" on us.

Sometimes, though, we decide that we love ourselves more than we love God and that we don't want to change. Sometimes the relationship will get difficult. We will make mistakes. The thought that maybe God wants to call the whole thing off because we messed up will sometimes creep into our head. That could not be further from the truth. God wants to pick us up and restore us into a relationship with Him.



Activity:

Name: _____ Grade: _____

A Metaphor is a figure of speech which makes an implied or hidden comparison between two things or objects. In other words, when you portray a person, place or thing as being something else, even though it is not that 'something else', you are speaking metaphorically. For example, "*A mighty fortress is our God*", '*the light of my life*', '*She has a heart of gold.*'

Use paper, markers or any other available material to draw a picture or metaphor of what salvation means to you. You will be asked to share your pictures with the class and say what your pictures represent.

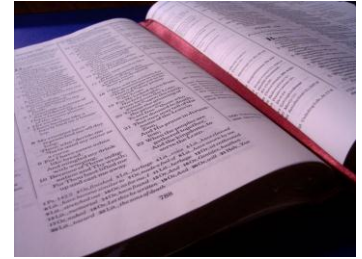




God is Holy

Scripture: "For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world. The world is passing away, and also its lusts; but the one who does the will of God lives forever." 1 John 2:16, 17.

It is not easy to remain sexually pure these days. Satan likes to tempt us with things that are attractive to us; we need to guard ourselves against things we are drawn to by nature, but that we know are not of God. There are many safeguards we can place in our way so we don't inadvertently come across those images. We can put guards on our computers; we can choose to stay away from situations in which we might be tempted. Every day we are bombarded with sexual situations either from the media, the Internet, or even in daily life.



The good news is that God can be with you in every situation and wants you to be victorious over sin. Remember every image you see represents a person who somehow found themselves in a less than ideal situation. It is important to deal with the issue of lust before you get into an overpowering situation. Jesus tells us in His sermon on the mount (*Matthew 5*) that we should stay as far away from sin as we can. This does not mean that we should walk around with "blinkers" on, but as Ellen G. White states (*Messages to Young People*) we need to guard the avenues of our souls - As the children sing in Sabbath/Sunday School, "Watch your eyes what they see, watch your feet where they go, watch your ears what they hear, watch your lips what they say." Ask God to protect you from the evil influences around you.



Activity:

Ask the students to keep a log of everything they do for a few days. At the end of the period let them look carefully at all the free time that they have and make a deliberate plan to use those blocks of time more constructively. As the saying goes, "the devil finds work for idle hands."

For example, if your log shows that you spent five hours or more each day watching TV or playing video games, you could use two of those hours studying or preparing for upcoming tests.





Topic: God is Your Maker

Scripture: "From one man he made every nation . . . and He determined the times set for them and the exact places where they should live." Acts 17: 26.

Did you know that God planned where you'd be born and where you'd live for His purpose? Your race and nationality are no accident. God left no detail to chance. He planned it all for His purpose. The Bible says, *"From one man he made every nation . . . and He determined the times set for them and the exact places where they should live."* Acts 17:26. Nothing in your life is arbitrary. It is all for a purpose. Most amazing! God decided how you would be born. Regardless of the circumstances of your birth or who your parents are, God had a plan in creating you. It doesn't matter whether your parents were good, bad, or indifferent. God knew that those two individuals possessed exactly the right genetic make-up to create the custom "You" He had in mind. They had the DNA God wanted to make you.

God made you special! In fact every person on earth is different and unique!



Adapted from Cornerstone Connections, 3rd Quarter, 2009.



Activity:

Name: _____ Grade: _____

Complete the following activity sheet:



1. Write down four things that make you uniquely "You" _____

2. How are you different from every other person?

3. Do you feel that these differences make you special?

4. Do you feel they cause you to be misunderstood?

5. Do you enjoy being different, or do you wish you were like everyone else and "fit in"?



Topic: God is Your Creator

Scripture: "Oh yes, you shaped me first inside, then out; you formed me in my mother's womb. I thank you, High God! You're breathtaking! Body and soul, I am marvelously made! I worship in adoration! What a creation! You know me inside and out, you know every bone in my body; You know exactly how I was made, bit by bit, how I was sculpted from nothing into something."



"Your thoughts towards me? How rare, how beautiful! God, I'll never comprehend them! I couldn't even begin to count them any more than I could count the sand of the sea." Psalm 139:13-15; 17-19

If you are one of those teenagers who believe that beauty is only skin deep, I would like to show you what really makes you beautiful:

When God looks at you, He sees beauty because He handcrafted you from conception. All the unique features and intricate facets of your being are the result of God's artistic endeavor. And because we are a direct production of the Potter's hand, we are in His loving thoughts more than one hundred, forty billion times a day!

And we're beautiful! Maybe not by the world's petty, small minded, one dimensional, superficial and super facial standards, but we are defined as beautiful because we reflect the image of the Beautiful One who created us. And when you download this truth into the core of your self-perception, everything changes and your life can start moving in a different direction, knowing that God is making you more beautiful each day in eternal ways.



God is Love

Scripture: "Behold what manner of love the Father hath given unto us. That we should be called the sons of God , , , " 1 John 3:1

Did you know that there are two kingdoms in this world? Yes there are! The Kingdom of God and the kingdom of Satan. Each one of us belongs to one of these kingdoms! In His wonderful High Priestly prayer Jesus prayed before returning to heaven, Jesus said, *"I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil. They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world."* John 17: 15

As followers of Christ we live in the world but we are loyal citizens of another world. In other words, we should not separate ourselves from other human beings and live as hermits because we do not want to be "soiled" by sin. Rather, it means that we are not to get caught up in the greed and selfishness that characterizes this world. While we participate in earthly activities we are to always remember that this world is not truly our home. God has a better plan and a better place for us. The happiness that this world gives is only transitory.





Activity:

Have two volunteers participate in an exercise to illustrate how futile it is to try to hold on to the happiness that this world offers.

Illustration 1: The volunteer is asked to hold out his/her hand while the teacher pours water into it. The volunteer is asked to try to hold on to the water, but is unable to prevent it from leaking out of his/her hand.

Illustration II: The volunteer is given an egg that has been cracked and poured into a saucer. He/she is asked to pick up the egg without tilting or lifting the saucer.

The happiness that the world offers is like the water and the egg you could not hold. Only in Jesus is there lasting happiness.





God is Your Miracle Worker

Scripture: "Is anything too hard for the Lord?" Genesis 18:14

"I'm sorry, but your daughter will never walk again." The words sounded like a final sentence to the little girl and her mother. But they weren't. Wilma's left leg was twisted and weakened by polio. But her mother was determined Wilma would someday walk. Week after week Wilma's mother brought her 50 miles from home to do physical therapy. At home her mother, brothers and sisters helped her exercise her leg. Throughout her childhood Wilma went to school with a heavy metal brace on her leg. She used the brace, crutches, and a corrective shoe. And despite the doctor's prediction she walked.



When she was twelve, Wilma was finally able to walk without any assistance at all. That was when she made an important decision. She had already overcome tremendous odds. She was walking, even though doctors had told her she never would. But Wilma wanted to do more than walk. She wanted to run. She wanted to become a world-class athlete. It might have seemed like a crazy dream for a poor African-American girl in the southern United States in the 1950s. Poverty, racial discrimination, and physical disability were all stacked against Wilma Rudolph, predicting she'd never become a success.

But a strong will, a supportive family, and determination were on Wilma's side. Day after day she hit the track running, training to make her left leg as strong as her right. She ran until she could run as well as the other teenage girls, and then she ran until she was a lot better. When she was 16 years old, Wilma went to her first Olympic Games and came home with a bronze medal. Four years later, in Rome in 1960, she became the first African-American woman to have won three Olympic gold medals. What Wilma was able to achieve, you too can achieve even greater things with faith in God and determination. Remember that when the odds are stacked against you, you serve an omnipotent God!



Topic: God is Audible

Scripture: "Be still and know that I am God" Psalm 46: 10

Jesus fulfills the textbook definition for establishing a relationship. We can love Him, because He first loved us (*1 John 4:19*). But do God's children have any responsibility in maintaining this relationship? The answer is a resounding yes . . . sort of. Jesus' action calls for our inaction: *Be still and know that I am God.*

Being still is more difficult than ever before. We have become technology gluttons, bombarded with a cacophony of smart phones, computers, tablets, iPads, iPods, TV, and radio. From sun up to sundown, the sights and sounds never stop. As we move through our day, we must take some time to unplug—literally—from the world!

Some people stay plugged-in to run from reality. As long as their minds are filled with outside "data," they don't have to think about or evaluate their decisions in life, their relationships with others, or their relationship with the Creator (or lack thereof). For others, staying plugged-in is a habit; they can't think, work, or play without background sounds, and need a TV to lull themselves to sleep.

God calls out to us above the clamor saying, "Hello, can you hear me now?" If there is a constant stream of noise in our lives and we're always "plugged-in," then we are allowing the world to mold our minds and determine our thoughts, which makes cultivating a deeper relationship with God more difficult. The Holy Spirit can certainly penetrate the constant din, and one way or another He will get through. However, by allowing stillness in our lives, by allowing ourselves to think about God, and permitting our souls to marinate in His Word as we work and play, God will speak to us in new ways; and we will hear Him, maybe for the first time!





Topic: God is the Way

Scripture: "Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in there at." Matthew 7:13

The story is told of a man who lived at the top of a steep mountain. The road from his house to the valley was a winding, narrow route. On one side of the road there were no guard rails, in spite of a steep drop-off at the edge of the road. His search for a new chauffeur brought several potential drivers to the residence for an interview. His only interview instruction was, "Drive me down the mountain, and see how close you can come to the edge without going over the cliff."



The first candidate took the challenge bravely and drove down the mountain about eight inches from the edge, demonstrating tremendous skill as a driver. A few times, the tires squeaked slightly, but the car stayed firmly on the road the whole way down. The man who lived on the mountain thanked him politely and dismissed him.

The second candidate boldly responded to the same challenge and skillfully drove the car six inches from the edge of the cliff the whole way down. The driver spoke of his experience racing cars and could describe exactly what the car was doing at each turn. He too was dismissed.

When the third candidate heard the challenge, he looked at the mountain road that went to the valley and then looked back at his interviewer and said, "Are you sure?" The man replied, "Yes." But the owner noticed as they made their way down the mountain that the driver stayed a healthy distance away from the edge of the mountain the whole way down. He thought that the driver must have misunderstood his instructions. When questioned, the driver said, "I understood perfectly. There are many ways to get down the mountain, but I just thought I would choose the best way. I'm not one to test the limits of my skills when it comes to someone else's life." He was hired.

The Bible admonishes us that the way to heaven is the narrow way. But we often slip from the narrow way onto the popular way without even knowing it. Every day we have to make a conscious decision to take the narrow way.



Topic: God is Your Seeker

Scripture: "Nothing in all creation is hidden from God's sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give account." Hebrews 4:13

"Ollie, Ollie, oxen free! Come out; come out, wherever you are!" Sound familiar? What child hasn't played *Hide and Go Seek*? Watching young children hide by covering their eyes, or pushing their heads into a couch pillow with their rear ends sticking out, is quite amusing! They figure if they can't see the seeker, then the seeker can't see them!

Isn't this a picture of what we do with God? Many teenagers are overwhelmed with the knowledge that God sees us all the time! We cannot do anything without God knowing about it. There was no place to hide! (A frightening thought when you're trying to live life apart from God.)



But our Seeker, who knows the thoughts and intents of our hearts, pursues us despite our waywardness. When we come to the realization that God's kindness, and not His wrath, leads us to repentance then we will overcome our fear of God and exchange it for friendship with God. When we understand that the Seeker isn't out to get us, but wants to rescue us, it is a life-changing, load-off-your-back kind of experience!

However, what about today's Bible verse that says we must give an account? Who among us is worthy to stand? The answer is no one! Apart from Jesus, our only hope would be to run and hide. Yet, our attempts would be as futile as a small child closing his eyes to get away.

Thanks be to God, our sins are forgiven because of Jesus. We can stand before him with eyes wide open!

Jesus gives a good account on our behalf. His sacrifice makes you righteous. What a blessed thought! Who wants to run and hide from that kind of love? Sadly some do, which is why God's children are to continue publishing peace to those who need salvation!



Theme: God is the Greatest Giver

*Scripture: "Greater love hath no man than this that a man lay down his life for his friends."
John 15:13*

Once there was a tree and she loved a little boy. Every day the boy would gather her leaves and make them into crowns and play king of the forest. He would climb up her trunk and swing from her branches and eat apples. They would play hide and seek. And when he was tired, he would sleep in her shade. The boy loved the tree very much. And the tree was happy. But time went by and the boy grew older. The tree was often alone because the boy spent more time playing in other places. He began to love other things beside the tree, although he never forgot the tree.



Then one day he returned to the tree. The tree was very happy to see him and said, "Come, boy, and climb up my trunk and swing from my branches and eat apples and play in my shade and be happy." "I am too big to climb and play said the boy. I want to buy lots of things and have lots of fun. I need money. If you can't give me money I can't waste much time with you." "I'm sorry", said the tree, "but I have no money, I have only leaves and apples. But you may take my apples, boy, and sell them.

Maybe they will provide you with enough money to be happy." So the boy carried apples away, and the tree was happy that she could do something for the boy. And so this continued until the tree had no more to give.

Students, Jesus gave His all for you; make sure you do not take Him for granted as the little boy did the tree.



Theme: God is Your Transformer

Scripture: "I am fearfully and wonderfully made . . ." Psalm 139:14

Once a little boy was playing outdoors and found a fascinating caterpillar. He carefully picked it up and took it home to show his mother. He asked his mother if he could keep it, and she said he could if he would take good care of it. The little boy got a large jar from his mother and put plants to eat, and a stick to climb on, into the jar. Every day he watched the caterpillar and brought it new plants to eat.

One day the caterpillar climbed up the stick and started acting strangely. The boy worriedly called his mother who came and understood that the caterpillar was creating a cocoon. The mother explained to the boy how the caterpillar was going to go through a metamorphosis and become a butterfly.



The little boy was thrilled to hear about the changes his caterpillar would go through. He watched every day, waiting for the butterfly to emerge. One day it happened, a small hole appeared in the cocoon and the butterfly started to struggle to come out. At first the boy was excited, but soon he became concerned. The butterfly was struggling so hard to get out! It looked like it couldn't break free! It looked desperate! It looked like it was making no progress!

The boy was so concerned he decided to help. He ran to get scissors, and then walked back (because he had learned not to run with scissors). He snipped the cocoon to make the hole bigger and the butterfly quickly emerged!

As the butterfly came out the boy was surprised. It had a swollen body and small, shriveled wings. He continued to watch the butterfly expecting that, at any moment, the wings would dry out, enlarge and expand to support the swollen body. He knew that in time the body would shrink and the butterfly's wings would expand.

But neither happened! The butterfly spent the rest of its life crawling around with a swollen body and shriveled wings.

It never was able to fly



Devotional Unit - God Is...

As the boy tried to figure out what had gone wrong his mother took him to talk to a scientist from a local college. He learned that the butterfly was **SUPPOSED** to struggle.

In fact, the butterfly's struggle to push its way through the tiny opening of the cocoon pushes the fluid out of its body and into its wings. Without the struggle, the butterfly would never, ever fly. The boy's good intentions hurt the butterfly.

Allow Jesus to be the transforming force in your life!





God is the Real Deal!

Scripture: "I am God and there is no other, I am God, and there is none like me." Isaiah 46:9

Janel was excited when her sister Shaina got home from her senior class trip to New York. She couldn't wait to hear about all the fun Shaina and her friends had had on the trip.

"Hey, I bought these for you," Shaina said, handing Janel a shopping bag. Inside were three sweatshirts all with the logo of Janel's favorite designer on them. "Wow! What a cool gift, Shaina, thanks! Three of them? These are so expensive!" Not in New York city," Shaina grinned. "We found a place that was selling them for about \$10 each." You're kidding!" Janel gave her a sister a big hug. The next day she proudly wore one of the designer sweatshirts to school.



Two evenings later, when she pulled another of her new sweatshirts off over her head she heard a ripping noise. "Oh no!" she cried out. Janel's mom stuck her head into the room. "What happened?" Janel showed her mom the long rip in the side seam of the sweatshirt. "I can't believe it tore so easily the first time I wore it! Their stuff is usually really good quality. Anyway, I know they have a guarantee, so maybe I can send it back to the company and get it replaced or something. I wonder if Shaina kept the receipts"

Janel's mom sat down on the bed and turned the sweatshirt inside out, looking at all the seams. "Janel, how much did Shaina say she paid for this sweatshirt?" "Ten bucks!" "And how much would it be normally?" "Oh at least fifty. I've seen them even more expensive than that." Mom sighed. "I think your sister got taken in, Janel, and I don't think the designer label is genuine. They don't realize they're not getting the same quality." Janel looked down at the torn shirt. She could still wear the other two, until they fell apart, which probably wouldn't be that long, she realized. Everyone would see the label and think she was wearing a top quality product. But she would know different. Looking up, she caught her mom's smile. "Just like I've always said honey, it's what's inside that counts."



God is Your Power Source

Scripture: "I am the vine; you are the branches. Those who remain in me, and I in them, will produce much fruit." John 15:5

When pulling out weeds from our lawns we often discover that seemingly unconnected plants may in fact be part of the same network of roots. Beneath an area of lawn, a large number of such connections may link together many single plants. There is reality beneath the surface of the lawn. This network is the real target if one is trying to remove the weeds. It is of limited benefit to keep mowing the surface weeds; they will keep coming back.

A number of times in the Gospels Jesus uses plants to illustrate the lesson He was trying to teach. As followers of Christ, we have to choose to be connected to the underground network that is the reality of the Kingdom of God. Jesus said, *"I am the vine; you are the branches. Those who remain in me, and I in them, will produce much fruit."* John 15:5

Just as how the plant that is disconnected from the vine will eventually wither and die, in the same way, the Christian cannot survive if he/she does not stay connected to Jesus who is the "true vine." How is your connection to the power source? Is it strong or is it weak?





God is A God of Variety

Scripture: "The man said, 'This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called "woman," for she was taken out of man.' Genesis 2: 23

Guys and girls are different! God made them that way. The Bible tells us in Genesis that God made male and female. God also gave special gifts to each gender and carved out different roles for them. One of the main ways in which guys differ from girls is in the way they communicate. Here is a story to illustrate the point.



A newlywed couple moves out of the town where their families live. The husband has to go to graduate school, so the wife works. This is a great setup, but after a month the wife comes home from her job and complains about the relationship with her boss. The husband is honored that the wife would confide in him and ask for his advice. So, being a good husband, he offers her suggestions usually beginning with the phrase "what you should do is"

Another month goes by, and the husband realizes that the wife is no longer telling him what happens at work. He begins to get curious about why she doesn't share with him anymore. So one day he asks her.

"Well," she says, "you're always telling me what to do about my relationship with my boss. It's as if you don't think I can handle it myself." The husband is shocked. He can't believe what she is accusing him of. He becomes defensive and lashes out at his wife, saying, "Apparently you can't deal with the situation; you keep asking me what you should do!" She laughs incredulously, "I never once asked you for advice; you just kept giving it!"

He is simply amazed. "What do you mean? You came home for a month telling me what was wrong with your relationship with your boss. Why did you tell me those things if you did not want my advice?" "I was sharing with you!" "Sharing with me?" he says. "What am I supposed to do about it when you tell me?" "Nothing! Just listen."



Devotional Unit - God Is...

This is a foreign concept to the young husband. He has grown up in a home with three brothers and a dad, but no mom. Because of this, he has only learned how to communicate like a guy. Guys typically tell each other things when they need advice. On the other hand, the wife has grown up in a home with two sisters and a mom, no dad. She never learnt to communicate with guys effectively.

These differences between guys and girls is not something to cause strife and conflict, rather it should be celebrated. We should thank God instead that He made us special and unique.





YOUTH LESSONS:

Theme: God is Your Light

Scripture: "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path" Psalm 119: 105

One summer Doug and his friend went on a canoe trip. As Doug was tramping a portage through the deep bush, night caught him. The trail went inky black. He was slowed to a snail's pace. A long trip with a heavy pack loomed ahead of him. His feet stumbled and he grumbled. After a miserable half hour, he caught sight of a glimmer along the trail. Soon his friend appeared holding a kerosene lantern. He led Doug into their camp. What a relief it was to be able to walk again. What relief to see the path!

Our key text Psalm 119: 105 speaks about the experience in the bush and about life in general. Life can be a lot like a dark trail in the bush. Because Jesus loves us, He has offered us the lamp to see where we're going. The light of His lamp, God's word, shines on our lives, giving us the sight we need to reach heaven without stumbling over trees or falling into rivers of difficulty. The Bible gives principles to light up how Christians should relate to spiritual light.



Theme: God is our Light (Part II)

Scripture: "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path" Psalm 119: 105

Yesterday's portion of the lesson describes the Bible as a shining light. But who turned it on? Where did it come from? Did the Bible writers just decide to sit down one day and write a book on religion? According to 2 Peter 1: 20, 21, how did the Bible come to be? If what these authors wrote came from God, how does it affect your life? Following are some decisions you may have to make from day to day.

Place a check mark beside each decision that you think the Bible relates to:

- What you eat for breakfast.
- How to lead a friend to Christ.
- Whether or not to wear makeup.
- What TV programs to watch.
- What career you should choose.
- Who to date.
- How to get along with your little brother.
- What hobbies to enjoy.
- Which computer game to buy.
- How to wear your hair.

Do you know that the simple day-to-day decisions you make like what to eat and what recreational activities to participate in can affect your eternal destiny?

Let Jesus guide your every decision and that way you can guarantee that you will make the right choices.



Theme: God is Your Lighthouse

Scripture: "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path" Psalm 119: 105

When you face a tough decision, it's hard to know how to make the truly best choice. **Read John 16: 13.** The Holy Spirit, the Third Person of the Godhead, taught each Bible writer. He gave each one the true knowledge people needed to learn. He took the responsibility of preserving what the Bible's authors wrote. He also made sure each inspired book was in the growing collection with those already written. These separate books form what we have as our Holy Bible.

But the Holy Spirit didn't stop there. Just as He taught the prophets what to say, He stands by, ready to help you understand what the Bible says and how to apply it in your life today.

How do we know we can depend on others? Do we trust them more if we know they love us? What has Jesus done that shows us His word can be trusted?

The crowds were amazed when Jesus fed five thousand people, but He told them miracles aren't as important as believing His Word. Read John 6: 63. Do you think it's important to Jesus that people don't change or twist His words? Why or why not?

Some people have said that the Bible could have been changed since ancient times. The Dead Sea scrolls that were discovered in the Middle East included parts of the Book of Isaiah. Even though they were buried thousands of years ago, when they were translated they were the same as the book of Isaiah in our Bible today.





Theme: God is True to His Promises

Scripture: "Man does not live by bread alone, but on every Word that comes from the mouth of God" Matthew 4: 4 (NIV).

Your mind is a wonderful computer, but what a loop "forever" creates. God's history and eternity are the same. His words are forever as well. Can you imagine including the Hannah and Daniel of the Bible in your list of friends? God can. He fondly thinks of times He shared in the Garden of Eden with his friends Adam and Eve. His eternal nature allows Him to include you and your friends in that same list of shared memories.

"But you said you would meet me at the corner at six!"

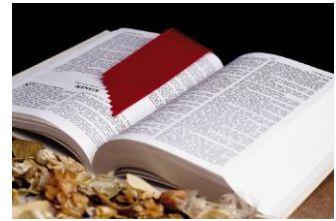
"I said I would if I finished on time."

"You said to warm the soup and toast the bread."

"I said to do that after you prepared the salad."

"I asked to be first last week!"

But you didn't remind me this week!"



A small word is sometimes so important. God likes to be understood, too. That's why He carefully reminds us of the value of hearing everything He has to say before we rush off to action. Most families have to change house rules as the children grow. Some rules no longer apply, and some new ones are needed. God's family rules never need to change.

Friendships are often broken because of unkept promises or rash, angry threats. There is real value in friends who carefully consider their promises before they make it and then are firm in keeping their word. God is that kind of friend. He considers His word a binding contract. List a couple ways Psalm 89: 34 would help a new Christian feel secure.

A guarantee is only as good as the company that sells the product. A person's influence depends upon their character. God is the person standing behind Bible promises. He has expressed His feelings about many things that affect our lives.



Theme: God is Your Teacher

Scripture: "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction . . . That the man of God may be perfect" 2 Timothy 3: 16, 17

Jim slumps down into his chair. Fifth period! That means time for David to study his eyelids, while Ellen plays with her gum, stretching it out to arm's length. Fifth period means Bible class, time for Elder Chacon to drone about Bible texts. What good does it do to study the Bible, anyway? Jim wonders, glancing across the room to see Suzy's mouth disappear in a cavernous yawn. Can you relate? Studying the Bible doesn't have to be that way.

The Bible itself tells us how we can apply it to our lives. Read 2 Timothy 3: 16, 17. This text lists several functions of the Bible. The *Living Bible* says it this way:

- Teaches us what is true.
- Makes us realize what is wrong in our lives.
- Helps us do what is right.
- Equips us to do good to everyone.



So now what? How can you put the Bible to work in your life? Recall one example for each item listed above when the Bible performed that function for you.

- When it taught me what is right:
- When it made me realize something was wrong in my life:
- When it helped me do what is right:
- When it equipped me to do something good for someone:

Although the Bible was written what seems like eons ago, we can still put its principle into practice today. God inspired the Bible, and He didn't mean for it ever to become outdated.



Theme: God is The Truth

Scripture: " He replied: 'Watch out that you are not deceived. For many will come in my name, claiming, "I am he," and, "The time is near." Do not follow them"

Luke 21:8

Not every nugget that a miner finds is real gold. "Fool's gold" looks like the real thing, but when you put it through the "acid test" of an assayer, or mineral chemist, it is found to be worthless. The chemist uses sulfuric acid to burn out all the impurities in the raw ore. Fool's gold burns up; pure gold is refined and comes out shining brightly.



The Bible tells us that in the last days many false prophets would be around, people who claim to be teaching and preaching the Word of God when in reality they are serving the devil. When you hear these persons it would be wise to test whether or not a statement is inspired. Isaiah 8: verse 20 provides an acid test for scripture. Read it and write it in your own words:

Just as the gold acid test requires an assayer, the scripture acid test requires a Bible student. Spiritual beliefs today contain a lot of fool's gold. Do you know what you believe? Have you run your faith through the acid test? Have others tried to confuse you by telling you they have gold when it may be fool's gold? In this week's lesson you have studied many texts that could help you develop your own acid test to assay spiritual nuggets.



Theme: God is the Originator

Scripture: "Male and female created He them" Genesis 1:27



Like it or not, guys and girls are different - God made them so! Research has shown that these differences exist in a majority of men and women. This doesn't mean that all men are one way or all women are another way. These differences often cause misunderstandings in friendships and romantic relationships. One big difference is the way guys and girls go about forming and maintaining friendships.

Guys hang out in groups. Their friendships are often based on whom they do things with. Girls, on the other hand, enjoy more one-on-one relationships, and their friendships stem from emotional sharing. Most guys find it hard to talk seriously on an emotional level because they're used to relating on a competitive level. Girls have a hard time feeling close to somebody unless they can talk about feelings.

Because guys and girls form relationships from different perspectives, their styles of communicating are different too. Guys tend to talk to get or give information. They debate the details of last night's game. Girls, on the other hand, use communication as a way of getting close to a person.

God deliberately made males and females different. It is a difference that should be celebrated! God made you male or female for a special reason. He wants you to be sure about who you are. You were made in His own image. Now that is something worth celebrating!



Theme: God is Your Best Friend

Scripture: "A friend loveth at all times, and a brother is born for adversity." Proverbs 17:17

Lena had just slid into her desk and was opening her algebra notebook when a wad of paper hit her squarely on the back of the head and stuck. Wincing, she gingerly pulled it out of her hair, half wrapped chewing gum! The sound of stifled giggle from the desk behind her stung her ears, and she felt her cheeks burn. Quickly she began poring over her notes to keep the tears brimming in her eyes from flowing over. She sighed! A wad of gum in my hair wouldn't be so bad if it had been a harmless joke. What really hurt was knowing who had thrown it.

Hilary, who lived next door, had been Lena's best friend since birth. They had shared all their deepest secrets and wildest dreams. Lena and Hilary had been inseparable all through grade school. They would walk to and from school together, study together, plan to wear the same clothes to school. Whenever anything was upsetting one, the other had always been right there to listen and support. Then came academy! Both ran for class president. Lena won. From that day on, things were different. Hilary made other friends. Then Lena began to catch her own friends looking at her with strange expressions in their eyes. They even seemed to talk to her less and less, and finally most of them ignored her completely, unless they were whispering about her as she walked by. Through the few remaining friends she had, Lena heard the rumors that were circulating about her, how she cheated on tests, how she had used her friends to become elected as president, what she said about this person behind their backs, and how she always tried to break up friends. All lies! Lena was heartbroken.



She swallowed hard and focused on the equations on the board, but as much as she tried, she could not concentrate on algebra. How could Hilary do this to me? was the only thought that came to her mind. She had even tried to talk to Hilary about it, but it was no use. Hilary had given her a look of contempt, turned her back, and walked away, laughing and talking with the other girls. Shaking her head, Lena sighed deeply. This was going to be a long year!

It took a while but Lena eventually learnt that the best friend to have is Jesus. He is the only friend who will never let you down.



Theme: God is Trustworthy

Scripture: ". . . I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." Hebrews 13:5

Kaira sat at the railing of the railroad bridge overlooking the Sacramento River, spring-swollen and the swirling like chocolate milk more than 120 feet below her. Through hot tears, she watched a huge branch, torn from an overhanging willow somewhere upriver, as it caught on one of the granite pillings for a moment before being carried under the bridge and beyond.

The scene at school from four days earlier was fixed mercilessly in her mind, like a videotape TV show frozen on "pause." With graduation only three months away, Kent had sat her down in a corner of the cafeteria and said he had something "kind of important" to talk to her about. After going steady for more than a year, they'd planned to attend the same college back east in October, but Kent said he'd changed his mind. In fact he'd said, he thought it would be best for them to break up. When she'd asked him what was bothering him, he'd simply shrugged his shoulders, as though it were all just a whim. Kent had never been one to talk out his problems much, she knew, but his refusal to discuss the situation hurt her deeply.



She left school in the middle of lunch period, didn't think she could face two more classes feeling the way she did. Hugging her favorite stuffed toy animal, a gray seal that Kent had bought her on her class trip to Marine Land, Kaira wept much of the afternoon away. She fell at last into a fitful sleep from which she woke at dusk at the sound of her parents' voices downstairs. Mom and Dad were fully engaged in one of their rows over something completely meaningless. Wish I could talk to Mom about things, Kaira mused, but with the trouble she and Dad have been having lately, she doesn't have any time for my problems.

If you are at a place emotionally that Kaira has reached, remember, Jesus is a friend who sticks closer than a brother. He will never lie to you, use you, abuse you, or betray you. He alone is trustworthy; why won't you trust him?



God is Your Stabilizer

Scripture: "You are fearfully and wonderfully made"

Psalms 139:14



Christy sat gasping for breath, trying to overcome the terror of that monster roller coaster she had allowed April to talk her into riding on. In contrast, April was grinning from ear to ear, she exclaimed excitedly, "Wow! That was great! Let's do it again! This time with no hands. Let's not even hang onto the bar next time!" Not being able to speak, Christy looked at her roommate carefully, trying to detect any other signs of insanity. Finally she managed to croak, "Surely you didn't consider that fun. How could you have liked that waking nightmare of a ride?" April replied, "Well, I guess you have to learn to enjoy it."

What about you? Have you ever felt that you've been on a roller coaster of emotions, one day up, the next day down, then up again? And sometimes you look around, and others don't seem out of control at all. Someone else breaks up with a boyfriend/girlfriend and does not fall apart. Some of your friends have an early curfew like you, and they don't become upset over it. Someone else loses a major basketball game and he doesn't seem to feel angry or inferior. What's the difference? Where does the secret of controlling our emotions lie?

Remember, emotions are just the body's response to powerful thoughts. Here are some things you can do to keep your thoughts from controlling you. First, try to identify your feelings by talking to someone or writing down how you feel. Second, disregard how you should feel and concentrate on what you really feel. Do not deny emotions that seem unacceptable. Denying your emotions prevents you from dealing with them. Once you have identified and accepted your emotions, it's important to express them in appropriate ways.

Above all, remember that God understands your emotions, He made you and He knows everything about you. Even those emotions you find it difficult to express to others, you can freely express them to God and know that your secret is safe with Him!



God is All-Knowing

*Scripture: "Nothing in all creation is hidden from God's sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give account."
Hebrews 4:13*

Back home to visit with her family and her high school friends, Becky was feeling good. She was living in California now; she had a new job, and she was deeply in love with her new boyfriend, John. True, some things about her California life weren't so perfect, but Becky felt that after dropping out of college, her life was finally headed in the right direction. When John dropped by to visit for a few days and to meet Becky's family, she felt even more sure that he was the one for her and that they'd soon end up married.



After John left, Becky went out partying with her old friends again. Since she had come back to visit, every night had been a non-stop party. That Thursday night was no different. Becky and a friend finished off a fifth of vodka before 7:00 in the evening then talked the gang into going to a local bar for more drinks. At the bar, Becky met George, a guy she used to party with in high school. That was the last thing she remembered until she woke up Friday morning.

Becky opened her eyes to see that the red numbers on the clock read 5:03. Rolling over, she realized she was in a strange bed in an unfamiliar room. Becky was horrified. She remembered nothing about the night before. When George woke up she asked him to drive her back to her parents' house. She was so embarrassed she couldn't even ask George what had happened. "I have lost total control of who I am," Becky realized.

Years of being the life of the party—going all the way back to junior high when she had found out how easy it was to fit in and have fun after a few beers—had led to this moment. Becky went into the house and saw her mother asleep on the couch. She sat up as Becky came in and sat down in a nearby chair. Her eyes filling with tears, Becky blurted out, "Mom, I think I am an alcoholic."

Dear youth, whatever your besetting sin God knows about it and stands ready to deliver you, just acknowledge that you are a sinner in need of His grace.

Adapted from Becky Tirabassi and Gregg Lewis, Just one Victory, Campus Life Books, 1987



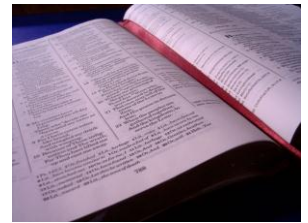
God is Holy

Scripture: "Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report...think on these things. Philippians 4:8

One particular day Joey and his friend Eric were out hiking in the hills behind Joey's house when Eric found something. He called Joey. "What is it?" Joey asked. "I don't know" Eric replied, and they both began to peruse the pile of papers and magazines that had been left behind the house by someone. After they looked at these magazines for a while they began to feel guilty, as if they were looking at something they were not supposed to see.

After a while they started talking again and decided they should do something with these pictures. And so they decided to destroy them. They were very careful to make sure that they had torn up every image that they had seen. In so doing of course, they ended up making sure that they had looked at every picture. They walked back down the mountain feeling a little better for what they had done with the material.

The next day they found themselves relating to each other that they both thought a lot of the pictures they had seen. They knew they were wrong but for some reason they decided that there may be some more that they had missed, and so they thought they should go and check. What they found close by the magazines they had found the day before was another pile of material. They looked and again they felt guilty so again they decided to destroy it as well. This went on for a while. Both boys found themselves thinking more and more about the things they had seen and looking forward more and more. That summer they spent a lot of time in the hills seeking out and destroying that stuff that people had left there.



Little did they know the effect it would have on them later in life. Because of their early exposure to such graphic materials, they both had to deal with some odd issues about sexual relationships. Joey had to get counseling to deal with addiction to pornography. There he learnt that what went into his mind, especially in the form of pictures stay there. He was always able to conjure up those images when he "needed" them. His early run in with pornography shaped who he became, and it took him a great deal of time and effort to undo some of the damage that was done on those afternoon hikes in the hills.

Be careful what you look at; remember you become what you behold!



God is Your Heavenly Parent

Scripture: "For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life." John 3:16

Many years ago, in the foothills of Tennessee, Ben was born. In those days boys and girls born to unmarried mothers were treated terribly. Parents wouldn't let their children play with little Ben. When Ben accompanied his mother to the store, he'd hear people talking just loud enough for him to hear, wondering who his father was. By first grade Ben would stay at his desk during recess and lunch time, since no one would play with him. When Ben was 12 a new preacher came to their small town. This was an exciting event, and many people began attending the little church. The stories about the new man caught Ben's interest. This preacher was loving and non-judgmental. He accepted people just as they were, and when he was with them people felt better about themselves.

Ben was curious so one Sunday he decided to learn more about the man and attended church for the first time in his life. He made sure to arrive late and slip out early, but he liked what he heard and kept coming back week after week. For the first time in his life Ben caught just a glimmer of hope. During the seventh week of meetings Ben became absolutely enthralled with the message. It was almost as if there was a sign above the preacher's head that read, "For you little Ben Hooper of unknown parentage there is hope!"



Suddenly the service was over; Ben rose quickly to leave and found the aisle blocked. As he contemplated working his way through the crowd he felt a hand on his shoulder. Turning, Ben looked right up in the eyes of the young preacher, who said what everyone had been wondering for years, "whose boy are you?" The church grew silent waiting for the answer. Slowly the preacher's smile began to spread across his face. "Oh I know whose boy you are! The family resemblance is unmistakable; you are a child of God!" With that the preacher patted Ben and said, "That's quite an inheritance you've got there, boy! Now go live up to it!"



Devotional Unit - God Is...

Ben Hooper said that was the day that transformed his life. His picture of himself began to change, and that began the change in his life. Ben had gone from being the son of an unknown father to being the child of the King. Ben Hooper later became the governor of Tennessee.

The same thing that was true of Ben Hooper is true of you. You are the child of the King! Now go and live like one!

Adapted from ZigZagler, Over the Top.





God is Patient

Scripture: "Pride goes before destruction, a haughty spirit before a fall." Proverbs 16:18

Waterskiing doesn't look too complicated, especially for someone who considers himself to be athletic. How hard can it be? The young man thought to himself, as the group of girls asked him if he knew how to water ski and whether he would like to go. "Sounds great," he said pretending to know all about the experience. He had never been on skis, but avoided sharing that information and replaced it with a bold-faced lie: "I know how to do it." He had only himself to blame for what happened. After minutes of wriggling in the water he finally got the skis on, bent his knees, arm straight and nodded his head. Sure enough straight upon the skis he went, and he was skiing, first time. It was easy.

After about six seconds of glory and admiration from the girls in the boat, both skis flipped off, and he fell but failed to let go of the rope. After he lost his swimming trunks in the water he let go. When the boat drew nearer he screamed, "Stay there and throw me a towel." There were no words for his humiliation. He thought he knew enough, that the fact that he was athletic would be sufficient.

So did Peter; he was an expert fisherman. He knew there were no fish available for business in the afternoon. All wisdom and experience shouted "Don't do it. People are going to think you are crazy." The biggest three letter word in the world is but, Peter says to Jesus, "Master, we have toiled all night and caught nothing but because you say so, I will let the nets down."



These words were a watershed moment of submission in Peter's life. Let it be yours too. "I don't think this makes sense Lord, but because you say so I'll do it."

Adapted from RealTimeFaith.net (Teen Lessons)



God is the Source of Wisdom

Scripture: "Thy word have I hid in my heart that I may not sin against thee." Psalm 119:11

All his life Kevin wanted to be a chef. As a boy he would sit and daydream about being a famous chef. The day he became a certified chef was the happiest day of his life. His cookbook was never far from him. When people asked him why he always had that book with him, he would proudly state that he owed his present success of the cookbook. Little by little as Kevin became more experienced he set aside the cookbook. He started making his own recipes. He started reading other books and watching TV cooking shows. Eventually Kevin attended cooking society meetings less and less. Finally Kevin's interest in cooking waned.



Think of the cookbook as the Bible. Like Kevin we think we know how to run our lives better than God's way outlined in the Bible. As we continue to neglect the word of God we become cold and lose interest in spiritual matters. Before we know it we find ourselves outside of the church. However, if we take time to read and study God's Word, we will grow in wisdom, becoming more and more like Jesus each day until we resemble Him so closely, people will not have to ask if we are Christians.

Adapted from RealTimeFaith.net (Teen Lessons)



God is Gracious:

Scripture: "But He knows the way that I take; when He has tested me, I will come forth as gold." Job 23:10



Bill was a second lieutenant in the U.S. Army when he had his first drink. At 22 years of age he had a good career ahead of him and a loving girlfriend. He was well on his way to making a success from a life that had gotten off to a rough start. His father's alcoholism had broken up Bill's parents' marriage when he was just a kid, and he'd been raised by his grandparents. But it looked as if Bill would overcome that rough start until he found out that, just like his dad, he loved to drink.

By the time he was in his thirties Bill was a wreck. Whereas once he used to drink to celebrate a successful business deal, now he couldn't hold down a job. He and his wife were living in her parents' house because they couldn't afford a home of their own. Bill was so down and out that he sometimes begged on the street. He was hospitalized four times to try quit drinking.

One day Bill gave up. He admitted that he couldn't do anything to break the power of alcoholism in his life. It was up to God to help him out. He eventually founded the Organization Alcoholics Anonymous, which today has more than two million members in 150 countries. The first steps of the program are to admit that you are powerless over your problem and to ask a higher power for help.

As Christians, citizens of God's kingdom, we know God is our higher power. Alcoholics talk about having to hit rock bottom, even if that means begging for money on the street, before they realize how much they need help. But we're not all homeless or down-and-out. Many of us are pretty well-off, popular, clean-living people, aren't we? Do we all need to hit rock bottom before we can accept God's offer to help us?



God is Kind:

Scripture: "Hold them in the highest regard in love because of their work. Live in peace with each other." 1 Thessalonians 5:13

A teacher decided to honor each of her students by telling them the difference they had made in her life. She then presented each of them with a blue ribbon that read "Who I Am Makes a Difference." Afterward she decided to do a class project to see what kind of impact positive recognition would have on a community. She gave each of the students three more ribbons to go out and do the same for others. They were to follow up on the results, see who honored whom, and report back to the class.

One of the boys in the class went to a junior executive in a nearby company who had helped him with his career-planning project. The boy gave the junior executive a blue ribbon. Then he gave him two extra ribbons, and said, "We're doing a class project on recognition, and we would like you to go out and find someone to honor. Give them a blue ribbon, and then give them the extra ribbon so they can honor a third person. I'll call you in a few days to see what happened." Later that day the junior executive went to see his usually grouchy boss. He told his boss that he admired him for being a creative genius. The boss seemed very surprised. The junior executive asked him if he would accept the gift of the blue ribbon. His surprised boss said, "Well, sure." As he gave him the last extra blue ribbon, he said, "Would you do me a favor? Would you take this extra ribbon and pass it on by honoring somebody else? The young boy who first gave me the ribbons is doing a project in school, and we want to keep this going and find out how it affects people."

That night the boss came home to his 14 year old son and sat him down. He said, "The junior executive came in and told me he admired me and gave me a blue ribbon for being a creative genius. The he gave me this blue ribbon that says "Who I Am Makes a Difference." He gave me an extra ribbon and asked me to find somebody to honor. As I was driving home tonight, I started thinking about whom I would honor with this ribbon and I thought about you." "My days are really hectic, and when I get home I sometimes scream at you for not getting good enough grades and for your bedroom being a mess. But tonight I just want you to know that you do make a difference to me. Besides your mother, you are the most important person in my life. You are a great kid and I love you."



"Thanks Dad," the boy managed quietly. "I was just thinking about whether or not it was even worth living, since I didn't think I'd ever be able to please you and make you love me."



God is Your Guide

Scripture: "Whether you turn to the right or to the left, your ears will hear a voice behind you, saying, 'This is the way; walk in it.'" Isaiah 30:21

The little plane liked to day dream about his future. He would take people to exciting places all over the world. But one day he kind of got into a playful mood and, just on a lark, tried a barrel roll. It was fun, so he tried a loop the loop. This gave him a funny feeling in the pit of his baggage compartment, but he liked it. As it turned out, he became so interested in stunt flying that he lost interest in becoming an airliner.



"Who needs traffic control, anyway?" Cedric asked a friend one day. "All the tower does is give me a bunch of orders that I'm supposed to follow. It destroys my self-expression, my freedom!" So Cedric began to experiment more and more. He tried new techniques that caused dizziness in the control panel and a flopping sensation in the cargo hold. His friends worried about him, of course, and they warned him of the dangers of stunt flying. He heard occasionally of other aircraft that, while doing the stunts, had crashed into lakes or mountainsides.

"Just poor judgment," Cedric said, dismissing his friends' concerns. But then one day something happened to Cedric. No he didn't crash, as you might expect. Just as he was about to leave the airport for another afternoon of fun in the great blue sky, a trim Lear jet swooped seemingly out of nowhere and touched lightly down on the tarmac. The sleek, powerful jet happened to taxi right by Cedric as he was waiting for his turn to take off. There was something about the Lear jet that immediately caught the little airplane's attention. He had a purposeful look, an air about him that said he knew where he was going. "Where are you from?" Cedric asked in an attempt to make conversation. "Just in from London," the Lear jet answered. "And what a time was had there? Where are you off to?" Cedric gulped. For the first time in a long time he remembered his former goal of going to places like Tahiti and Rio de Janeiro and Beijing. He hadn't been as far as the city limits, much less to one of those exotic places on the map. "Just going for a little spin," he said. "No place special I'm going to try a few hammerhead stalls today." "Are you kidding?" the Lear jet asked. "And besides, there are places I want to go. The stunts may be thrilling for a while, but when you are through, you're right back at the same airport." Cedric hadn't ever thought about stunt flying that way before. He had to admit that barrel rolls weren't taking him anywhere he really wanted to go. And he also had to admit that stunts could be dangerous.

Cedric got a reality check that day! What has God got to do to get you to realize that God has great plans for you? He does not want you to drift through life aimlessly. `



God is the Giver of all Good Gifts

Scripture: "Just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ we who are many for one body, and each member belongs to all the others." Romans 12: 4-5

Devin feels that he isn't very good at any one thing. Some of his friends can sing, or speak, or are techies. Some are likable and friendly; everyone seems to contribute in some way. He just doesn't feel as if he is needed or useful.

As a result, he tends to be cynical about any service project or activity that meets the needs of people. If you had a friend who feels the way Devin feels how could you help to integrate him/her into activities that would help to change his/her feeling of uselessness?

Remember God is the giver of all good gifts. If you are unsure about your gifts you need to talk to God about it. It's not a question of "if" but "what" gift God has empowered you with.

You could be a good teacher helping to motivate others to learn. If you are a great organizer, there are plenty of activities and service projects to complete. If you have the gift of mercy and compassion, look around for those who are left out or are struggling, practice listening and letting them know you are there.





God is Your Loving Heavenly Father

Scripture: "Keep His commandments and laws and all will go well with you and your children after you, and you'll continue to live in this land which the Lord your God is giving you forever." Deuteronomy 4:40

Three carloads of family members waited at the airport for the newest child to arrive. The ten-month-old baby boy had traveled nonstop for the past twenty-four hours. Latvia, his country of birth was now a long way away, and his new parents eagerly waited for their son's arrival on the other side of the world.

The nurse carried the baby to the new mother's eager arms. The mother held the baby boy close, hardly seeing his chalk-colored cheeks, and the vacant look in his eyes. When she cooed into his ear, he didn't turn to look at her. He had no laughter and no tears. Life had been very hard in his few months of life.

The next day the infant visited the doctor's office. There the family learned the baby had a terrible, but treatable, ear infection. In a few days the effects of proper medicine and nutritious food could be seen on the baby's pink cheeks. Now his laughter was infectious, and he would turn his head and listen to his parents' loving words.

God has adopted you into His family. You are God's child! Your church members are your family. Just like this family made great preparation for this new addition to the family, in a similar manner God is eagerly awaiting your arrival to His heavenly home.





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