

## Grade 4—Unit 9

# Jesus Offers Freedom

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In this unit, students will be introduced to a number of people in the gospels who came face to face with Jesus during his ministry. Each of them was offered the freedom that only Jesus can offer, bringing them into the light of Christ’s love. They could accept or reject this freedom. Finally, the unit points students to the Word for an understanding of the freedom Jesus offers us.

### **LESSONS**

1. A Sinful Woman Encounters Freedom
2. A Rich Young Ruler Encounters Freedom
3. We Encounter Freedom

### ***Plan ahead:***

Lessons 1 and 2 include reader’s theaters. For Lesson 1, you will need a guest female reader. Choose students to read parts ahead of time, so they will have time to practice.

# Unit 9: Jesus Offers Freedom

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## Unit Information

### SUMMARY

Jesus' ministry was one of freeing people from sin and guilt. The sinful woman, the rich young ruler, and many others were offered this freedom. Each of them was given an opportunity to accept or reject the grace, mercy, and love that God offers. The memory texts in this unit point us to that same opportunity.

### KEY BIBLE TEXTS

#### Lesson 1

John 8:1-11

**Memory text:** Psalm 119:32

#### Lesson 2

Mark 10:17-27

**Memory text:** John 8:31-32

#### Lesson 3

**(Memory texts)** John 8:12, John 8:34-36

### BIBLICAL BACKGROUND

#### Liberation and Freedom

The ministry of Jesus the Messiah was one of liberation and freedom. The Jewish people under Roman rule expected this liberation to rid them of the Roman presence. Instead, Jesus challenged the political, religious, and economic systems of the day in his teachings and by his ministry of love. Jesus also freed people from the bondage of sin and guilt. Those who believed in the truth of Jesus' teachings and became his disciples experienced true freedom in forgiveness from sin (John 8:31-36).

This unit focuses on Jesus' ministry of freeing people to do God's work. Although the story of the woman recorded in John 8:1-11 is not considered to be an original part of John's gospel, most commentators agree it is an accurate historical account. The Pharisees and teachers of the Law brought to Jesus a woman whom they said was caught in the act of adultery. It is possible that the religious leaders deliberately planned a set-up to catch this woman. According to the Law, two witnesses were needed to confirm the guilt of someone accused of a crime, Deuteronomy 19:15. Their purpose in bringing this accusation was not to enforce the Law, but to discredit Jesus as a teacher. If Jesus did not condemn the woman, he would be disagreeing with the Law given by Moses. If he did condemn her, he would lose favor with the common people.

Although we don't know what Jesus wrote on the ground after the accusations were made, his remark about those without sin casting the first stones struck the accusers' hearts. Jesus' response pointed out their own sinfulness and also his sinlessness, which identified him as the authoritative judge. Because the witnesses and accusers left the judgment scene, the legal case against the woman was dropped.

Jesus then extended the offer of forgiveness to her. His statement, "Neither do

I condemn you . . . Go now and leave your life of sin” (John 8:11), emphasizes the freedom from guilt and sin available to her if she chose to accept his forgiveness.

In contrast is the account of the rich young ruler. The question this wealthy and influential man asked Jesus shows his earnest spirit and his respect for Jesus’ teachings. The young man, who may have been a member of the Sanhedrin or an official in a local synagogue, wanted to know what he must do to be right with God. Evidently he thought that eternal life could be achieved by doing good. He also seems to have felt insecure about his future destination. Jesus began his answer by quoting the commandments that deal with human relationships—murder, adultery, stealing, false testimony, defrauding, and honoring parents. These the ruler said he had followed. Filled with love for the young man, Jesus saw that he lacked full allegiance to God. His wealth was the first priority in his life, and he was unwilling to relinquish his hold on it to keep the first commandment of putting God before all else.

Nothing more is recorded in the Bible about either the woman or the young ruler. From their encounters with Jesus, we can conclude that the woman accepted Jesus’ forgiveness, while the rich young ruler made the choice to reject God as first in his life.

Jesus’ freedom ministry extended to many other people. Those who met Jesus and accepted his teachings were freed to join the kingdom of God. Those who rejected his invitation remained bound by their lives of sin.

## ESSENTIAL UNDERSTANDINGS

- Jesus’ forgiveness frees us from our bondage to sin.
- All people must choose to accept or reject the teachings of Jesus.

## WORSHIP

**1. Prepare a bulletin board** where students can display some of the writings they will be doing during the unit.

**2. This unit brings students in touch** with Jesus, his love for us, and the acceptance that has to come from us. Watch carefully and prayerfully for concepts and questions you need to discuss in the context of worship. You may want to invite a minister to one of your worship times, if you feel that students need more opportunity to discuss their questions.

**3. Your worship theme** might be “commitment.” Many songs are listed under this heading in *Hymnal: A Worship Book*. “We will walk with God,” #78 in *Sing the Journey* is a wonderful little song that will likely stick in children’s minds. It is also found on the *Sing the Journey* CD.

**3. Use the memory texts** for worship Scriptures. You can discuss them in the context of “commitment.”

**4. Worship readings.** Readings 706 and 707 from *Hymnal: A Worship Book* speak to commitment and living in the light.

## MEMORY PASSAGE

The memory texts for this unit are Psalm 119:32; John 8:12; John 8:31-32; and John 8:34-36. Each of these texts is used within the context of the lesson, mostly as an introductory activity.

## **ASSESSING TEACHING / LEARNING**

Several activity sheets can be used for formal assessment, and a formal unit assessment follows the lessons.

In this unit, understanding God's love is more important than assessment. Pray that your students will be able to see Jesus' love as he interacts with these biblical characters. The story "Coals of Fire" is meant to help students see how Christ's upside-down kingdom works today. Help them see that Christ's behavior might seem far-fetched, but Christ's love is unbelievable and we must choose to practice it to the best of our ability.

# Jesus Offers Freedom

## LESSON 1: A WOMAN ENCOUNTERS FREEDOM

### Objective

Students will be introduced to the freedom Jesus offers by observing an encounter a woman and her accusers had with Jesus.

### Key Concepts

- Jesus offers people freedom and forgiveness from sin and condemnation.

**Text:** John 8:1-11

**Memory text:** Psalm 119:32

**Estimated Lesson Time:** 40-45 minutes

### Materials

- Bibles
- Biblical costume for adult guest reader
- “John 8:1-11 Reader’s Theater” (p. 275)
- “From the Woman’s Point of View” (p. 276)
- Transparency/projection of Psalm 119:32 (p. 277)
- For Extend the Lesson, option one: “Reflections on John 8:1-11” (p. 278)

### Teacher Preparation

- Read the Biblical Background for this unit (pp. 270-271). Read the lesson story from John 8:1-11.
- Ask a guest to come to your classroom to share the reading, “From the Woman’s Point of View,” or plan your strategy for sharing the reading yourself. Provide a costume for the reader, a John 8:1-11 script, and a copy of the reading. She will also need a stone as a prop.
- Prepare for the reader’s theater by asking several students ahead of time to play the parts of the narrator, Jesus, and the group of accusers. Give a “John 8:1-11” script to the narrator, Jesus, and one accuser. Reader’s theater can be done with no action or with limited action, as suggested in the script.

### INTRODUCING THE LESSON

**Jesus’ freedom ministry.** Ask students what they think was the real purpose of Jesus’ ministry on earth. Invite them to share opinions and ideas. Accept every idea as valid.

Ask the class to define freedom. After some discussion, give them this dictionary definition: *exemption from an obligation; being able to act freely; a right or privilege.* Then ask if the word “freedom” has anything to do with Jesus’ ministry. (*Exemption from the consequences of sin, being able to freely follow God; the right to call ourselves sons and daughters of God*)

Display the transparency/projection for the Psalm 119:32 memory text. Tell the students you want them to discover what this text is saying about freedom. Quickly divide students into buzz groups of two or three students. They should

write, in their own words, how the verse makes them feel. Give the groups two minutes to jot down their ideas. Then ask for volunteers to share their ideas. Have students keep the ideas for a later activity.

## LESSON STEPS

**1. Meet the woman.** Explain that in this unit students will meet some of the people who encountered Jesus during his ministry on earth. Today they will meet a certain woman. As they listen to her story, they should think about her response to Jesus. Does her story have anything to do with freedom?

**2. The woman's story.** Have the reader's theater players, including the woman, come to the front and read the John 8:1-11 script. The players will need to listen carefully to the narration so they know when to move. At the end, the players go to their seats, but the woman remains. She then shares "From the Woman's Point of View."

**3. Response to the story.** Have students open their Bibles to John 8:1-11. Then ask: How did Jesus free the people in the crowd to think about their own lives and what they wanted to do?" (*Jesus held them accountable—whoever is without sin, but he gave them the freedom to make their own choices.*) In what ways did the woman experience physical freedom? (*Jesus helped her gain freedom by helping her accusers think about their actions. He also told her to leave her life of sin.*) Did she gain spiritual freedom? (*Jesus did not condemn her. He just told her to leave her life of sin. The decision was hers. She was free to choose.*)

## EXTEND THE LESSON

*(These activities will extend the lesson to longer than 40-45 minutes.)*

- **Reflect on the story.** Hand out the "Reflections on John 8:1-11" activity sheet. Allow 10 minutes for students to reflect on the story and answer the questions as if they are the woman in the story. Activities of this nature are very personal, so be careful about requiring accountability. Some might like to share with another student or two; others might simply want to tuck their reflections away in a journal.

- **Memory text, Psalm 119:32.** Invite students to think again about this verse. They may have other ideas now about what it says about freedom, or they may want to stick with their original ideas. Ask them to draw or create symbols for their ideas. If possible, they should include the text of the verse or the word "freedom" in the symbol.

# John 8:1-11 Reader's Theater

from *The Message*

*Characters: Narrator, Jesus, Woman, Accusers (a small group for action, but only one reader)*

**Narrator:** Jesus went across to Mount Olives, but he was soon back in the Temple again. Swarms of people came to him. He sat down and taught them.

The religion scholars and Pharisees led in a woman who had been caught in adultery. They stood her in plain sight of everyone and said,

**Accusers:** "Teacher, this woman was caught red-handed in the act of adultery. Moses, in the Law, gives orders to stone such persons. What do you say?"

**Narrator:** They were trying to trap Jesus into saying something incriminating, so they could bring charges against him.

Jesus bent down and wrote with his finger in the dirt. They kept at him, badgering him. He straightened up and said,

**Jesus:** "The sinless one among you, go first: Throw the stone."

**Narrator:** Bending down again, he wrote some more in the dirt.

Hearing that, they walked away, one after another, beginning with the oldest. The woman was left alone. Jesus stood up and spoke to her.

**Jesus:** "Woman, where are they? Does no one condemn you?"

**Woman:** "No one, Master."

**Jesus:** "Neither do I. Go on your way. From now on, don't sin."

# From the Woman's Point of View

Just like that! He let me go.

*(Woman pauses and shakes head in bewilderment, then sits down on a stool or desk.)*

A woman like me. Caught in sin.

*(Shakes her head, then gets up, walks around, and gestures as she continues.)*

I thought my life was over when they came in and dragged me out into the courtyard. Jews have been known to stone people for this! *(Pause.)* It happened so quickly I didn't have time to think of it at the time—where was the man who was with me? He must have got away. Hmm . . . maybe they helped him escape. He should have been in front of the crowd with me.

*(Returns to stool or desk and sits down.)*

Anyway, they brought me to the man called Jesus and asked him what to do with me. It was the first time I had seen him. He must be someone important, but there was something different about him. I can't quite put my finger on it. He sure wasn't dressed like those fancy Pharisees. In fact, his feet and his clothes were dirty, as though he'd been on the road a long time.

*(Gets up and walk around again.)*

This Jesus, whoever he is, must have nerves of steel. Can you imagine having to make a decision like that? If he told them to stone me, the Romans would be on him like a swarm of bees. They don't look too fondly on that practice in these parts. But if Jesus told them *not* to stone me, he could get in trouble with the scribes and Pharisees who enforce the Torah.

*(Stops abruptly and turns to several students, getting close to them as she talks.)*

That guy, Jesus. He just bent down and wrote something in the dirt. I was crying so hard, I couldn't make it out. Here I was, trying to figure out a way to save my life, and Jesus just crouched there, playing in the dirt.

*(Acts out Jesus' motions.)*

Then he stood and looked the mob straight in the eyes. I'll never forget his words as long as I live. He said, "If any one of you is without sin, let him be the first to throw a stone."

*(Picks up a stone and holds it out to the class, then repeats the phrase and holds out the stone again. Repeats several times, making eye contact with everyone, then begins walking again.)*

I closed my eyes, waiting for the first stone to hit my trembling body. There was dead silence, I tell you! When I opened my eyes, all I could see was their backs as they walked away. And there was Jesus, crouched near the ground, writing in the dirt again. Can you believe it? *(Pause.)* I didn't know what to do. They were gone! Jesus stood and faced me, and I braced myself for a stern lecture.

*(Moves toward several students again.)*

He asked me where everyone went, and if anyone had thrown a stone at me. I whispered "No." Then he said, "Then neither do I condemn you. Go now and leave your life of sin."

*(Returns to stool or desk and sits down, facing the class.)*

"Leave your life of sin." I'm not sure what that means. I can't explain it, really, but I feel different somehow. Maybe it was my brush with death. Or maybe it was Jesus' words.

*(Stands and moves toward audience.)*

"Leave your life of sin." He gave me a lot to think about.



I run in the path  
of your commands,  
for you have set  
my heart free.

Psalm 119:32



# Reflections on John 8:1-11

*Pretend that you are the woman in the story. Answer the following questions.*

1. What do you think would have happened if Jesus had told the people to go home and leave you alone?

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2. How would that have been different from what Jesus actually did?

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3. If Jesus had told you that were a bad person, how would that have changed the freedom you felt inside?

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4. As the woman in the story, what would you want to say to Jesus after he told you he did not condemn you and you should go on your way and sin no more?

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# Jesus Offers Freedom

## LESSON 2: A RICH YOUNG RULER ENCOUNTERS FREEDOM

### Objective

Students will be introduced to a negative response to Jesus' offer for freedom through the story of the rich young ruler.

### Key Concepts

- The rich young ruler chose wealth over the freedom Jesus offered.
- Accepting the offer for freedom from sin and condemnation is a choice.
- Choosing includes accountability for our decisions.

**Text:** Mark 10:17-27

**Memory text:** John 8:31-32

**Estimated Lesson Time:** 40-45 minutes

### Materials

- Bibles
- "Mark 10:17-23 Reader's Theater" (p. 281)
- Transparency/projection of John 8:31-32 (p. 282)
- For Extend the Lesson, option one: "Reflections on Mark 10:17-23" (p. 283)
- For Extend the Lesson, option two: "Word Maze" (p. 284)

### Teacher Preparation

- Read the Scripture text for the lesson and the reader's theater script.
- Make three copies of the script for the readers. This script requires some movement and expression, so a bit of practice may be necessary. Choose three energetic and excellent readers to present this story, and ask them to make the story come alive for their classmates.
- If using Extend the Lesson, option one or option two, make a copy of the activity sheet for each student.

### INTRODUCING THE LESSON

**Project the memory text, John 8:31-32.** Have the students quietly read the text three times. Then ask them to write down three words that caught their attention. Turn off the projector and ask them to share with a partner what words they wrote and why. Next, ask the pairs to give you the word that stands out most to both of them, and why. Write these words on the board. Ask the class to tell you what the verses say. (*If we believe and know Jesus' teaching, which is truth, we are free.*)

Explain that in this lesson you will meet another person who encountered the freedom Jesus offers. As the students listen to this story, they should think about the response the man makes to Jesus. Does he understand the truth? Does he walk away a free man? Why or why not?

## LESSON STEPS

**1. The rich young ruler's story.** Invite the three readers to the front of the class and listen to the story as they present the reader's theater.

**2. Respond to the story.** Ask the students to find Mark 10:17-23 in their Bibles. Through asking questions, lead them to an understanding of the story:

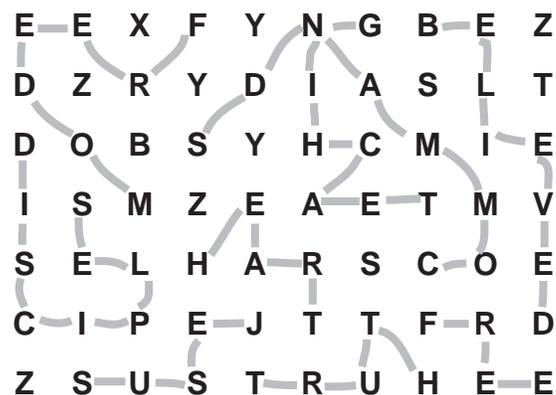
- What do we know about this person? (*He knew and kept the Ten Commandments.*)
- Do you think he loved Jesus? (*We know that he respected and honored him. He called him Good Teacher.*)
- Is Jesus telling us through this story that we can't follow him if we are rich? (*It appears that the rich young ruler was more concerned with doing the right thing than he was about having the right attitude. Jesus wanted him to have so much love for others that he was willing to sacrifice in order to meet their physical needs. This story is not necessarily about being rich. It does, however, focus on what we do with our financial and material resources.*)
- At the end of the story, Jesus asked his disciples if they had any idea how hard it was for people who "have it all" to enter the kingdom. Why is it hard for these people? (*Self-reliance, no need for God*)

## EXTEND THE LESSON

(*These activities will extend the lesson to longer than 40-45 minutes.*)

• **Reflect on the story.** Hand out the "Reflections on Mark 10:17-23" activity sheet. Give the students 10 minutes of quiet time to reflect on the story and its importance to us. At the end of the reflection time, give students an opportunity to share their thoughts with another student or to tuck their reflections away in a journal.

• **Memory text maze.** Hand out the word maze with important words from Psalm 119:32 and John 8:31-32. The answers are: *commands, heart, believed, teaching, disciples, truth, free, Jesus.*



# Mark 10:17-27 Reader's Theater

## from *The Message*

*Characters: Narrator, Jesus, Rich Young Ruler (might choose to wear a simple costume depicting wealth; bracelets, rings, turban, etc.)*

*(The rich young ruler runs toward Jesus.)*

**Narrator:** As he went out into the street, a man came running up and greeted him with great reverence.

**Young Ruler:** *(out of breath)* Good Teacher, what must I do to get eternal life?

**Jesus:** *(Says each command as a question. Pauses between each command and looks at young ruler. The young ruler nods head in affirmation after each command.)* Why are you calling me good? No one is good except God. You know the commandments: Don't murder, don't commit adultery, don't steal, don't lie, don't cheat, honor your father and mother.

**Young Ruler:** *(emphatically)* Teacher, I have—from my youth—kept them all!

**Narrator:** Jesus looked him hard in the eye—and loved him.

**Jesus:** *(Looks into young ruler's eyes, with hand on shoulder.)* There is one thing left: Go, sell whatever you own and give it to the poor. All your wealth will then be heavenly wealth. And come and follow me.

*(The rich young ruler looks very sad and turns as if walking away. Takes one or two steps, then freezes.)*

**Narrator:** This was the last thing the rich young ruler expected to hear. He was holding on tight to a lot of things, and not about to let go.

**Jesus:** *(Steps toward class and look directly at them.)* Disciples, do you have any idea how difficult it is for people who "have it all" to enter God's kingdom?



To the Jews who had believed him, Jesus said, "If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."

John 8:31-32



Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

## Reflections on Mark 10:17-23

*Reflect on the story of the rich young ruler. Then answer the questions below.*



1. Jesus clearly explained his need to the rich young ruler, so he understood the truth. What is the truth God wants you to know?

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2. Even though Jesus loved the man, he allowed him to choose. What does this tell you about Jesus and his relationship with you?

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3. Jesus asked the rich young ruler to give up something that was important to him. What might Jesus be asking you to change or give up?

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Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

# Freedom Word Maze

*This word search contains eight important words from Psalm 119:32 and John 8:31-32. Find each word and color it with a highlighter. Begin in any square and move from letter to letter in any direction—horizontally, vertically, or diagonally—until a word is completed. The word “freedom” has been done for you.*

E	E	X	F	Y	N	G	B	E	Z
D	Z	R	Y	D	I	A	S	L	T
D	O	B	S	Y	H	C	M	I	E
I	S	M	Z	E	A	E	T	M	V
S	E	L	H	A	R	S	C	O	E
C	I	P	E	J	T	T	F	R	D
Z	S	U	S	T	R	U	H	E	E

*When you find a word, list it below:*

1. freedom

6. d \_ \_ \_ \_ \_

2. c \_ \_ \_ \_

7. t \_ \_ \_

3. h \_ \_ \_

8. f \_ \_ \_

4. b \_ \_ \_ \_

9. J \_ \_ \_

5. t \_ \_ \_ \_



# Jesus Offers Freedom

## LESSON 3: WE ENCOUNTER FREEDOM

### Objective

Students will discuss the memory texts and a present-day story to explore the meaning of Christ's freedom in our lives.

### Key Concepts

- The light of Jesus removes sin.
- Accepting the freedom Jesus offers makes us sons and daughters in the family of God.
- The Light of the World shines through us to light the path for others.

**Memory Texts:** John 8:12; John 8:34-36

**Estimated Lesson Time:** 40-45 minutes

### Materials

- Bibles
- "Coals of Fire" (pp. 287-288)
- Transparencies/projections of memory texts (pp. 289-290)

### Teacher Preparation

- Read the "Coals of Fire" story and prepare to lead the discussion.
- Make copies of the story, one for each student.

### INTRODUCING THE LESSON

**Respond to the memory texts.** Project the John 8:12 memory text and ask the students to read the verse quietly several times. Turn off the projector and invite them to close their eyes and visualize the Scripture as you read it again. After a minute, ask the students to share what they visualized. Be accepting of all responses. Then ask: What is Jesus offering us? (*Himself as our light for life, no more darkness*) What does that mean to you? (*God's light can never be extinguished. Jesus' life brings light to us. In him, we can see that we are sinners and need a savior. If we follow Jesus closely we will be FREE from following our sinful nature.*)

Follow the same procedure for the second memory text, John 8:34-36. Ask the following questions: What does Christ say about people who sin? (*They are slaves.*) How does a slave fit into a family? (*No permanent place*) Who can set us FREE and make us children of God? (*God's Son*) What is Jesus offering us? (*To be sons and daughters in the family of God*)

### LESSON STEPS

**1. Read "Coals of Fire."** Hand out copies of the story and ask the students to read it. As they read the story, they should think about examples of freedom they see in the life of the main character, Chris. (*Have the students read the story on their own. However, if you have students who have reading difficulties, offer the entire class a choice to read on their own or to join you in a reading group.*)

**2. Discuss the story.** Following are some questions you may want to use in this discussion.

- Where did you see signs of freedom in Chris' life?
- Was Chris being nice to Jerome because he knew it would upset him?
- Who became free in this story?
- How did Chris' actions change Jerome?
- Did Chris' loving ways change anyone else?
- Who does Chris represent in the story?

Help students draw the following conclusions from this story: *Chris was free to choose how to respond to Jerome. Chris chose the way of the cross, or responding with love and grace. Chris' actions changed Jerome from being proud and competitive to being repentant and more thoughtful. We don't know what happened in the days after the story. Chris' actions were noticed by people who were watching, such as the teachers, his parents, and other students. Chris' attitude of love and grace opened the way for God to work in many people's lives.*

**3. Learn from the story.** This story teaches a moral or a life lesson for someone who wants to accept Jesus' offer and live a life of freedom. Ask students to think about the story and about how it fits with the memory texts. Then ask them to write a paragraph that explains the lesson of this story. Following is an example:

*This story, "Coals of Fire," is an example of a person living in the light. Chris is obviously not a slave to sin. He has accepted the freedom Christ offered him. He has a permanent place in the family of God. He is a child of God. Now he walks on a path that is lit by the light of Christ, so he can show love and grace to other people. The moral of the story is, when God's light shines through us, it lights the path for others. Then they can also accept freedom from sin and become sons and daughters in the family of God.*

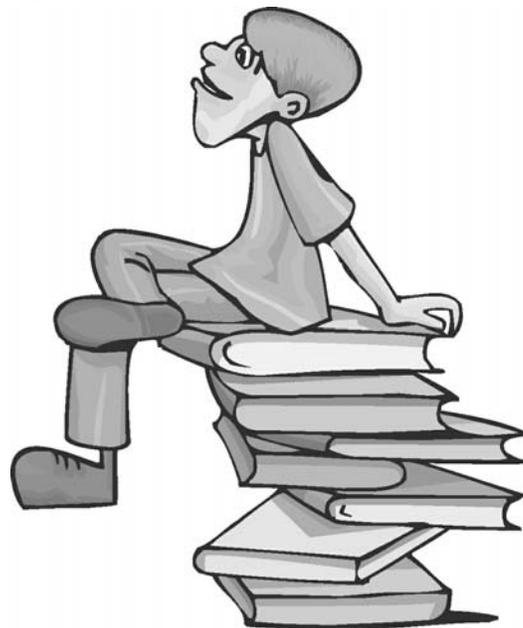
## **EXTEND THE LESSON**

*(This activity will extend the lesson to longer than 40-45 minutes.)*

• **Freedom poetry.** Invite the students to write a piece of poetry about the word "freedom." Here are several ideas you may want to share:

1. Try an acrostic format, where the first letter of each line spells a word.
2. Use similes and metaphors to connect to the five senses.
3. Refer to the freedom found in Jesus.
4. Make a good copy to publish!

# Coals of Fire



Okay, so maybe I don't really hate him. Maybe I'm just jealous. In our school we have a monthly honor roll listing the top student in each homeroom. It's mostly about grades, but they also count citizenship, leadership, and stuff like that—stuff nobody can figure out but them. Them and Jerome.

Jerome doesn't seem that smart to me, but he knows how to make teachers think he is. He always says the right thing, or even when he says the wrong thing he says it in the right way. And he always puts his homework in those little plastic folders. After the first month, he was on the honor roll the next four times straight.

Chris was the honor student the first month and probably should have been from then on instead of Jerome. I'm not saying that because I like Chris, 'cause I don't. I mean, would you like somebody your parents were all the time comparing you to? "Why can't you be more like Chris? He doesn't spend all his time sweating in a gym. He studies. He makes good grades."

It's not like I'm flunking out of anything. I make an A every now and then, mostly C's, but I'm busy. I'm tall and strong. Chris is about average size, but not physical at all. He can't do anything but read and study. I made 12 points in the last basketball game. You think that satisfied my parents? You think Chris' parents got on his case for not even making the team? You figure it out.

Well, anyway, last month we got an assignment in English class to write a biography, and it was due in two weeks. Our mouths all fell open, but nobody said anything. We knew better than to question Ms. Green. When Chris raised his hand, we stared at him and Ms. Green, waiting for the explosion.

"Our science fair projects are due next week," Chris said.

"That's none of my concern," answered Ms. Green.

"But it's required," Chris went on.

"So is this," said Ms. Green, "and it could easily be twice as long."

That's when Jerome stood up and made his

big play. "Ms. Green, let me apologize on behalf of the class. Just because the carrot-head is vegged out doesn't mean the rest of us are afraid of a little work. We'll get the job done."

Chris did have red hair. And after what Jerome said, he had a red face too, but he didn't have a temper to match. He looked at Jerome, at Ms. Green, and then down at his desk. That was all. If Jerome had said something like that about me, I'd have experimented on him for my science project.

With an odd smile, Ms. Green handed out the assignment sheets. Beside each student's name was the person they were supposed to write about. I got Rocky Marciano. Chris got Charles Dickens. And Jerome got somebody named Huey Long.

Naturally our science fair projects made us put off doing the biographies until the next week. The school library didn't have near enough stuff on Rocky Marciano, so one day after basketball practice I went over to the branch public library.

I found three books and was just wandering around when I came up behind Jerome. I was going to walk on by, but then I noticed he had a real pile of books in his arms. I stopped and looked. He had two books on his assigned person and six on Charles Dickens. Dickens was Chris' assignment! I went over to the magazine

section and sat down. When I saw Jerome leave, I checked the section where he had been. There wasn't one book left on Charles Dickens! I went home and called Chris.

"He stole your books, Chris," I said.

"Huh?" he asked.

"Jerome checked out all the books on Charles Dickens, so you won't be able to do your report."

"Oh," was all Chris said.

"Oh? What do you mean, *oh*? Don't you know Ms. Green'll have a fit if you don't get that report in? You won't get honor student again, and Jerome the Jerk will get away with cheating! You've gotta do something, and do it right now."

"Well," Chris said quietly. "I'll have to ask someone about it."

"Ask! Who do you have to ask? You can nail him. Tell Ms. Green. Tell the principal. I'll bet you could get him kicked out of school for this."

"Let me talk to my dad first."

"Your dad! Are you kidding? If you're scared, I'll get Jerome for you."

"No, please. It'll be all right. Don't worry."

"Chris, you're weird," I said, and hung up.

The next day when I saw Chris, he said everything had been taken care of.

"What are you going to do?" I asked.

"My dad's taking me to the central library after school today. I should be able to pick up some books and be back in time for science fair tonight."

"You mean you're just going to let Jerome get away with it? You're a wimp!" I said, and stomped off.

That evening we were all setting up our science projects in the gym—me with my potato-powered clock and Chris with something about bacteriology, when I heard Jerome from the other side of the gym.

"What do you mean I can't use these slides? I ordered 'em special just for the science fair."

"That's the point," said Mr. Conker, the tall, skinny science teacher. "The rules specifically state you cannot use commercially prepared specimens in your exhibit. If you're going to use slides, you have to make them yourself."

"But my project is on human blood," Jerome exploded. "What am I supposed to do, cut my own finger?"

I was going to offer to do the job for him, but right then Chris came over to me.

"This is what he said would happen."

"Who said what?" I asked, but he was already on his way over to talk to Jerome.

"Jerome," he said, "the science fair doesn't officially start for another half hour. I have some blank slides and all the other stuff you need. It really wouldn't take all that long to fix and stain a few slides for your exhibit. I could even tell you how to do it. That would be okay, wouldn't it, Mr. Conker?" he asked, looking up at the science teacher.

"Sure, as long as he does the work himself."

"But where will I get the blood?" Jerome asked.

Chris looked at him for a second or two and then, with a grin, stretched out both hands and said: "My blood ought to be red enough. I've got a needle with my project. We can sterilize it and draw blood from one of my fingers."

I don't think I ever saw a guy blush before—not like that, not crimson. And I know I never saw Jerome look so ashamed. But he sure was, and for the rest of the night he looked like a whipped puppy. He followed Chris to his table, did everything he said, and had his project ready on time.

When he won first place, that embarrassed him even more. After everything was over and we were putting all our junk away, I went over to Chris. "Whoever he was must be psychic," I said.

"What?" asked Chris.

"You told me, 'He said this would happen.' You really put Jerome in his place. I couldn't have done it better myself."

"Oh, that was God," said Chris with a smile.

"God! Oh, yeah, right. Like God talks to you personally."

"Through the Bible, sure," said Chris. "Jesus said, 'If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him a drink: for in so doing you will heap coals of fire on his head. Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.'"

"Oh," I said. "Well, I'll be seeing you." And then I gathered up my stuff and went home.

That was last week. But I'm still wondering about Chris . . .



When Jesus spoke again  
to the people, he said,  
"I am the light of the world.  
Whoever follows me  
will never walk in darkness,  
but will have the  
light of life."

John 8:12





Jesus, replied,  
"I tell you the truth,  
everyone who sins is  
a slave to sin. Now a slave  
has no permanent place in  
the family, but a son  
belongs to it forever.  
So if the Son sets you free,  
you will be free indeed.

John 8:34-36

# Jesus Offers Freedom

## Unit 9 Assessment

**Part 1:** *Circle the letter of the correct answer*

1. For what did the rich young ruler ask Jesus?
  - A. Healing in his body
  - B. How to obtain eternal life
  - C. Healing for someone else
2. The rich young ruler was a slave to:
  - A. Money and possessions
  - B. A slave owner
  - C. A person to whom he owed money
3. Jesus told the rich young ruler to:
  - A. Sell everything; give to the poor
  - B. Pay the money to the person he owed
  - C. Continue keeping the commandments
4. The woman was terrified people were going to:
  - A. Arrest her and put her into prison
  - B. Stone her to death
  - C. Make her move away from her family
5. Jesus told the woman that since everyone else left, he would:
  - A. Help her.
  - B. Not help her.
  - C. Not condemn her.
6. Jesus said, "Then you will know the \_\_\_\_ and it will set you free."
  - A. Name of God
  - B. Love of God
  - C. Truth

**Part 2:** *Answer the following questions in complete sentences.*

7. In your own words, explain what it means to have freedom in Christ.

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8. In your own words, explain what the character of Chris in the story "Coals of Fire" teaches about living a Christ-like life.

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**ANSWER KEY**

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- For what did the rich young ruler ask Jesus?
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  - Love of God
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**Part 2:** Answer the following questions in complete sentences.

7. In your own words, explain what it means to have freedom in Christ.

*(Accept reasonable answers.) Look for these ideas: accepting of Jesus' offer, following Jesus' model*

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8. In your own words, explain what the character of Chris in the story "Coals of Fire" teaches about living a Christ-like life.

*(Accept reasonable answers.) Chris responded to an unfair situation with love and grace. He chose to return good for evil. His actions offered Jerome forgiveness.*

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