For Such a Time as This: The Apostle Paul

Surveying the Source

Plotting the Course
The students will:
► Identify the similarities between their experiences with God’s call to servanthood and Paul’s experiences.
► Recognize the true Source of Paul’s talent and leadership in the church.
► Respond to God’s call to work for Him with surrender, trust, and dependence on His power.

Preparing to Lead
Paul was a high-profile leader who made a drastic U-turn to follow God’s calling to servanthood in His worldwide business of saving souls. We are called to work in the same business. Responding to a call from God to serve Him is something each one of us goes about in our own way, but it’s the same high calling.

“Not . . . all are called to be ministers or missionaries in the ordinary sense of the term; but all may be workers with Him in giving the ‘glad tidings’ to their fellow men. To all, great or small, learned or ignorant, old or young, the command is given.”

Getting Started
A. Print from online Web sources pictures of various people who have accepted the call to serve. Some more famous names include Paul, Moses, Esther, Martin Luther, Martin Luther King, Albert Schweitzer, Mother Teresa, Jimmy Carter, Hannah Whitehall Smith.

Display these pictures, and ask your class to think of some names of people they know of today who have accepted a call to serve God in some way. Ask:
● “What is a calling?” ● “Why do these names impress us as persons who have been called to serve?” ● “Have any of you felt a call to serve in a particular field?”
Take time to share some experiences.
B. Tell the story of Gladys Aylward, missionary to China. (See http://www.tlogical.net/bioaylward.htm for her biography.) Ask: “How do we know if we are called to serve?” With your class, read Mark 16:15 in the context of the quote in the “Preparing to Lead” section. Say: “It is evident that we are all called. But how do we know what we are called to do?” Discuss their answers.

Delving Into the Word
A. Divide a chalkboard into two sections, and divide your class into two groups. Ask one group to study Acts 5:34; 22:3, 4; 8:1–3; and 9:1, 2, and make a list of Paul’s qualifications from a human point of view. Ask a spokesperson to
write the list on one side of the board. Ask the second group to study Acts 9:3–30; 11:25–30; 13:1–12; 2 Cor. 3:4–6; and 12:6–12, and make a second list on the other side of the board regarding Paul’s qualifications from a spiritual point of view and the church’s point of view. Ask: ●“What did Paul feel about his human credentials?” ●“What did he feel were his true credentials?”

Give each class member a blank sheet of paper, and ask them to write out a similar set of lists for themselves. What are their credentials from the viewpoint of the world? What are their credentials from a spiritual point of view?

B. Compare Jesus and Paul’s attitude to being a servant. Study with your class Matthew 24:36; John 13:3–17; John 14:28; John 15:9–17; and Philippians 2:5–8 in regard to Jesus’ attitude toward servanthood. See Romans 1:1 and 2 Corinthians 4:5–12 about Paul’s attitude toward being a servant.

Brainstorm with your class about how Christ took the place as a servant to the Father and to us. Say: “Paul called himself a servant of Christ, but also a servant of the church. How did Paul take the servant role?”

Say: “After the Last Supper, Christ said that His disciples were no longer servants but friends [read John 15:15–17 to your class]. The intimacy of Christ with the Father and of Christ with us that He mentions repeatedly throughout John 3 to 17 is not a relationship usually thought of as one of servanthood.” Discuss with your class how to understand this paradox.

Discussing the Ideas

1. What role has recommendations from church leaders played in directing our understanding of our calling? What role did such recommendations have in Paul’s early ministry? (See Acts 9:3–30; 11:25–30; 13:1–12.) Discuss class experiences in serving the church in the context of the following quote: “The church is organized for service; and in a life of service to Christ, connection with the church is one of the first steps. Loyalty to Christ demands the faithful performance of church duties. This is an important part of one’s training; and in a church imbued with the Master’s life, it will lead directly to effort for the world without.”

2. How did the maid of Namaan’s wife, captured slave that she was, minister as a missionary? (See 2 Kings 5.) How about Joseph? What other servant missionaries are there in the Bible?

3. Isaiah 6 and Jeremiah 1 describe the calls of two important prophets. Sometimes a specific call to duty in God’s service comes very clearly and early in life. But not all calls are as definitive. Considering that we are all called, how do we know what we are called to do?

Closing the Activity

Have each class member do the reproducible activity on page 31.

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2. Ibid., pp. 268, 269.
The following quote from E. G. White’s *Education*, page 57, is one of her better known passages. The second paragraph may not be as familiar as the first, but it is critical for a correct understanding of the previous lines. In the space after the quote, rewrite both paragraphs in personal terms, using your own name and pronouns that refer to yourself. Then complete the sentence following your rewrite.

“The greatest want of the world is the want of men—men who will not be bought or sold, men who in their inmost souls are true and honest, men who do not fear to call sin by its right name, men whose conscience is as true to duty as the needle to the pole, men who will stand for the right though the heavens fall.

“But such a character is not the result of accident; it is not due to special favors or endowments of Providence. A noble character is the result of self-discipline, of the subjection of the lower to the higher nature—the surrender of self for the service of love to God and man.”

*Complete the following sentence:* I can help supply the greatest need of the world by being a person who will . . .
“All Things to All People”: Paul Preaches to the World

Surveying the Source

Plotting the Course
The students will:
► See the importance of knowing the distinctive truths of our Christian faith.
► Learn the importance of knowing the basic beliefs of other faiths and philosophies.
► Gain conviction and confidence to share Christ with others.

Preparing to Lead
From Paul we can learn how to share Christ in a pluralistic world. He stood in the face of contradictory Roman mythologies and clearly presented Christ as Lord. He was effective because he understood their beliefs. If we are to be effective in reaching others for Christ, we need not only to understand our own faith, but also to have a working knowledge of other belief systems and to anticipate the objections and assumptions we will confront.

Getting Started
A. Prepare two T-charts on the chalkboard or flipchart to fill in as the discussion progresses. Across the top list the five major religions: Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, and Buddhism. A second list should include major philosophies that impact today’s global culture: Humanism, Relativism, Syncretism, and Existentialism. Ask the students to identify the beliefs of the major worldviews. Keep “Christianity” for last. Once this list is complete, discuss the commonalities among the different worldviews. Then note the distinctions.
B. Before class, ask 3–5 people to participate as panelists. Panelists may be from your class, church, workplace, or community who are converts to Christianity, or who have a good understanding of philosophy and comparative religions. The topic will be: Evangelizing in a Global Culture.
List the information that comes from the panel discussion about major worldviews and Christianity. The panel should offer a more modern simulation of how Paul debated with the philosophers in Athens and the Jews in the synagogue. Include ideas or role-play about how to witness for Christ in this world culture.

Delving Into the Word
A. Have a student read Acts 17:16–34 to the class. Ask: “What clues do you see in these verses that indicate the philosophers disliked Paul and his message? Were they true seekers?” ●“How did Paul respond to their skepticism?” (Acts 17:18–34)
real and vibrant relationship with the living Lord Jesus. At the center of our Christian belief is Christ Himself. If Jesus is not who He said He is and did not do what He said He did, then we have no hope and no salvation. This belief drives us back into the world, not to conquer the lost, but to win them to Him.”

Close with prayer after challenging the class to consider what they are willing to sacrifice for the sake of the gospel.

Distribute the reproducible sheet on page 32. Ask the students to review each box and then to reflect on the following:

1. Think about non-Christians you know. What do they believe about Jesus?
2. How have you tried to show them Jesus’ true identity?

Share this closing thought: “Paul willingly endangered his life and endured persecution, because for Him, Christianity wasn’t just another religion. It was a real and vibrant relationship with the living Lord Jesus. At the center of our Christian belief is Christ Himself. If Jesus is not who He said He is and did not do what He said He did, then we have no hope and no salvation. This belief drives us back into the world, not to conquer the lost, but to win them to Him.”

Close with prayer after challenging the class to consider what they are willing to sacrifice for the sake of the gospel.

Jean Kellner, Columbia, Maryland, U.S.A.

B. Write the key text for this lesson (1 Cor. 9:22) across the board. Pick a few male students to read aloud Acts 6:1–32. The text should be read in parts like a play (a narrator, King Agrippa, Paul, Jesus, Festus). Then facilitate a discussion on the following points: ●Why was Paul driven to preach the gospel at all cost? (verse 6). ●How did Paul view Jesus? (verse 7). ●How did Paul view people? (verses 19, 20). What did Paul endure for the sake of the gospel? (verse 21). ●What methods did Paul use to take the gospel to all people?

Discussing the Ideas

3. What universal questions did Paul appeal to in witnessing to the philosophers in Athens?
4. What assumptions do skeptics and nonbelievers have about Jesus?
5. How do you think Paul would be treated in our culture? Would he be castigated for being narrow-minded? Would he be seen as a self-loathing Jew who was now committed to persecuting his own people? Would other groups rise up as self-proclaimed victims and assert that Paul was guilty of hate speech?

Closing the Activity

Distribute the reproducible sheet on page 32. Ask the students to review each box and then to reflect on the following:

1. Think about non-Christians you know. What do they believe about Jesus?
2. How have you tried to show them Jesus’ true identity?

Say: “As in their culture, today it is also fashionable to be spiritual and religious. Paul faced pluralism in our post-modern age, and so do we.”

Have the class break into two groups. Have one group list the observations and hints Paul gathered about the people in Athens. Have the second group list the unique beliefs Paul presented to them about Christ, the world, why we are here, where we are going, and our future hope.

List each group’s findings to show how Paul used the fact that they were all religious to point them to the One true God who was unique and superior to all their invented philosophies and religions.

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Global Perspective

Public Broadcasting System’s *Frontline* broadcast “From Jesus to Christ” reflected society’s incomplete acceptance of Jesus. They acknowledged that “a number of different portraits of Jesus have emerged,” and “certain issues dominate the emerging picture of the historical Jesus.” Among these are:

1. “The historical Jesus and the Jesus of the early church bear little resemblance to one another.” The show argued that there is even less connection between the real Jesus and the Jesus of contemporary Christianity. In other words, we worship a made-up Jesus, not the Son of God who lived, died, and arose in the first century.

2. Jesus might or might not have seen Himself as the Messiah, “but he almost certainly did not see himself as divine.” The implication is that if Jesus did not see Himself as divine, neither should His followers.

Society accepts Jesus, but what it accepts about Him may vary considerably. Few deny His existence in history. They just do not accept Him as Lord.

Witnessing Tip: Show That Jesus Is Lord

Use Paul’s arguments in Acts 17:26–29 to show a lost person that Jesus alone is Lord of the world.

● **The argument from creation.** Show that God lovingly created the lost person with a unique identity and purpose.

● **The argument from sovereignty.** Show that God orchestrated events in the person’s life to lead to the opportunity to enter a fulfilling love relationship with Him.

● **The argument from universal need.** Show that a relationship with God through Christ meets every need in the person’s life, especially the need to overcome sin and death and to have abundant, eternal life.

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Global Perspective and Witnessing Tip are resources from *When Worldviews Collide*, Ergun Mehmet Caner.
John the Baptist: Preparing the Way

Surveying the Source


Plotting the Course

The students will:

► Appreciate the need to prepare for a task and to rely on God.
► Recognize that the environment in which we prepare could impact our delivery.
► Be exposed to another aspect of Christ’s soon return.

Preparing to Lead

Special assignments often carry a risk factor as well as require specialized knowledge and skills to carry them out. Training (preparation), often under severe conditions, is necessary to fulfill these assignments. A farmer, a teacher, a janitor, an accountant, a driver, a pastor, or an evangelist must undergo special training to meet the requirements of their jobs.

But after the training, careful delivery is important to accomplish the desired outcome. Sometimes, the results come soon after the delivery. John the Baptist preached to Herod; the farmer plants an orange tree; the evangelist preached about Jesus’ second return. Which outcome is soon?

Getting Started

A. Divide the class into two groups. Give each group a whole fruit, a knife, and a small tray or dinner plate. Select someone in each group to take notes of the group’s observations (give him/her paper and pencil). The instructions for each group are: ● Describe the exterior of the fruit. ● Cut the fruit and describe the inside. ● Outline the steps needed for the seeds to become a fruit. ● Decide how long it would take to go from seed to fruit.

Bring the groups together, and ask: ● “Is the outside of the fruit the same as the inside? Explain your answer.” ● “What caused the difference, an accident or a plan?” ● “Is the time it took to go from seed to fruit short or long?”

Show a grain of corn or a bean, and ask: “If you were to plant the seed of your fruit and this grain [or bean], which would you say would soon produce food?”

B. Place small heaps of a cake’s ingredients on a tray, and place the tray where the class can see the ingredients. Without telling the class what the ingredients are for, ask: ● “What could you do with these ingredients if there was enough of each?” (Answer: Make a cake.) Ask: ● “How long would it take to make a cake?” ● “If you were to make a cake for the president/Prime Minister of your country, how long would you take to make it?” ● “Is there a difference in the times? Why?”

Materials

paper and pencil; small tray or dinner plate; small amounts of cake ingredients; fruits with seeds; small kitchen knife; grains of corn and/or beans; chalkboard or flipchart; chalk or felt-tip pen
Delving Into the Word

A. Use the reproducible activity on page 33. Divide the class into small groups. Ask them to match each term in the right-hand column to one text only. Then discuss the following: ●“Give three examples to show that different tasks require different types of preparation. Explain each example.” ●“John the Baptist had a specific task to do. How did living in the wilderness and drinking milk and eating unrefined honey aid his preparation?” ●“Would you say that John the Baptist’s time in the wilderness deprived him of interpersonal skills, which probably would have improved his effectiveness in carrying out God’s mission, and which also would have saved his life?” ●“Does God prescribe this same method for our preparation to do His will? Why or why not?”

B. The following texts relate to soon: Genesis 24:30; Genesis 29:13; Genesis 34:7; Genesis 39:18; Genesis 40:10; Genesis 41:32; Exodus 8:29; Deuteronomy 11:17; 1 Kings 1:21; Ezra 4:23; Job 7:21; Psalm 37:2; Ezekiel 11:3; Daniel 10:20; Matthew 2:8; Mark 4:15; Romans 16:20; 1 Corinthians 4:19; 1 Timothy 3:14; Revelation 1:1; Revelations 22:12.

Discussing the Ideas

1. Why is there a difference in the times allocated to soon in the various texts we’ve studied?
2. What is the average life expectancy of an adult? Would you say the average life expectancy is a long time? Why, or why not?
3. People die at different ages. From a biblical perspective, what will be the next thing they are conscious of after death?
4. If a 20-year-old dies and the next thing she or he knows is the second coming of Christ, would you say that Christ has come soon for that person? Explain your answer.
5. For over a hundred years, Adventists have preached that Jesus is coming soon. Why does it make sense to say that in the same way soon means different times, Jesus’ coming after our individual deaths or during our individual lifetime is relatively soon?
6. Could the urgency of soon, therefore, mean that we should establish a meaningful relationship with Jesus because we do not know the day or the hour (Matt. 24:36) when we’ll die?

Closing the Activity

Share the following with the class: “John the Baptist, through special preparation, made it easier for the people of his day to receive Jesus. Jesus, by His baptism, fasting, temptations, and death on the cross made it easier for us to understand the nature of God and the meaning of eternal life. What can we do to help others understand Jesus’ purpose for their lives?” Close with prayer.

Albert A. C. Waite, Riseley, Berkshire, United Kingdom
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scripture Reference</th>
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<tr>
<td>Gen. 18:7, 8</td>
<td>Some things should wait</td>
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<td>Just before the honeymoon</td>
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<td>Luke 23:56</td>
<td>Better days ahead</td>
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<td>John 14:2</td>
<td>Repentance</td>
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<td>Rev. 21:2</td>
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The Son of God Among Us

Surveying the Source
Matt. 23:23; Mark 9:12; John 1:29; 7:12, 40, 41.

Plotting the Course
The students will:
► Be able to say who Jesus is and to explore ways in which this is not supported by their words and/or actions.
► Gain a better understanding of what Jesus’ continuing biography means in their life and the role they have to play.
► Be able to give an answer for what they believe (1 Pet. 3:15).

Preventing to Lead
Even those who are not Christians rank Christ’s biography as one of the most significant in history. Indeed, much of the world marks the dividing of time by His birth. How much more important is His life story to those of us who believe it is not yet finished? The question, then, of who we say Jesus is remains as important now as it was when asked of the disciples. “A man who was merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. . . . You must make your choice. Either this man was, and is, the Son of God: or else a madman or something worse.”

Getting Started
A. While someone records the answers on a blackboard, whiteboard, or flipchart, have class members call out as many possible answers to the question of who people say Jesus is. When the responses slow significantly, discuss some of the answers as well as whether or not our words and actions concur with what we know about Him. Have class members discuss how to get our knowledge of Jesus to coincide with our words and deeds. Give them a few minutes to reflect on what their words and actions truly say about who Jesus is.
B. In much of the world, Christ’s birth divided time into B.C. (or BCE) and A.D. (or CE). This division of time should be replicated in every believer’s life. Have members of the class share their testimony about when they accepted Christ and the difference it made in their lives. Encourage class members who may have never shared their testimony to “always be prepared to give an answer . . . for the hope that you have” (1 Pet. 3:15, NIV).

Delving Into the Word
A. Use the reproducible activity on page 34, entitled “Who People Said Jesus Was Before He Was on Earth.” This activity looks at just a few of the prophecies fulfilled through Christ’s life. Have class members share any other fulfillments of
prophecy of which they’re aware. Then have them discuss how this impacts who they say Jesus is. Explore whether it really makes an impact—after all, many in the first century had this same evidence, but they didn’t accept Jesus as the promised Messiah.

**B.** Divide the class into three groups: Jesus (John 4:25, 26; 5:17–30; 6:35, 53; 8:12; 10:7, 11; 14:6; 15:1), believers (Matt. 16:15, 16; 27:54; John 1:29; 3:27–36; 4:42; 7:41), and others (Matt. 16:13, 14; John 6:14, 25, 41, 42; 7:12, 20, 40; 7:45–52; 18:39). Have each group share with the other groups what their verses say about who Jesus is. Give the other groups a chance to respond to the declarations, staying “in character.” Discuss how the “simple” matter of who Jesus was led in part to His crucifixion. **Ask:** “How can we ensure we have the right answer to this question, and not something of our own making?”

For the “believers” and “others,” discuss what actions resulted from who they said Jesus was. Read the C. S. Lewis quote in the Preparing to Lead section. **Ask:** “Given Jesus’ declarations about Himself, explain why you agree/disagree with this quote.”

Read John 12:37–43 together, and discuss its implications for how we answer the question of who Jesus is today.

**Discussing the Ideas**

1. Who do you say Jesus is, and why?
2. In what ways do your words and actions support or contradict who you say Jesus is?
3. When you were a child, what did the words and actions of people who professed to be Christians teach you about who Jesus was?
4. How can our words and actions better reflect our true knowledge of Jesus?
5. In what situations do you find it most difficult to proclaim Jesus unashamedly?

What can you take to address this?

6. How has “who you say Jesus is” changed since you first accepted Him? Has this change been for the better or for the worse?
7. What does Jesus’ earthly biography mean for your life?
8. What is the significance of the fact that His biography is not yet completed?
9. What role do we all play in the continuing life story of Jesus?

**Closing the Activity**

Read the following poem to the class: “You are writing a gospel, a chapter each day/By the deeds that you do and the words that you say./Men read what you write, distorted or true./What is the gospel according to you?”

**Say:** “We have looked at what people long before, during, and after Jesus’ earthly life had to say about who He is, but ultimately the question remains for each of us. Take some time to think about what your words and deeds say about Jesus and what you want them to say. Thank Him for the role He has given you in His continuing life story, and pray for help in making any necessary adjustments.”

Close with prayer.

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2. Author unknown.
Who People Said Jesus Was
Before He Was on Earth

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<td>Eph. 4:8–13</td>
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<td>Matt. 27:34, 48</td>
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<td>Luke 1:69; Acts 2:30</td>
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Jesus and His Disciples

Surveying the Source

Plotting the Course
    The students will:
    ▶ Understand what witnessing means.
    ▶ Examine effective ways of witnessing.
    ▶ Determine which ways of witnessing are most appealing to themselves.

Preventing to Lead
    “Super Bowl commercials are high-profile advertisements which air during the Super Bowl. Thirty seconds of advertising time costs $2.6 million due to the extremely large audience, typically over 90 million viewers.” A target audience of 90 million viewers is impressive by any standard, but $2.6 million for 30 seconds? Is it worth it? In September 2007 the world’s population reached over 6.7 billion. How can we possibly get the word out about Jesus? What kind of advertising will be most effective?"

Getting Started
    A. Invite class members to give answers to the following questions. Write their responses on a whiteboard, chalkboard, or flipchart. ● What products have you purchased based on advertising? ● What products have you chosen not to purchase based on advertising? ● For the items you purchased, what made the advertising effective? ● For the items you chose not to purchase, was it the advertising that affected your decision? ● Why do you think advertising works so well? ● If we really want to get the word out about Jesus, how can we do it effectively? ● How can we be an effective witness? ● Are you an effective advertisement for God?

    B. If your Sabbath School room has access to a computer and online connections, show commercials from the 2007 Super Bowl from http://sports.aol.com/nfl/superbowlads. Show the winning advertisement (the Blockbuster Mouse), and ask why they think it was the winning advertisement. Also ask if they think the 30 seconds was worth $2.6 million. Why or why not?

    Ask: ● “Would we be willing to spend $2.6 million for 30 seconds to tell 90 million people about Jesus?” ● “Does it seem more important when we spend money to get our point across?” ● “How can we, in 30 seconds at no cost, make a difference in someone’s life for eternity?”

Delving Into the Word
    A. When someone was healed by Jesus, He would often tell that person not to tell anyone else that He had done so. Read and discuss the following stories:
●Matthew 8:1−4  ●Matthew 9:27−31
●Mark 1:39−45  ●Mark 5:35−43.

Contrast the above texts with the following texts in which Jesus tells the healed person to tell everyone or at least doesn’t tell the person not to share their story: ●Matthew 4:23−25 ●Matthew 9:20−22 ●Mark 5:1−19.

Some possible questions to ask are:
●“Why do you think some people were told not to tell anyone?”  ●“Why weren’t they able to do what Jesus asked of them?”  ●“Why were they sometimes told not to tell and other times no instruction was given?”  ●“What impact did the witness of these people have on Jesus’ ministry?”

B. Witnessing comes in many different ways and through many different people.

Discussing the Ideas

1. Explain the difference between advertising and witnessing.

2. What is the most powerful form of witnessing, and why?

3. Why, at times, does it seem so difficult to witness?

4. Is it easier to witness to people you know or don’t know. Explain your answer.

5. Why are there times when you should not witness, when you should “tell no one”?

6. How can we encourage each other to share the Good News and our good news?

7. What impact does witnessing have on your life?

Closing the Activity

Using the reproducible activity on page 35, invite people to write an advertisement for Jesus. What would be the key message they would like to share with people? Encourage them to make it practical and meaningful. Once they have written their advertisement, see if anyone would like to share their witness. Ask:

●“How can you turn this advertisement into a life statement?”  ●“Is this witness something you would want to share with people with whom you come in contact?”

On their album, Lifeline, Phillips, Craig, and Dean have a powerful song titled, “Can I Get a Witness?” Close by playing this song. Follow with prayer.

Janya Mekelburg, Lincoln, Nebraska, U.S.A.

Create an advertisement below for Jesus. It can be a picture, a jingle, a catchy rhyme, or a quiet reflection. Consider this your short statement of witness for Him.
The Compassionate Savior

Surveying the Source
John 1:14; 3; 4; 9:1−7; Eph. 4:32; 1 John 2:12.

Plotting the Course
The students will:
► Know that Jesus feels compassion for each of them in their present life situation.
► Feel grateful to Jesus for His love that lifts their burdens.
► Respond by committing to be like Jesus and to show compassion to others.

Preparing to Lead
While on earth, Jesus demonstrated compassion for every class of people and was moved by their needs. The same harassed and helpless crowds that He touched are still with us in prisons, hospitals, war-torn regions, areas struck by natural disasters—in our own cities, in our own neighborhoods. To be like Jesus means that we also are moved by the needs of others—their felt needs and their real needs. When others around us are harassed and helpless, Jesus needs us to be His hands, His feet, and His voice to help lift their sorrows and to reveal His love.

Getting Started
A. Share an act of compassion toward another person that you witnessed to or experienced. Then invite participants to share acts of compassion they have witnessed or experienced. Ask: ● “Is it easy or hard to be compassionate?” ● “What prompts a person to be compassionate to another?” Say: “Our lesson this week reveals Jesus’ compassion for others.”
B. Before class begins, prepare slips of paper. On one write “Leave the group and stand outside the class circle.” On another write “Exchange places with the person outside the circle.” On the others write “Do nothing.” Fold the papers so the instructions cannot be read by the participants. Place them in a basket, making sure you have one slip for each participant and no more.

Pass the basket, and instruct each participant to take one slip of paper and follow the instructions.

Ask: ● “What happened?” ● “What did you think when (name) left the circle?” ● “How did this make you feel?” ● “What did you think of (name)’s actions?” ● “How did this make you feel?” Say: “Our lesson this week reveals Jesus’ compassion for others.”

Delving Into the Word
A. Before class begins, write the following questions on a marker board:

● Who is the main character in the passage that Jesus is relating to? ● What was
that person’s need(s)? ●How did Jesus meet this person’s needs? ●What does this story teach us about Jesus? ●What does this story teach us about ourselves?

Divide the class into small groups and assign one of the following passages to each group for study: John 3:1, 2, 19–21; John 4:4–9, 15–18; John 4:39–42; John 4:46–53; John 9:1–7.

Allow time for them to answer the questions; then have each group share their answers.

B. Before class, write each passage below on separate sheets of paper:

**Dividing the Class into Groups and Assigning Passages**

**Discussing the Ideas**

1. How would you define the term compassion? What is the difference between sympathy, empathy, and compassion?

2. What barriers prevent people today from showing compassion to others?

3. What can we learn from Jesus about meeting the needs of hurting people?

4. What fueled Jesus’ compassion for people?

5. How did Jesus’ humanitarian work impact the spiritual state of those He helped?

6. How can people in care-giving professions protect themselves from “burning out”?

7. Is it possible to be truly compassionate outside of a strong faith relationship with God?

8. Why is it necessary to love others as Jesus loves us?

9. What impact does Jesus’ experience of suffering have on those who suffer?

10. How can you minister to “the wrong kind of people” without becoming like them?

**Closing the Activity**

Use the reproducible activity on page 36.

Kathy Goddard, Chattanooga, Tennessee, U.S.A.

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► Read Ephesians 4:32.

► Reflect on an experience in which you knew Jesus was taking care of you. Be ready to share this experience with another person.

► Identify one person you know who is going through a difficult time right now.

► Brainstorm for ways you could help that person.

► Ask God to let you know which idea to try first, how to share your own experience with him/her, and when to do this.
The Apostle John

Surveying the Source
Matt. 4:21, 22; Mark 10:35–45; John 5:30; 1 John; 2 John; 3 John.

Plotting the Course
The students will:
► Learn that internal elements of character are revealed in their appearance and actions.
► Recognize that spiritual victory frequently requires major changes.
► Experience a renewed desire to accept and to follow God’s calling in their lives.

Preparing to Lead
“God is never aimless. When He tells us to leave our lives of sin, He wants us to proceed to lives of victory. When He tells us to leave one place as He told Abram, He has another place for us to go. God may not reveal the destination for a while, but we can rest assured we’re never called out without being called to.”

As Abraham was called, renamed, and transformed, the apostle John finds himself nicknamed “The Beloved,” and wonderfully transformed.

Getting Started

A. Browse through newspapers, magazines, or http://images.google.com. Tear out or print several pictures demonstrating aspects of John’s character before and after Christ walked into his life. Photo examples might include: a fight on the hockey rink, the face of a snarling mammal (human or animal), devastation following a tornado, friends having a good time, the nonthreatening face of a human or animal, a rebuilt community following natural disaster, etc. As you display an image before the class, encourage members to describe the qualities they see in each.

B. Choose two volunteers willing to participate in a silent skit. The purpose is to demonstrate the transformation John experienced while following Jesus. Give volunteer A (Jesus) a list of things to do. Volunteer B (John) should copy what A does, being less perfect in his imitations at the beginning of the skit, then ending by reflecting A exactly. Actions could progress from relatively meaningless motions, to those with deeper spiritual implication. Examples might include: scratching their head, standing up, sitting down, taking a drink of water, shaking the hand of someone new, offering a drink of water, sharing a text of comfort, and giving a hug.

Delving Into the Word

A. Fascinating parallels exist between the life of Abraham and the apostle John. Look at God’s call to Abram (Gen. 12:1–3) and His call to John (Matt.
4:18–21; Luke 5:9–11). Have the class describe the similarities and differences in what God said to each. Also have them compare the specific promises God made and did not make, in conjunction with each call. Note how Abram (Gen. 12:4) and John (Matt. 4:22) responded.

Contrast Abram’s leadership paradigm in Genesis 13:7–9 with John’s in Mark 10:35–45. Notice how Abram is finally known (2 Chron. 20:7; James 2:23), and notice John’s changed identity (Mark 3:17) to “John the Beloved” (John 13:23; 19:26).

Point out that as the lives of these two faithful men unfold, transformation is revealed in both of them. Abraham’s love and faith are tested in Genesis 22:2, while John appeals to our entering into that very experience personally in 1 John 3:16. As their lives draw to a close, dying of natural causes (unlike Abraham’s fears [Gen. 12:12] or the martyrdom of John’s friends), consider the trust given them in the following statement: “But while we consider it a serious, solemn thing to die, we must consider it a much more solemn thing to live.”

B. Begin by singing together or listening to a song about God’s love. Read aloud the following quote: “The depth and fervor of John’s affection for his Master was not the cause of Christ’s love for him, but the effect of that love.”

Distribute pencils and the reproducible activity on page 37. Study, jot down, and discuss key points John is trying to communicate about God’s love in each of the verses. Finish by looking at some texts outside of the writings of John regarding the topic of love.

Discussing the Ideas

1. What physical changes might one have observed in John’s countenance and demeanor as he became more like Jesus?
2. How do we receive God’s love into our lives as John did, so that it will work the same transformation?
3. In a spiritual sense, where was God calling Abraham and John to go?
4. To what has or is God calling you?
5. What is His promise in conjunction with that call?
6. How are you responding?

Closing the Activity

Share with the class a contemporary story of God’s calling. It could be your own testimony or that of someone else. Ask members to locate themselves in such a way that they have increased privacy. Spaced seating can facilitate the accomplishment of this goal. A more reflective atmosphere can also be created by turning down the lights and playing soft background music. Ask each class member to prayerfully consider questions #4–6 above, and provide a length of time for personal meditation. End with a prayer reflecting a desire to listen to God’s call, accepting His love within, and making a personal commitment to obey, regardless of the cost.

Lisa Poole, Elbert, Colorado, U.S.A.

2. CQ [Collegiate Quarterly], August 10, 2008 “Logos.”
John Speaks on Love

John 3:16

John 15:9–17

1 John 2:15

1 John 3:16

1 John 4:7, 8, 16–21

Rev. 2:2–4

Lesson 7

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From Folly to Faith: Peter

Surveying the Source
Acts 2:14–40; 3; 5:1–11; 1 Peter; 2 Peter.

Plotting the Course
The students will:
► Understand that Jesus employs us in our growing stages, not just in “the finished product” stage.
► Learn how to value the journey and realize that it is more than just the arriving.
► Have the opportunity to commit to staying in a relationship with Christ.

Preparing to Lead
Every October approximately 40,000 people make their way to the starting line of the Chicago marathon. They’ve trained all year for this event, clocking countless miles in every kind of weather. They’re focused, intent on getting out there and running all 26.2 miles (need kilometer in parentheses). What’s shocking is that thousands upon thousands of them know beyond any doubt that they won’t win. In fact, they won’t even come close to placing. So why do they do it? They do it because winning, when it comes to a marathon, has a totally different meaning.

Winning means showing up for the race, staying in the race, and finishing the race. This is also the story of Peter. He didn’t give up, let up, or shut up. At every stage of his journey, he stayed with, or came back to, Christ.

Getting Started
A. Divide into small groups, and ask the students to each take a turn answering the following question: ●“What grade was your favorite grade, and why?” (Be sure to give an example from your own life to get started.) ●“What’s the difference or significance between the grades? Is one grade more important than the other?” Conclude by pointing out that each grade is valuable, significant, and contributes to getting a diploma. Then say: “Being a Christian is no different. Each stage of your Christian journey is valuable, significant, and important. Like Peter, we learn lessons at every stage.”

B. Draw on a chalkboard or posterboard five stages of corn (seed, seedling, young plant, full grown, dying). Ask: “If the Christian experience were corn, where would you currently rate yourself?” Allow students to explain their rationale for why they placed themselves in a particular spot. Ask: “Which stage is most important/values/useful?” Finally, ask the students to look at the pictures again and determine which one of the stages is “really” corn. Point out that the important thing to remember is that there is a purpose and place for every stage of the Christian experience.
Delving Into the Word

A. Have students divide into small groups and give each person a copy of “A Day in the Life of a Christian” (see page 38). After giving sufficient time to do the activity, discuss the following questions with the group as a whole: ● “What trends emerged with Peter’s spiritual journey? Describe them. Do you think they are accurate? Why or why not?” ● “Have you ever said or done something you were embarrassed about later? Do you think Peter was embarrassed by his ‘obvious’ folly? How did he react to life at those times?” ● “What are some ways in which you would like to react when you are having a low point in your Christian experience?” ● “In what ways do you identify/do not identify with Peter in your own Christian walk?”

Conclude by reading Luke 22:32, and pointing out that Christ had full confidence in Peter, as He does us. He knows what choices we’ll make and the direction our life will take, and He knows that a whole lot of folly can add up to a whole lot of faith.

B. Using Introduction A as a springboard, give each small group the following texts, a pen, and a blank piece of paper. Tell them that each text describes an event in Peter’s life. After they have read the text, have them do the following:

○ Give the story a title. ○ Answer this question: “Why do you think it was necessary for Peter to have this experience?”


Ask: “What if Peter hadn’t walked on water or denied Christ? What if he hadn’t acted hypocritically with the Gentiles?” Then say: “Jesus employs us in our growing stages, not just in the finished product. Every step of our journey is valuable, useful, and significant to develop our relationship with Christ.”

Discussing the Ideas

1. Is it possible to become a person of faith without times of folly? Explain.
2. God creates an environment where we can improve and grow. How did He do this with Peter? How has He done it with you?
3. In the Christian experience, what is the difference between winning, staying, and finishing? Or are they the same?
4. Do we have to meet minimum criteria before God can use us? Why or why not?
5. Describe what being faithful looks like.
6. Can being faithful include folly? Explain.
7. Was Peter more faithful or folly-filled than the other apostles?

Closing the Activity

Read the following verse: “Therefore then, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, . . . let us strip off and throw aside every encumbrance —unnecessary weight—and that sin which so readily (deftly and cleverly) clings to and entangles us, and let us run with patient endurance and steady and active persistence the appointed course of the race that is set before us” (Heb. 12:1, Amplified Bible).

Invite the students to commit to staying with Jesus no matter what, and close with a prayer of dedication.

Celina Worley, Walla Walla, Washington, U.S.A.
A Day in the Life of a Christian

Read the following texts that describe various events in Peter’s life. If you think he was having a spiritually high moment, place a mark near the FAITH header. If you think it was a spiritually low point in his life, place a mark near the FOLLY line. When you are finished, connect the dots to create a line graph.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Peter the Disciple</th>
<th>Peter at Time of the Crucifixion</th>
<th>Peter, the Seasoned Apostle</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Matthew 14:28, 29</td>
<td>Matthew 14:30</td>
<td>John 18:10</td>
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<td>Mark 14:66−71</td>
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<td>Acts 9:39−40</td>
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<td>Galatians 2:11−13</td>
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</table>

FAITH

FOLLY

Lesson 8

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Lesson 9

Pillar of Mission: Peter

Surveying the Source

Plotting the Course
The students will:
► Examine the life of Peter as an example of God’s ability to turn raw passion into discipleship.
► Explore how God restores His children when they stumble.
► Explore the qualities godly leaders must possess.

Preparing to Lead
At first glance, Simon wasn’t much to look at. A young fisherman supporting his family, working alongside his brother Andrew on the shores of Galilee. Uneducated. Impetuous. Coarse. Quick to speak, but slow to think.

First Samuel 16:7 says, “‘The Lord does not see as mortals see; they look on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart’” (NRSV). If there was ever a man who didn’t want to do anything half-hearted, it was Simon. Jesus dubbed him Peter, because He knew that once the shifting sands of Peter’s heart had settled, he’d be a rock for Him.

Getting Started
A. Ask a class member to share his or her own experience (or tell your own) of how God called them to work for Him despite less than obvious qualifications. Discuss how God “qualifies the called,” shaping one’s character through experience and the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

Ask: ● “What qualities did Peter possess naturally?” ● “What qualities did he have to gain the hard way, through a grueling life experience?” ● “What qualities were the most painful to attain?” ● “What personality traits did he have to shed in order to achieve his potential as a godly leader?” ● “People often compare the ‘obvious’ leadership qualities of Judas and the less impressive traits of the other disciples. All 12 disciples deserted Jesus after the Last Supper, so what made the difference between Judas and those who went on to spiritual greatness?”

B. Ask the class to list the qualities of a leader. Write their responses on the board or a sheet of paper. Answers might include wise, intelligent, quick-thinking, humble, charismatic, etc. You might also ask them to list the qualities of a poor leader.

Ask: ● “What qualities did Peter possess naturally?” ● “What qualities did he have to gain the hard way, through a grueling life experience?” ● “What qualities were the most painful to attain?” ● “What personality traits did he have to shed in order to achieve his potential as a godly leader?” ● “People often compare the ‘obvious’ leadership qualities of Judas and the less impressive traits of the other disciples. All 12 disciples deserted Jesus after the Last Supper, so what made the difference between Judas and those who went on to spiritual greatness?”

Materials
pens and paper; whiteboard, flipchart, or chalkboard; markers or chalk

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Delving Into the Word

A. Have a class member read Matthew 14:22–33 and Matthew 16:13–23. Explore how Peter exhibited faith—or tried to—in each story. Point out that Peter exhibits a gung-ho trust in Jesus that’s always willing to go to the next level, but circumstances reveal that though it’s a mile wide, it’s an inch deep. Peter starts out strong with resolute declarations, yet ends up flailing.

Ask: ●“‘Get behind me, Satan’ is as sharp a condemnation as anyone could expect to hear. Yet does Peter not deserve credit for his enthusiasm? His willingness to ‘step out in faith’”? ●“Is it easier to smugly say ‘I’d have kept my eyes on Jesus if I were walking on water’ than to muster the courage to step out in the first place?” ●“Who is easier for God to work with: someone who’s a bit naïve but willing to take risks, or someone (like Judas as Mary anointed Jesus’ feet) who just sits on the sidelines and criticizes other people’s actions?”

B. Have a class member read John 13:3–10. Point out that Peter’s volatil-ity—yet essential good-heartedness—is on full display here.

Ask: ●“How did Peter feel when Jesus gently rebuked his unwillingness to let Jesus wash his feet?” ●“How do you think Jesus felt when Peter declared, ‘Not just my feet but my hands and my head as well!’”? ●“Where do you see yourself in that story?” ●“Is it hard to let Jesus work on your heart and submit your whole self to Him?”

Have a class member read John 21:15–19, Acts 5:12–15, and 1 Peter 5:1–4. Ask: ●“How did Jesus’ redemptive treatment of Peter shape the rest of Peter’s ministry?” ●“How did Jesus reflect His Master throughout His own ministry?”

Ask: ●“How would your local church respond to a prominent member who so publicly denied God?” ●“What should we learn from Jesus’ example with Peter?”

Discussing the Ideas

1. Are we sometimes too hard on the apostle Peter? For example, how many steps do you think you would have taken on the water before slipping?

2. What does Jesus’ gentle treatment of Peter after His resurrection tell us about relationships and reconciliation?

3. How can we keep our zeal and passion for serving God from blinding us to His principles and plans?

4. What were the most critical qualities of Peter’s character that made him a potential leader?

5. How does God use situations and life events to stretch our characters and fit us to do greater things for Him?

6. Were the character-shaping lessons Peter learned from Jesus mostly “caught” or “taught”? Explain your answer.

7. One problem Peter had was that he constantly jumped ahead of Jesus without thinking of the consequences. How can we keep ourselves in tune with God’s plans for us?

Closing the Activity

Have the class do the reproducible activity on page 39. Close with prayer.

Tompaul Wheeler, Nashville, Tennessee, U.S.A.
Wisdom From a Life Well Lived

The biblical books of 1 and 2 Peter are packed with classic advice about humility, long-suffering, and serving God wholeheartedly. It’s almost hard to imagine that the author was once a wavering man with feet of sand.

Read 1 Peter 5:8–10. What experiences in Peter’s life does his counsel remind you of?

What made the difference in Peter’s life to turn him from foolhardy to righteously bold?

Read 1 Peter 1:1–15. What hard-earned wisdom jumps out at you from these verses?

Read 1 Peter 2:1, 2. What vices that he lists do you think is hardest to deal with in our lives?

Peter compares his reader to newborns craving “pure spiritual milk.” How in Peter’s experience was he able to humble himself to realize his spiritual needs?

First Peter 3:1–7 are understandably controversial verses. How does understanding Peter’s life story help you interpret what they have to say?

Read 1 Peter 3:8–12. What would it take for you to live up to the counsel in these verses?

Read 1 Peter 4:12–16. Do most “public” Christians live by these verses? Why or why not? How or how not?
Women of Mission

Surveying the Source

Plotting the Course
The students will:
► Relate stories of biblical women of faith.
► Discover the times when they have used faith in their lives and everyday situations.
► Determine how to look for opportunities to grow their faith.

Preparing to Lead
“The faith that is unto salvation is not a mere intellectual assent to the truth. He who waits for entire knowledge before he will exercise faith, cannot receive blessing from God. It is not enough to believe about Christ; we must believe in Him. The only faith that will benefit us is that which embraces Him as a personal Saviour; which appropriates His merits to ourselves.”

In this week’s lesson we will examine how faith played a role in the lives of five women in the New Testament and how faith impacts our lives today.

Getting Started
A. Distribute paper and colored markers to students. Instruct them to illustrate a time in their lives when they had to depend on their faith in God. Ask for volunteers to share their illustrations. Discuss how they felt when they were depending on faith. How did it increase their faith?

B. Form two teams. Use a flipchart, whiteboard, or chalkboard. Have students list or illustrate things that we take by faith in our everyday lives. Discuss how we use faith in small and large ways in our everyday lives.

Delving Into the Word
A. Read Matthew 17:20. Distribute a mustard seed to each student. Explain that mustard seeds grow on a bush. When planted, it grows rapidly and takes over the entire space. Examine the mustard seeds, and discuss what Christ meant when He compared the size of the mustard seed to faith. Ask:
● “How does faith, which starts out as small as the mustard seed, grow into something larger?”
● “How can we increase our faith?”

B. “As Christians, we are called to go into the world and make disciples for Christ. How do we use our faith to be the disciple-makers Christ has called us to be?”

Compare this mustard seed faith with the following Bible stories about women of faith—the bleeding woman in Luke 8; the woman at the well. Ask:
● “How did these women use their faith to tell others about God’s love?”
● “Using their examples, how can we use our faith as an
everyday living event in our lives and share it with others?”

B. Divide the class into four groups. Assign one story to each group: (1) Mary the mother of Jesus and Elizabeth the mother of John the Baptist; (2) the bleeding woman in Luke 8; (3) Jairus’ daughter; and (4) the woman at the well.

Instruct the students to read the stories from their Bibles and to make notes on the type of faith each woman had at the beginning of the story and then at the end. Distribute the reproducible handout titled “Women of Faith” on page 40. Ask the students to write down the observations of each group under the corresponding section on the handout. Have each group share what they discovered about the woman/women in their stories. Ask:

● “Which woman had the smallest amount of faith at the beginning of the story?”
● “Which woman had the greatest amount of faith at the beginning?”

● “How did their faith change and grow throughout the story?”
● “How does this apply to our lives today?”

Discussing the Ideas

1. We can’t see Jesus in person today. So how do we exercise our faith by believing He died for us and is coming again? How does this change the ways we live our daily lives?

2. If you were asked to describe faith to a nonbeliever, what would you say in 100 words or less?

3. When the woman at the well finally understood what Jesus was offering her, she ran back to town to tell everyone what she had learned. How can we share our faith and tell others about what we have learned about God and our growing faith?

4. Each of the women in today’s lesson had a different type of faith. Which type of faith did you identify with most closely? Why?

5. The bleeding woman believed if she just touched the hem of Jesus’ cloak, she would be healed; and she was healed immediately. Why are there people today who have faith but still die of cancer or some other diseases? How can we keep our faith strong when this happens?

6. Today’s lesson gives examples of acting on faith (the bleeding woman); seeing people’s need of a Savior and helping them have the faith to accept Him (the woman at the well); and waiting for God to answer in His time (Jairus’ daughter). In what ways do we parallel these types of faith in our lives?

Closing the Activity

Distribute a 3x5 card to each student. Tell them to choose one of the Bible texts used in today’s lesson that will help them while growing their faith. Have them write it on the card. Distribute glue and more mustard seeds. Have the students glue the mustard seeds on their cards. Say: “Put this card somewhere so you can see it everyday. Use it as a reminder to continually find ways to grow your faith.”

Close with prayer, asking that during the next week, God will show each class member ways in which their faith can grow.

Deena Bartel-Wagner, Spencerport, New York, U.S.A.

*The Desire of Ages, p. 347.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Women and where their stories are found</th>
<th>Faith at beginning of story</th>
<th>Faith at end of story</th>
<th>How her faith grew and changed</th>
<th>How it applies to my life today</th>
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<tr>
<td>Woman at the well</td>
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<td>Jairus’ daughter</td>
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<td>The bleeding woman</td>
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<td>Mary, the mother of Jesus</td>
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<td>Elizabeth, the mother of John</td>
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In a Pagan Land: Daniel and Company

Surveying the Source
Exod. 20:4; Dan. 1:12; Matt. 5:14–16; 1 Cor. 10:31.

Plotting the Course
The students will:
► Realize that witnessing is not a separate component of a Christian’s life, but like Daniel and his friends, it’s living your faith—which may mean you will stand out.
► Gain an understanding that culture is not God’s enemy and that He uses culture to bring about His purpose.
► Recognize that we live in a dark world (Babylon), but that we can still shine God’s light here.

Preparing to Lead
Christians don’t belong to this world. Like Daniel and his friends, we live away from home in a foreign land where we are exposed to different cultures, customs, and many different ways to live.

Daniel and his friends accepted the Babylonian name change, education, and training. They learned the Babylonian language, lived among them, and worked for their king. In many ways, they were no different from Babylonians. However, Daniel and his friends were different—they believed and followed God as they stood up in matters of their faith. They stood firm to the teachings of the Bible and the principles of their God. They learned how to stay true to their faith in a Babylonian world. We, too, can learn to live a godly life in this world.

Getting Started
A. Ask:
● “Who has been to another country, or mixed with another culture?”
● “What differences did you find?”
● “What surprised you?”
● “What challenges did you experience?”
● “Describe some awkward moments you experienced.”
● “Daniel and his friends were transported to a foreign land where they were immersed in a completely different culture. Which experiences and emotions do you think they experienced?”

B. Ask:
● “When was the first time you were away from home?”
● “How did you feel?”
● “How old were you?”
● “Where did you go?”
● “What was it like?”
● “Did you feel alone or scared?”

Discuss how Daniel and his friends felt when they were taken away from their homes and how their feelings and thoughts were different and similar to ours when we were in similar situations.

Delving Into the Word
A. Divide the class into four groups, and allocate one of the following chapters to a group: Daniel 1, 2, 3, and 6. After each group has read their designated

Materials
four pieces of posterboard; various colored markers or paints; 3x5 index cards
chapter, give each person in the groups a copy of the reproducible activity on page 41. After each group has finished this activity, have them appoint a spokesperson to share with the entire class what points they came up with from their allocated chapter.

Discuss as a whole class any trends they see after every group has reported.

**Discussing the Ideas**

1. In what ways do you assimilate into your culture, and in what ways do you stand out? Why?
2. Do you think it gets harder to live your faith as the world gets darker? Why or why not?
3. How is the foreign land that Daniel lived in similar to the world now?
4. Do you think culture is God’s enemy? Why, or why not?
5. In what ways can you live your faith and be a witness?
6. Describe a time in your life where you felt uncomfortable because you compromised your beliefs. How did you respond? How would you handle it differently now?

**Closing the Activity**

Make the room as dark as possible, closing curtains, turning off the lights, etc. Light a small tea candle. Then turn on the lights and make the room light again.

*Ask:* ●“When did the candle seem to shine the brightest?” ●“But was it really shining any brighter?”

After discussing these questions, highlight that fact that the candle seems to light up the whole room when the room is dark. The light becomes more obvious and begins to illuminate the darkness.

*Say:* “Daniel and his friends were God’s light just by being true to Him.”

Pass out an index card to each student. Challenge them to write on the card two ways they can share their light this week with their world. They could share with each other their challenge if they wanted to.

Close with pray that God will use each student to live their faith this week in their world.

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**Amy Townend, Les Murdie, Australia**
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>In what ways did Daniel and his friends assimilate into the Babylonian culture?</th>
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<th>In what ways did Daniel and his friends stand out?</th>
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Gifted for Service: Philip

Surveying the Source
Acts 6:3; 8; Rom. 12:6–8; 1 Cor. 12:1–11, 27–31; 1 Tim. 3:8–12.

Plotting the Course
The students will:
► Understand which qualities are necessary for serving God.
► Identify spiritual gifts and their function based on Philip’s experience.
► See Philip’s attitude of willingness to follow the Holy Spirit as the key to his success.

Preparing to Lead
Philip’s life illustrates the power of a willing attitude. No matter whether God was calling him to wait on tables, to preach and perform miracles among the hated Samarians, or to go into the desert to teach an Ethiopian, Philip was willing and ready to go. He was satisfied to let the Holy Spirit lead him, even if the task was humble or the directions didn’t at first make sense. Philip was an ordinary person whom the Holy Spirit used in an extraordinary way. If we are willing, the Holy Spirit can gift us for service, too.

Getting Started
A. Give the students small pieces of paper. Ask them to write down (1) a job/career that they believe they can do successfully, and (2) a job/career that they don’t believe they can do successfully. Have several students share their answers and explain why they feel that the jobs/careers would or would not work for them. (Answers will probably have to do with their likes/dislikes and perceived abilities.) Ask: “How should we respond if God calls us to do something that we aren’t interested in or feel unqualified to do?” Discuss.
B. Say: “Suppose you were invited to play ice hockey in the Olympics. What would you need to be a good player?” Write Qualifications and Equipment on a whiteboard, and ask the students to list skills/items that fit under those categories. Ask: ● “Which one qualification or equipment is more important? Can you eliminate one and still be a good player?” ● “How does this relate to our spiritual life?” Discuss the answers.

Delving Into the Word
A. Ask a volunteer to read Acts 6:3 and 1 Timothy 3:8–12. List the qualifications of a deacon on the whiteboard/flipchart. Divide the students into groups and ask them to carefully read Acts 6:1–7 and Acts 8 together. Have each group write down examples from Philip’s life that illustrate the qualities of a deacon.
Encourage the students to search for other Christian qualities that Philip

Materials
slips of paper; pens/pencils; whiteboard, flipchart, or chalkboard; markers or chalk; gift bag or gift-wrapped box with name tag

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Close with prayer. Explain that you will give them a couple of quiet moments to talk to God about anything that may be blocking a willing attitude. Pray for willingness to be gifted for service by God no matter where He leads us.

Discussing the Ideas

1. Philip had to meet certain qualifications to serve God as a deacon. What qualifications are necessary for us to have in order to serve God?
2. What do you think was Philip’s most important qualification?
3. How do we become qualified to serve God?
4. In Philip’s time, the primary function of deacons was to distribute and serve food. What role should deacons have in our churches today?
5. Why are spiritual gifts necessary for the church? What purpose do they fill?
6. How do you think the Holy Spirit determines which spiritual gifts you will receive?
7. Do we have the same spiritual gifts our entire lives? Support your answer with examples from the Bible.
8. How do we figure out which spiritual gifts we have?

Closing the Activity

Read the Preparing to Lead section aloud. Ask: ●“Why are we often unwilling to allow God to lead us?” ●“What role does fear play in our unwillingness?” ●“How can we develop the same willing attitude that Philip had?”

Close with prayer. Explain that you will give them a couple of quiet moments to talk to God about anything that may be blocking a willing attitude. Pray for willingness to be gifted for service by God no matter where He leads us.

Liane Edlund, Ekebyholm, Sweden
Prophecy                           Apostleship                           Tongues
Service                            Wisdom                              Faith                             Administration
Interpretation of Tongues                            Teaching                            Knowledge
Encouragement                           Generosity                           Leadership
Distinguishing Between Spirits                            Miraculous Powers
Mercy                            Healing

From: The Holy Spirit
To: For the good of
the church
“Send Me”: The Prophet Isaiah

Surveying the Source


Plotting the Course

The students will:

► Identify key ingredients in discerning a true “call” of God.
► Explore practical ways in which we can respond to God’s purposes.
► Reflect on reasons why we might hesitate or avoid living out God’s plan.

Preparing to Lead

The curtain of Isaiah’s call as a prophet rose on God’s pronouncement of Israel’s rebellious way. This message of judgment is a familiar theme throughout the book of Isaiah. God wanted Israel to know He would not overlook their rebellious and evil ways. He would not look the other way when they oppressed the helpless and poor. Their prayers were completely bankrupt if they did not first repent of their sins. Many parallels exist between us and Israel. We must be prepared to face the truth and act in God’s favor.

Getting Started

A. Read and react to the following online excerpt by the secular music group singer, Bono (U2) at the National Prayer Breakfast in 2006 in Washington, D.C.

“Preventing the poorest of the poor from selling their products while we sing the virtues of the free market, that’s not charity: That’s a justice issue. Holding children to ransom for the debts of their grandparents, that’s not charity: That’s a justice issue. Withholding life-saving medicines out of deference to the Office of Patents, well that’s not charity. To me, that’s a justice issue. And while the law is what we say it is, God is not silent on the subject. That’s why I say there’s laws of the land and then there’s a higher standard.”

Ask: ●“How are we the hands of grace who are taking action on behalf of the oppressed and poor?” ●“Is our church a voice for social conscience and religious liberty? Why, or why not?”

B. On a flipchart, whiteboard, or chalkboard, write the words: “CALL or CALLING.” Discuss possible definitions and associations of the words call and calling. Ask: ●“Does God still communicate with us today? If so, how?” ●“How can we be absolutely sure of His will?” ●“What limits us from hearing God’s voice?”

Delving Into the Word

A. Have individual class members read aloud the following texts: Proverbs 31:8; Psalm 146:7, 8; Micah 6:8; Amos 5:21–24.

Ask: ●“Has our responsibility to act for the oppressed diminished in 2008? Why,
or why not?” ●“What things restrict me/us from helping the oppressed?” ●“What avenues does our church use to seek social justice and to restore lives?” ●“How can believers balance sharing their faith and helping the oppressed?” ●“In terms of world issues and problems, might God be calling His church to shift its understanding of ‘neighbor’ (Luke 10:29–37) and the meaning of evangelism?”

**Discussing the Ideas**

1. What limitations exist if relying on feelings is our guide to following God?
2. Can Isaiah’s response to “God’s call” be used as a practical model for today? Explain.
3. What inherent limitations would we place on ourself/families as to how far outside our comfort zone we’d be prepared to move if God called?
4. Share an experience where you responded to God’s call.
5. Who within your reach can you impact with the gospel this week?
6. What activity can our Sabbath School group conduct this week that serves as an outreach opportunity?

**Closing the Activity**

In pairs or groups, read the moving story of Nate Saint (see page 43). *Ask:*
●“Like Isaiah, Jim, Nate, Peter, Ed, and Roger; if God called you to share a message for people like Israel or the Waorani people, would you say, ‘Here I Am, Lord, Send Me?’” ●“Why do you think the missionary ministry to these people continued after having suffered such losses?” ●“How might you have responded?”

Close with prayer.

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Jean-Pierre Martinez, New South Wales, Australia

The Story of Jim Elliot, Peter Fleming, Ed McCully, Nate Saint, and Roger Youderia

Every Christian has inevitably heard numerous stories of missionaries who either died or overcame adversity in the name of the gospel. This story happened among the rain forests in eastern Ecuador, South America. It was there, on January 8, 1956, that this story of martyrdom occurred.

The last words heard from jungle pilot and missionary, Nate Saint, were, “We are hoping for visitors (Waronis people) at about 2:30. I’ll call you again at 4:35.” However, when his and the other men’s bodies were pulled from the river, Nate’s watch read 3:12. Why would God allow such a tragedy to occur? What would motivate these upstanding, intelligent young men to embark on such a journey?

However, one clearly sees an unmistakable sense of calling these men felt in their journals. As one wrote, “He makes His ministers a ‘flame of fire.’ Am I ignitable?” Then he adds, “God deliver me from the dread asbestos of ‘other things.’ Saturate me with the oil of the Spirit that I may be aflame. But a flame is transient, often short-lived. Canst thou bear this, my soul short life? In me there dwells the Spirit of the Great Short-Lived, whose zeal for God’s house consumed Him.”

Thus, they pressed forward in their quest, all equally aware of the inherent dangers. Jim Elliot said to his [wife] Betty: “If that’s the way God wants it to be, I’m ready to die for the salvation of the Aucas.” These men had heard about the Indians referred to as Aucas, meaning savages. The Aucas had never been brought under control by the army or won over by missionaries. But the missionaries’ passion ran hot, because they believed they had been called.

Even with these deaths, the work with the Waoranis was only commencing. By sheer chance, a young girl named Dayuma, an escapee from a near Waorani territory, helped Rachel Saint (one of the widows) learn the language. Later on the gospel of Mark was translated into their language and the Bible began to be taught to the people.

I believe that the ongoing attraction to this story, including a recent feature movie called Beyond the Gates, is as much about the lives of the martyrs’ survivors as it is about the five men who paid the highest price imaginable. We know of these men through their journal entries, photos, and the lives of their missionary widows, their children, and the Waorani converts. This ministry continues to blossom as many other villages also have heard and received the message of hope and love.

References
Nate Saint, Retrieved February 22, from http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nate_Saint