

Unit 25, Session 1: Jesus Met Nicodemus

John 3:1-21

Christ Connection:

Preschool: Jesus taught Nicodemus about God's kingdom. God loves the world, and He sent Jesus to earth to rescue people from sin. Jesus said that people who believe in Him will be with God forever.

Kids: Without Jesus, we are spiritually dead. Sin separates us from God. When people believe in Christ and are "born again," they receive new life and become God's children. Jesus offers new life to those who trust in Him for salvation.

Adult Connection Point: God is the most beautiful, the most righteous, the most everything good and pure. He created the heavens in all their complexity, visible and invisible, so that they would praise Him (Ps. 148). This began with the angels, who praised Him as He created and filled the earth (see Job 38:5-7). But He also created the earth, including humanity, so that His praise will resound eternally (see Ps. 19:1; Isa. 43:6b-7; Rev. 4:11). God created the heavens and all that is in them to display His glory and dominion through His kingdom. Humanity sinned against God, rebelling from His kingdom and seeking to build a kingdom of our own. The new birth, being "born again," enables us to live again in God's kingdom under His loving rule as He intended for humanity. That's why Jesus taught Nicodemus that sinful man must be born again in order to see and enter the kingdom of God (see John 3:3-8). Through the new birth we are made alive to see creation differently, namely as the theater of God's glory and as the realm in which His kingdom is to exist. Because Jesus' followers have been made alive to this reality, we are driven by the vision of God's power and love on display in the creation of the universe. What a privilege it is to praise the One who made us for His glory. Our mission is to spread the fame of His name.

Family Devotion:

Materials: flashlight, paper, pencil, small football (or wad of paper)

Before your family time, print John 3:16 on a piece of paper and locate a small football. For your devotional turn off the lights and use a flashlight to tell the story.

Ask: "What did Nicodemus have trouble understanding?"

Remark to your kids that Nicodemus did not understand Jesus' statement; "You must be born again." His answer was a radical concept and required each person to make a decision to follow Jesus. Just as you could not be born without a mother and dad, you cannot be born again on your own. You are born again only after trusting in Jesus for your salvation.

Encourage your children to ask questions. Remind them that Nicodemus asked Jesus questions when he did not understand what it meant to be born again. Emphasize that when one is born again he receives new life and becomes one of God's children.

Ask: "What well-known verse did you hear in these Bible passages?" Recite John 3:16 to your kids then practice it several times as a family.

During the week shout, "John 3:16" then throw the football (or wad of paper) to a family member. The individual should recite John 3:16. Keep practicing this verse each day until everyone in the family has it memorized.

Pray, asking God to help each of your family members to be born again. Pray specifically for those family members who are not saved.

Unit 25, Session 2: Jesus and John the Baptist

John 3:22-36

Christ Connection:

Preschool: God gave John the Baptist a special job. John told people, “Get ready for Jesus! Jesus is coming!” God sent Jesus to earth from heaven. When Jesus was older, He went out to teach people about God. Jesus was here, and John’s job was finished.

Kids: John the Baptist had told people to get ready for Jesus, the promised Messiah. Now that Jesus was there, John’s mission was complete. John the Baptist joyfully stepped aside as Jesus began His earthly ministry.

Adult Connection Point: Why did Jesus come as our Savior and Messiah? For one, because of humanity’s sin and rebellion against God and His kingdom. And furthermore, Scripture summarizes the mission of Jesus as coming “to destroy the works of the devil” (1 John 3:8). John the Baptist prepared the way for Jesus the Savior and Messiah. Jesus is not only the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world but brings about the kingdom of God on earth (see John 1:29-31; Mark 1:15; Luke 11:20; 17:20-21). Jesus’ death and resurrection rescues us from sin, but His work on our behalf also rescues us to something—namely to be servants in the kingdom of the Messiah. As Romans 6:11 teaches, we are now to consider ourselves “dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus.” Jesus rescues us from Satan’s kingdom and restores us to God’s kingdom (Col 1:13-14; cf. Acts 26:17-18).

God’s rule first came under attack with the rebellion of Satan and his angels, an event about which the Bible does not give us many details (see Isa. 14:12-15; Ezek. 28:11-19). Nevertheless, Satan in some ways prepared the way for the coming of human sin by his initial rebellion in heaven and subsequent temptation of Adam and Eve in the garden of Eden. Parallel to this, John the Baptist prepares the way for the One who will do away with sin by dying for it and rising from the dead to conquer it after having faithfully endured Satan’s temptations (see Matt. 4:1-11).

God has never been thwarted by Satan’s evil schemes. Before God even created the heavens or Satan himself, He planned to interpose Himself as the solution. He determined to come to the world He permitted to fall and execute a plan for a Savior He devised “before the foundation of the world” (Eph. 1:4). The result is that “at the name of Jesus every knee will bow...and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord” (Phil. 2:10-11). Satan’s puny revolt against heaven will, in God’s good time, give way to the final triumph of God’s beloved Son, the King of kings and Lord of lords (Rev. 19–22).

Family Devotion:

Materials: old wedding clothes/accessories to use as props, camera, wedding picture

Create a “photo booth” where the kids can try on your wedding clothes or accessories. Take several pictures in your “booth.”

Choose one of your children to recall the Bible story. Point to the wedding picture and find out how many of the individuals your kids can identify. Explain the roles of the maid of honor and best man.

Ask: “Define John’s role in Jesus’ life. What did John the Baptist compare this role to?”

Comment that John used the illustration of a wedding to define his role. In a wedding, the groom and bride are the center of attention. The guests come to see them. The best man’s role is to support the groom during the wedding. John’s role in Jesus’ life was very similar. John’s role was always to point the people to Jesus—the Messiah. Since Jesus’ earthly ministry had begun; John’s ministry was completed. This is what John meant when he said, “He must increase, but I must decrease.”

Ask: “How did John respond knowing his ministry was completed and Jesus’ ministry had begun?”

John responded by saying “this joy of mine is complete.” John joyfully stepped aside when his job was complete. As more and more people began to follow Jesus, John’s job became less important.

Pray, thanking God for sending you the Promised Messiah, Jesus, as He said He would do.

Unit 25, Session 3: Jesus Met a Samaritan Woman

John 4:1-26

Christ Connection:

Preschool: Jesus was different from other people on earth. He was kind to the woman at the well even though she didn’t have many friends. Jesus loves everyone, and He came to give people a free gift: salvation from sin.

Kids: Jesus offered the woman something no one else could give her—living water. Jesus wasn’t talking about water that she could physically drink; Jesus was talking about the Holy Spirit who would satisfy her spiritual thirst. Jesus gives the Holy Spirit to those who come to Him by faith.

Adult Connection Point: In speaking to the Samaritan woman at the well in John 4, Jesus shows us that the kingdom of God is meant to reach all the peoples of the world—Jew and Gentile, male and female. Being a Samaritan meant that the woman’s ancestors came from both Jews and non-Jews, thus causing many in her time to consider her unclean. The woman’s surprise that Jesus, a Jew, would even speak to her is expressed in John 4:9. Nevertheless, Jesus proves that people such as her can be a part of God’s kingdom by His offering of living water—i.e., the Holy Spirit—to her (see John 7:38-39). Just as the goodness of God’s creation extend over all over the world, including both genders, so too does the goodness of God’s new creation. God wants people from everywhere and anywhere to worship Him in spirit and truth (4:21-24). Jesus sends the Spirit to bring about the reality of worship among all peoples—Jew and Gentile, male and female (see Joel 2:28-29; Zech. 14:8). The work of Christ’s reconciliation applies to gender relations just as much as it does to any other human relationships that sin has distorted. Male and female best reflect God together. However badly the genders have treated each other, it is surely only when the two genders work together, whether in marriage or in broader culture, that the image of God is most fully expressed in us (Gen. 1:27). Consider the Voices quote below in view of this discussion.

Voices from the Church:

“In the garden of Eden, we see the world as God designed it to be. God’s people, Adam and Eve, live in God’s place, the garden, under his rule as they submit to his word. And to be under God’s rule in the Bible is always to enjoy his blessing; it is the best way to live. God’s original creation shows us a model of his kingdom as it was meant to be.”

–Vaughan Roberts, *God’s Big Picture* (Downers Grove: IVP, 2002), 23.

Family Devotion:

Materials: salty snack, iced water

Offer the salty snack as your kids arrive to devotional time (Save the water for the end). Review the story with your Bible open to John 4.

Ask: “How did the Jews relate to the Samaritans?” Recall in the Bible story how the Jews avoided them. They did not talk to Samaritans or even travel through their towns; instead they walked great distances to avoid them.

Read John 4:10 from your Bible. Remind your kids how in the story the Samaritan woman was confused at Jesus' answers about the living water. She thought He was referring to the water in the well--the same water He was drinking. This was not what Jesus meant, though, because one would still get thirsty after drinking it.

Ask: "What was Jesus referring to when he said, 'living water?'"

Connect the living water to the Holy Spirit. Jesus offered this "living water" to the Samaritan woman who most people ignored. She did not need another cup of drinking water, but rather she needed the Holy Spirit which Jesus gives to those who come to Him by faith. Her spiritual thirst (and yours) could only be quenched by a relationship with Jesus.

Provide iced water to your thirsty kids.

Pray, thanking God, that when you come to faith in Jesus you will never thirst again. Continue to pray for those family members who have not yet come to faith in Jesus.

Unit 25, Session 4: Rejection at Nazareth

Luke 4:16-30

Christ Connection:

Preschool: Long before Jesus was born, Isaiah the prophet talked about God's plan to send Jesus to earth. Jesus would bring good news and help people who were hurting. Jesus read Isaiah's words. Jesus said that He is the One God promised to send.

Kids: Hundreds of years before Jesus was born, the prophet Isaiah wrote about God's plan to send a Messiah. He would bring good news and redeem people who were broken and hurting. Jesus read Isaiah's words and told everyone who was listening that He is the promised Messiah.

Adult Connection Point: Consider the Voices quote below.

Much like humanity rejected God's rule over them in the garden of Eden, the people of Nazareth rejected Jesus' claims as Messiah (see Luke 4:28-30). This is to be expected since Scripture prophesied about the rejection of the Messiah (Ps. 2:1-3; 22; Isa. 53:7-8). Nevertheless, those who reject Jesus as Messiah are accountable for their unbelief and rebellion and thus excluded from the messianic kingdom (see Ps. 2:4-12; Luke 20:9-19). Paradise is lost when human beings rebel against God. Because of their rejection of God's good rule, the first humans are exiled from the garden of Eden. The good relationship between the King, His people, and the rest of creation is thrown into turmoil because of Adam and Eve's attempt to dethrone God. But God promises to reestablish His kingdom through a future King who will undo the curse that came as a result of sin. He is the Messiah of whom Isaiah the prophet said will preach good news to the poor, freedom to the captives, and recovery of sight to the blind (Luke 4:18-19). Those who submit to Jesus as Lord and Messiah will enjoy the healing and restoration found in His kingdom, whereas those who reject His rule remain in exile from God.

Voices from Church History:

"It is when man through selfish ambition seeks to be God in his own life and will that he sins. Sin is dethroning God and enthroning self."

—Herschel Hobbs (1907-1995), *The Baptist Faith and Message* (Nashville: Convention Press, 1971, revised 1996), 45.

Family Devotion:

Materials: maps--a state map with your town on it, a map of Israel in the time of Jesus (See the back of your

Bible.)

Display the state map and challenge your kids to find your hometown. Give some coordinates if it is a small town. Allow each child to tell something interesting about your hometown. Point to the Israel map and encourage your kids to find Nazareth.

Review the Bible story about Jesus' rejection by the people of Nazareth.

Ask: "What book of the Bible did Jesus read from the scroll and who did He speak about?"

Explain to your kids how Jesus read from the scroll of the prophet Isaiah. Recall how Isaiah had prophesied hundreds of years earlier that God would send His Son to redeem people who were broken and hurting. Jesus' ministry fulfilled these prophecies.

Ask: "Why do you think the people of Nazareth were angry with Jesus because he would not heal people in his own home town?"

Suggest they may have believed Jesus was no more than the son of Joseph, but Jesus was the Son of God. He was the promised Messiah they had been waiting for! Recall how Jesus showed that both Elijah and Elisha were not accepted in their home towns so they performed miracles elsewhere, too.

Pray, thanking God that He kept His promise to send a Messiah. Pray that God would redeem any family members or neighbors who are broken and hurting.

Unit 26, Session 1: Jesus Healed an Official's Son

John 4:46-54

Christ Connection:

Preschool: Jesus saved a boy from dying. Then the boy's father knew who Jesus is: the Savior God promised. Jesus said that the boy was healed, and the father believed Him. Jesus showed that He is powerful. Jesus is God's Son.

Kids: The official wanted Jesus to save his son from death, and it was not until Jesus did so that he understood who Jesus is: the promised Messiah. It took faith for the official to believe Jesus' words—that his son was healed. In healing the official's son, Jesus showed His authority and power as God's Son.

Adult Connection Point: Consider the Voices quote below. Jesus is the King who not only comes to rule but to transform His people and to bring healing in His midst. We need not only a permanent and just Ruler but also One who can rid our hearts of rebellion and restore us from sin's maladies. In the Book of Judges, the Israelites did what was right in their own eyes, leading to an ongoing cycle of sin, judgment, and deliverance. God raised up deliverers who brought temporary peace but ultimately demonstrated their own need for salvation. The Book of Judges shows us the idolatry that results from rejecting God's authority. As those who follow King Jesus, we are freed from this pattern of sin and empowered to do what is right in God's eyes. In John 4:46-54, the account of the official's son whom Jesus heals, we see a faith that both submits to Jesus' messianic authority and trusts in His redemptive kindness. In Jesus, we find the kind of Ruler whom we need—One who reigns justly and heals graciously.

Voices from the Church:

“The ultimate deliverer, Jesus Christ, has no flaws. So his rescue of those who believe in him is complete and everlasting.”

–Michael Williams, *How to Read the Bible Through the Jesus Lens* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012), 39.

Family Devotion:

Materials: chair, cushions

Plan a trust fall game. Guide each child to stand on the chair while placing the cushions behind it on the floor. Family members should stand on either side to catch the child as he falls backwards. Give a signal so the child knows when to fall. Do this with each child in the family.

Review the story with your Bible open to John 4.

Ask: “How did Jesus answer the man when he asked him to come heal his son?”

Recall how Jesus said that many people insisted on seeing miracles before they would believe Jesus was God’s Son. In this case, because the father believed, Jesus healed his son to reveal Himself as the Son of God. Jesus spoke the words so his son would live.

Discover how many of your kids believed the family would catch them during the activity. After Jesus spoke the words “your son will live,” the official believed Jesus. He took a step of faith and trusted Jesus to do what He said He would do. When the official arrived home his son was alive and had been healed the very hour Jesus spoke these words!

Review the Christ Connection by reminding your kids that the official had faith in Jesus because He had the authority and was God’s Son. You can trust Jesus for the same reasons.

Pray, thanking God for sending Jesus. Ask Him to help your family trust Jesus more.

Unit 26, Session 2: Jesus Drove Out Evil Spirits

Mark 1:21-28; Luke 4:31-37

Christ Connection:

Preschool: Jesus made evil spirits go away because He is more powerful than evil. One day, Jesus will come back and make all bad things go away forever.

Kids: Jesus is the King who has come to make all things right. By commanding the evil spirit to come out of the man, Jesus showed He has power over all our enemies. One day Jesus will take away Satan, sin, and death once and for all.

Adult Connection Point: Consider the Voices quote below. Israel wanted a king for the wrong reasons. One of those reasons is that they desired someone who would go before them and fight their battles on their behalf, something that God had already promised to do for them (see 1 Sam. 8:19-22; Deut. 3:21-22). While the Old Testament presents the surrounding nations as the primary enemies of the people of Israel, the Gospels provide us with glimpse of another kind of enemy—namely unclean spirits or demons. In Luke 4:31-37, we see that Jesus’ authority extends over even the spiritual world with His command for the demon to be silent and to leave the man’s presence. The crowd responded accordingly: “Amazement came over them all, and they kept saying to one another, ‘What is this message? For He commands the unclean spirits with authority and power, and they

come out!” (4:36). Jesus’ display of His authority over demons and the spiritual world is meant to evoke in us wonder, worship, and trust. His spiritual authority is meant to win our hearts.

God is fighting for our hearts—the ultimate fight. And we need a King who will win the ultimate fight. God’s plan is to offer us the true King, the King of kings, but because He wants to win our hearts, the pathway to providing us that true King will be through countless lesser kings.

Voices from Church History:

“Authority to be lasting must be of the same order as that of Jesus Christ, not the authority of autocracy or coercion, but the authority of worth, to which all that is worthy in a man bows down. It is only the unworthy in a man that does not bow down to worthy authority.”

—Oswald Chambers (1874-1917), in *The Quotable Oswald Chambers*, comp. and ed. David McCasland (Grand Rapids: Discovery House, 2008), 21.

Family Devotion:

Materials: none needed

Direct your family to go outside then prompt them to command objects in your backyard to perform an action. For example, you could stand by a tree and command it to drop all its leaves. Allow each family member to try a command.

Act out the Bible story by choosing one family member to play the man with the evil spirit and the other to play Jesus. Read the narrative pausing at certain spots so the child can act or speak the part.

Ask: “What was wrong with the man who shouted at Jesus and what did He say about Him?”

Comment that the man had an evil spirit in him. Remind your kids that evil spirits oppose God. This evil spirit knew Jesus was the Holy One of God. Recall how Jesus commanded the evil spirit to come out of the man and the evil spirit obeyed!

Ask: “What was the response of the people after they saw this?” The people were amazed because they had never seen anything like this. No one had ever commanded an evil spirit and the spirit obey. Jesus showed He is King and has power over all our enemies. One day Jesus will take away Satan, sin, and death once and for all.

Praise God and thank Him for giving Jesus authority over Satan, sin, and death!

Unit 26, Session 3: Jesus Healed Peter’s Mother-in-Law

Matthew 8:14-17; Mark 1:29-31; Luke 4:38-39

Christ Connection:

Preschool: Peter’s mother-in-law showed she was thankful to Jesus by serving Him. When God created the world, He did not make sickness. Sickness came when sin entered the world, but Jesus came to take away sin. We can thank Jesus for saving us from sin. We can love Jesus and obey Him.

Kids: The prophet Isaiah wrote that the promised Messiah would bear our sickness and carry our pain. Jesus fulfilled this prophecy as He healed people. Sickness exists because the world is broken by sin. One day, when Jesus returns, there will be no more sickness because Jesus dealt with sin on the cross.

Adult Connection Point: Much like the Israelites we sometimes want a king who wins the big battles for us, but in our perhaps mistaken estimation of what constitutes as the “big battles,” we lose sight that Jesus not only

came to rescue us from sin but that He also relieves us of the ongoing symptoms of sin such as sickness and fever (see Matt. 8:17). As David did not meet worldly expectations for a conquering king (see 1 Sam. 6:6-13), sometimes neither do the Gospels' portrayal of Jesus' healings match what we think is fitting for the coming of a messianic King. Nonetheless, the Gospels' writers included accounts such as the healing of Peter's mother-in-law to highlight Jesus' compassion for those who suffer from sin's effects on the world. Jesus' authority over the woman's fever—Luke 4:39 says that He rebuked it—portrays the all-encompassing nature of His mission to conquer sin. In light of Jesus' authority over our sicknesses and His willingness to heal us, we like Peter's mother ought to respond by rising and serving Him (Luke 4:39). Consider the following Voices quote.

Voices from the Church:

“It is often in our weaknesses that God's strength is most clearly perceived, and it is often in doing something the world sees as backwards that we are taking spiritual steps forward.”

—Trevin Wax, *Holy Subversion*, (Wheaton: Crossway, 2010), 127.

Family Devotion:

Play a game of charades where each family member acts out a different illness. Some ideas could be a broken limb, fever, stomachache, cold, earache, etc. The family should guess each illness acted out.

Review the Bible story about the healing of Peter's mother-in-law.

Ask: “What happened after Jesus healed Peter's mother-in-law?”

Remark how after Jesus touched Peter's mother-in-law she was completely healed, got up, and served Jesus and the others. That evening many more lined up at the door for healing. Some came to be free of evil spirits, and some who were sick hoped to be healed.

Read Isaiah 53:4. Connect this verse with what is happening in the Bible story. Explain that Jesus was fulfilling Isaiah's prophecy. Jesus performed these healings so that Isaiah's words would come true and people would know He was the promised Messiah. Remind your kids that sickness exists today because the world is broken by sin. One day, when Jesus returns, there will be no more illness because Jesus dealt with it on the cross.

Ask: “Who are some people you know who are sick and need Jesus' healing?”

Pray, thanking God for the times He has healed your family members. Pray for any family member or friends who are ill and need His healing.

Unit 26, Session 4: Jesus Cleansed a Leper **Matthew 8:1-4; Mark 1:40-45; Luke 5:12-16**

Christ Connection:

Preschool: The man with the skin disease had to stay away from his friends and family. Jesus helped the man. Jesus touched the man and healed him. Sin is like a disease that keeps us away from God, but Jesus will take away our sin if we ask Him.

Kids: Not only did Jesus have the power to make a leper clean, He was willing to make him clean. Like the disease of leprosy, sin deeply affects all people and makes them spiritually dead. Jesus willingly died on the cross and rose from the dead to save us from our sin and give us new life.

Adult Connection Point: God’s people needed a true king who would also be a true shepherd—one who points a guilty people deserving of banishment to the grace, forgiveness, and love of God. God’s kind of king rightly shows us God’s holiness and the wrath of God set against us, but God’s shepherd lays down his life instead to receive that wrath so that God’s people might be saved. God’s shepherd does not overlook lepers but heals them (see Luke 5:12-16).

And who is this true king who’s also God’s shepherd? It’s Jesus, the Good Shepherd who lays down His life for His sheep (John 10:11-15). It’s Jesus, the One who took on our weaknesses and carried our diseases (Matt. 8:17; cf. Isa. 53:4).

Furthermore, Jeremiah’s “nor will any be missing” (Jer. 23:4) is a pointer to this Good Shepherd who would leave the 99 to go get the 1. Maybe you’re feeling like that “1” today. You feel as though the justice and righteousness of God is against you; you see the “99” who seem like they have it all together, but they don’t. Each of the “99” is the “1” whom Jesus went after, and He will come after you too. And when He comes to find you exactly where you are and you’re gathered in from the exile, know that there will be a great party thrown in heaven for you (Luke 15:6-7). Have faith in Jesus to care for you. Cry out like the leper, “Lord, if you are willing, You can make me clean” (5:12).

Family Devotion:

Materials: washable markers

Using washable markers, allow family members to draw skin “diseases” on each others arms or legs. Go ahead walk around the living area yelling “Unclean.” Ask your kids how it felt to be identified as unclean.

Review the Bible story sharing how Jesus willingly healed the leper.

Ask, “What are some things we learned in the story about the effects of the disease called leprosy?”

Review how the man with leprosy had to leave the village, tear his clothes, cover his mouth and yell “unclean.” This person had to remain isolated until the disease went away.

Ask: “What specific instructions did Jesus give the leper after he was healed?”

Comment how Jesus ordered the man to do three things: 1) Don’t tell anyone. 2) Go to the priest. 3) Make the appropriate sacrifice.

Summarize the Christ Connection by explaining that like leprosy, sin is disease that keeps us away from God. Jesus, though, has the power and authority to heal us of our sin and diseases. He willingly healed the leper and willingly went to the cross for our sin so we could have a new life with Him.

Pray, thanking God that Jesus went to the cross for our sin so we could be close to Him and have new life in Him.

Unit 26, Session 5: Four Friends Helped **Matthew 9:1-8; Mark 2:1-12; Luke 5:17-26**

Christ Connection:

Preschool: The man who could not walk needed help. He needed to be healed. First, Jesus forgave the man’s sins. Jesus showed that He can forgive sins because He is God. Then Jesus healed the man so he could walk.

Jesus has the power to heal and to forgive sins.

Kids: The man who was paralyzed needed to be healed. Jesus knew this and did something even greater; Jesus forgave his sins, and then He healed the man. Because Jesus is God, He has the power and authority to heal and forgive. Jesus offers forgiveness to those who trust in Him.

Adult Connection Point: Consider the Voices quote below. Jesus proclaims the good news of the kingdom by calling disciples and healing the sick. Christ's life shows us the upside-down nature of God's kingdom and challenges us to adopt a mission-focused perspective on life. In the case of the paralytic man in Matthew 9:1-8, a worldly perspective would dictate that we see the man's most pressing need to be his need for working limbs. Jesus, though, knows differently. What is backwards to the world is straightforward to the kingdom. This man, like everyone else of us no matter of our level of physical handicap, needs his sins forgiven. No small feat in itself, Jesus' subsequent healing of the paralytic's body does not point to itself but to something, namely Jesus' identity and His mission. The man's bodily healing was done "so that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins" (9:6).

Jesus here once again emphasized the upside-down nature of the kingdom come near. Humility, meekness—these were the characteristics of this King. Bending low for the lowly that they may be lifted up from death to life. Jesus' healings, though examples of compassion in themselves, are attached to His missional purpose of redeeming the world from sin.

Voices from the Church:

"[The gospel of the kingdom] is the good news that life with God under the rule of God is available to all who would turn from their rebellion and trust in King Jesus."

—Daniel Montgomery and Mike Cospers, *Faithmapping* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2013), 43.

Family Devotion:

Materials: sheet, balloon

Lead your family outdoors to perform the activity. Instruct each family member to hold on to the edge of the sheet then place the inflated balloon in the center. Guide your family around the perimeter of your house at the same time keeping the balloon on the sheet.

After the task is completed, review the Bible story of the four men who helped the paralyzed man.

Ask: "What did Jesus say after seeing the paralyzed man lowered through the roof?"

Comment that upon seeing the four friends' faith, Jesus said, "Your sins are forgiven." The scribes and Pharisees were thinking only God could forgive sins and that Jesus was disrespectful to God.

Read Luke 5:23-24 to remind your kids of Jesus reply. To prove He was God's Son and had the power to forgive sins, Jesus did the harder work first of forgiving the man of his sins. Next he healed the man of his paralysis. The man walked away forgiven and healed.

Ask: "How did the man respond to God's forgiveness and healing?"

Remind your kids that the man did what Jesus commanded; he picked up his mat and went home glorifying God.

Close your time by singing along with one of the worship songs from this fall.

Pray, thanking God for giving Jesus has the authority to forgive our sins and heal our bodies.

Unit 26, Session 6: Jesus Healed a Man's Hand
Matthew 12:9-14; Mark 3:1-6; Luke 6:6-11

Christ Connection:

Preschool: Jesus healed a man's hand on the Sabbath even though the religious leaders thought He shouldn't. Jesus showed that God gives us rules to help us, not to hurt us. The religious leaders made a plan to kill Jesus, but God planned to use Jesus' death to help people by saving them from their sin.

Kids: Jesus showed that God's laws were meant to help people, not to hurt them. Jesus acted in love, even on the Sabbath. The religious leaders planned to kill Jesus. They did not know Jesus was going to die to show God's love to the whole world. God provided forgiveness and salvation through Jesus' death on the cross.

Adult Connection Point: Jesus' healing of the man's hand on the Sabbath highlighted the difference between His ministry and that of the Pharisees. Jesus' ministry was done in kingdom power toward the service of others while the Pharisees threw around their religious weight to assert their moral superiority over others. Jesus pointedly asked the question, "Is it lawful on the Sabbath to do what is good or to do what is evil, to save life or to destroy it?" Jesus realized that the Sabbath was made for human flourishing, not to prevent it. Between the Pharisees and Jesus, we see the contrast between worldly and kingdom power. In fact, the Pharisees plotted how to kill Jesus as a result of this event (see Matt. 12:9-14; Mark 3:1-6).

Jesus is the King who willingly died for His people. In His death and resurrection, we see the difference between the power of the world and the power of the kingdom. Because the power of God's kingdom comes from God and is established through Christ's sacrifice, we are freely given life.

Oh, the beauty of the cross! For the Jewish leaders, this crucifixion would prove this King was nothing more than a lowly criminal. For Jesus, this crucifixion would prove the love of an innocent King dying in the place of lowly sinners. The tool the Romans and religious leaders used to kill Jesus in order to maintain their positions of power was the very tool Jesus used to overcome the deadly consequences of humanity's quest for power. Consider the "His Mission, Your Mission" quote below in view of this discussion.

His Mission, Your Mission:

"Here is Jesus. He is the Creator, the Savior, and the King of Kings. And now the one who had everything, made himself nothing. He, who had the world at his feet, chose to come and wash the feet of the world."

—Kyle Idleman, *Not a Fan* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2011), 160.

Family Devotion:

Materials: soccer ball, sticks (or stakes)

Create a boundary around your front or back yard with the sticks. Instruct the kids to stay within the boundaries while you play soccer. After a few minutes of playing, discuss why the boundaries are needed for the game.

Hold your devotional outside or go inside to review the Bible story.

Ask: "What example did Jesus give when the Pharisees asked him if it was okay to heal on the Sabbath?"

Comment that Jesus told a story of how the religious leaders would assist a sheep who had fallen in a ditch and get it to safety on the Sabbath, but they did not think it right to heal a man. "A man is more important than a sheep," Jesus said. He was showing them through this illustration that God's laws were meant to help people, not hurt them, even on the Sabbath.

Ask: "How did the leaders respond after Jesus healed the man with the paralyzed hand?"

Comment how the leaders were angry with Jesus for healing the man's hand. Not only were the religious leaders

angry, but they were planning to kill Him. They did not realize this was part of God's plan, though. Jesus would have to die to show God's love for the whole world.

Pray, thanking God for providing forgiveness and salvation through Jesus' death on the cross.

Unit 27, Session 1: The Sermon on the Mount

Matthew 5–7

Christ Connection:

Preschool: The religious leaders looked like good people, but Jesus knew what they were thinking. They were not doing good things for the right reasons. Jesus taught about doing right things for the right reasons. God changes people who know and love Jesus so they want to honor Him and do what is right.

Kids: The scribes and Pharisees looked righteous on the outside, but Jesus taught His disciples about a righteousness that comes from the inside. People who know and love Jesus have changed hearts that want to honor Jesus.

Adult Connection Point: We see a stark difference between the religiosity of the Jewish leaders of the first century and the emboldened witness of the early disciples. One group did things for the sake of outward appearance while the other group did things for the sake of Jesus. Notice in Acts 4:13 how God's people were recognized by their proximity and connection to Jesus. The religious leaders took note that "they had been with Jesus." What a significant thing to say about someone whose life is surrendered to Jesus! Our allegiance to Jesus is not only declared but also displayed. Kingdom people don't just say they have a King; they claim to actually know the King.

In Acts 4:18-22, the religious leaders threatened Peter and John, telling them not to preach the message of the resurrection any longer. Peter and John replied that they could not help but speak of that which they had seen and heard. They disregarded the threat not because they were revolutionary mavericks but because they were resurrected men. Their ultimate allegiance was to Jesus. They couldn't help speaking of the kingdom of God because it had invaded every area of their lives. The religious leaders behaved the way they did because of their peers whereas the early disciples behaved as they did despite what their "peers" told them to do. What we have on display is the vast difference between the external religiosity of the Jewish leaders and the gospel-empowered devotion of the apostles.

Whose we are is more significant than who we are. Whose we are defines our identity. Whose we are shapes our priorities. Whose we are determines our activity. Whose we are strengthens our security. Whose we are transforms intimidation and threats into initiative and mission. We are emboldened because of Whose we are.

Family Devotion:

Materials: newspaper or magazines, scissors, paper, marker

Instruct your family to cut out pictures of individuals with distinct facial features. Prompt your kids to guess the kind of person he or she is according to the face.

Retell the Bible story. With your kids help, list as many life lessons Jesus taught on the paper.

Ask: "What did Jesus say about the scribes and Pharisees and how they live?"

Remark that the scribes and Pharisees were only worried about what others thought so they appeared righteous on the outside. The kind of righteousness Jesus offered or taught could not be produced on the outside unless the person was following Jesus. Loving your enemies or forgiving others is impossible to do on your own, but when you follow Jesus you will be given the courage and strength to do these things.

Ask: “Of all the different lessons on the list which do you find hardest to do?” Take time to talk through these lessons and during your prayer ask God for help in whatever issues come up.

Remind your kids that it is not how we look on the outside or what we do for others to see that is important to God. Rather, when you follow Jesus, He will change your heart so you do what He asks you to do.

Pray, thanking God for changing your heart so you can follow His teachings. Ask for help in any areas of your kids’ lives where they struggle.

Unit 27, Session 2: Parable of the Sower **Matthew 13:1-23; Mark 4:1-20; Luke 8:4-15**

Christ Connection:

Preschool: Not everyone who hears about Jesus believes in Him. Some people don’t understand Jesus or they think they are happy without Him. People who hear the gospel—the good news about Jesus—and believe in Him will be blessed.

Kids: Not everyone believes the truth about Jesus. Some don’t understand it, some believe in Jesus for selfish reasons, and some only want part of Jesus because they love other things more. But those who hear the gospel and understand who Jesus is will become like Jesus and share His good news with others.

Adult Connection Point: As Jesus’ people, we are a privileged people. We are not only called to be bold messengers of the kingdom of God, but we are also recipients of grace through our being brought into the kingdom. When asked why He taught in parables, Jesus gave His disciples the following reason: “The secrets of the kingdom of God have been given for you to know, but to the rest it is in parables, so that looking they may not see, and hearing they may not understand” (Luke 8:10; cf. Isa. 6:9). Where God’s revelation functions as mercy to some, it can function as a form of judgment to others. It is by God’s grace that we are the ones of the “good ground” who hear God’s word, hold on to it, and endure by bearing fruit (Luke 8:15).

Since the church is a sign and instrument of the kingdom of God, constituted and commissioned by Jesus Christ (1 Pet. 2:1-10), we should bear in mind that we are those who have entered the kingdom by grace as are those who hear the good news preached from our lips and in turn respond in faith and repentance. We cannot ensure that someone with whom we share the gospel is of the “good ground” rather than the other three types of soils in Jesus’ parable (see Luke 8:4-8, 11-15), but we nonetheless seek to scatter the seed that is the word of God (8:11). Through spreading the good news and doing good works (1 Pet. 2:11-17), we show the world the reality of God’s kingdom. Our common life together in worship and in the world is a testimony to our faith in the gospel. And God can use our preaching of the good news and doing good works to place our family members, friends, and neighbors amongst the good ground. Consider the Voice quote below in light of this discussion.

Voices from the Church:

“The church is the public face of the gospel.”

—Michael Bird, *Evangelical Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2013), 705.

Family Devotion:

Materials: seeds

Gather your family outside. Clear a small patch of land for your seed. Hand a seed packet or some seeds to each child and allow them to plant the seed. Demonstrate covering the seed with soil then water. During the week,

check on the progress of the seed making sure it is watered.

Re-tell the Bible story of the parable of the sower. Consider acting out each of the different seeds.

Ask: “What happened to each of the four seeds in Jesus’ story?”

Review the four types of seeds. Some were eaten by birds and did not grow. Some fell on rocky soil and sprouted early but died. Others were choked by thorns. Some survived and grew because of the good soil.

Ask: “What is Jesus trying to teach from this parable?”

Remind your kids how Jesus used parables to help us understand God’s kingdom. In this particular parable, Jesus is showing the different ways people heard the truth about Jesus. Only the person who hears and accept God’s truth will find it growing in their lives.

Pray, asking God to help your kids hear and understand God’s truth so they can grow to be like Jesus and share this truth with others.

Unit 27, Session 3: Three Parables

Luke 15

Christ Connection:

Preschool: Jesus told stories about people who were looking for things that were lost. Jesus told these stories to teach about Himself. Jesus looks for people who are lost, people who do not know Him. Jesus gave His life to save people from sin.

Kids: A shepherd was seeking his sheep, a woman was seeking her coin, and a father was seeking his prodigal son. Jesus told these parables to teach about Himself. As Savior, Jesus seeks sinners. He paid the ultimate price—His own life—to save people from sin.

Adult Connection Point: Jesus Christ will return as conquering King to make everything right. In the final book of the Bible, we catch a glimpse of the future when King Jesus returns to the earth to judge the living and the dead. As all of heaven celebrates Jesus and His work, His people—the bride—are welcomed to His table for a celebratory feast. In the end, Jesus promises to defeat evil and rule with His people forever. In anticipation of His coming, we worship Jesus, prepare ourselves spiritually, and witness to His reign.

In the three parables of Luke 15, Jesus told us His hearers that retrieving lost sinners brings joy to heaven (v. 7,10,24,32). In fact, in the case of the prodigal son, Jesus used the throwing of a celebratory feast to illustratively represent heaven’s joy over the repentance of sinners. Accordingly, the apostle John wrote of a vision of the ultimate celebration of Christ’s retrieving lost sinners with his description of the marriage feast of the Lamb (Rev. 19:6-10). God’s people are a bride-to-be, the wife of the Lamb (Rev. 19:7), and the bride includes those welcomed to the feast. They are those who believe the Groom loved them first and whose response of love endured the seductive attempts of the notorious prostitute as well as the long wait for the Groom’s return (see Rev. 18). Because what was once lost was found and the bride and Groom have been united together forever, there will be much to celebrate on that day (and plenty to celebrate in the meantime as well). On this day, we will eat, drink, and be merry because we will never die (see 1 Cor. 15:32)! When Christ returns and establishes His kingdom in its fullness, the ransomed church will be forever free from sin and able to enjoy her loving Husband and faithful Head. Consider the Voices quote below.

Voices from the Church:

“The return of Christ will signal not only the Father rescuing his children but also the Bridegroom rescuing his bride. As the church, we’re part of the ultimate Cinderella story—rescued from a home where we labor, often without appreciation or reward. One day we’ll be taken into the arms of the Prince and whisked away to live in his palace.”

—Randy Alcorn, *Heaven* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale, 2004), 199.

Family Devotion:

Materials: dollar bills or large coins (as many as the number of kids you have)

Before your devotional time, hide the dollar bills in the house. When it is time to meet, instruct your kids to each find one dollar bill and bring it back to the group. If you have a preschooler, give clues to guide the child closer to the money.

Prompt your kids to recall the three different parables and what or who was lost in each.

Ask: “What is a common theme between the three parables?”

Remark how the shepherd celebrated with friends and neighbors when the one lost sheep was found. The woman celebrated with her neighbors when the lost coin was found, and the father celebrated with friends and family when his lost son returned. In all three cases something was lost then found. When the item was located and the son returned, the celebrations included others.

Conclude your devotional time by reiterating the Christ Connection. Remind your kids that Jesus came to seek the lost—one still lost in sin. Not only does Jesus seek the lost, but He also saves. He paid the ultimate price—His own life, to save the lost.

Rejoice over your family’s salvations by singing and moving to a praise song from this quarter’s song selection. Pray, thanking God for seeking and saving your family. Ask God to save other family members who are still lost in sin.