

Grade 4—Unit 12

What Does the Lord Require?

In the final unit, students will reflect on the Lord’s requirements as stated in Micah 6:8. They will find answers to this question by studying models of justice from the Bible and other literary sources. They will explore point of view and perspective as tools for understanding each other. They will examine The Prayer of St. Francis, which points out ways to offer mercy to a suffering neighbor. Participating in drama gives students opportunities to apply “the way of love” in their daily living. Finally, students can leave for summer vacation knowing that God’s love and peace will go with them.

LESSONS

1. What Does God Want From Us?
2. Tools of Justice
3. Examples of Justice
4. Channels of Peace
5. The God of Peace and Love will Go with You

Plan ahead:

Lesson 3—contains 10 stories that need to be previewed.

Lesson 4—contains a short play. Assign the two lead characters ahead of time, so they can begin to memorize their lines. Consider how to give them additional class time for this task. Make arrangements with the principal for presenting the play; possibly during chapel.

Lesson 5—This lesson is completed in three sessions throughout the last day of school. You will need preparation time for writing personal letters to your students. *One suggestion:* write a generic letter, but include one personalized paragraph that highlights the gift you appreciate in that student.

Unit 12: What Does the Lord Require?

Unit Information

SUMMARY

Micah 6:8 clearly states that God expects us to do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with God. The Bible and literature provide models for this way of living. Philemon, a wealthy slave holder, was challenged by Paul to go against cultural and social norms to show mercy to a brother, and many characters in literature exemplify “just living.” St. Francis of Assisi called people to be channels of God’s peace in a pained and sorrowful world. Justice, mercy, and humility continue to be expected of God’s people in their daily living.

KEY BIBLE TEXTS

Lesson 1

Deuteronomy 6:4-8

Matthew 20:26-28

Matthew 22:37-40

John 4:15-21

John 12:23-28

The Book of Philemon

Lesson 5

2 Corinthians 13:11

Memory Text: Micah 6:8 (*This text appears in all five lessons.*)

BIBLICAL BACKGROUND

Just Living

Christians throughout history have addressed what it means to love God with heart, mind, and soul. Jesus modeled a life of servanthood. Each of us makes moment-by-moment decisions as we relate to others. Children already know that we are to love God with our hearts, souls, and strength. If we love God in this way, we will most assuredly live in right relationship with the people around us. Micah, a prophet during Hezekiah’s reign, summed it up in this way: *He has told you, O mortal, what is good, and what does the LORD require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness and to walk humbly with your God?* (Micah 6:8 NRSV)

Indeed, God has acted with justice, love, and mercy throughout history. Jesus modeled a life filled with love, justice, humility and mercy. He came as God’s Son, not to conquer but to free. Jesus taught people about just living as well.

Philemon gives a good example of a situation where a person could be treated with love, mercy, and justice. Paul’s letter to Philemon and the church where he was accountable is quite short, but filled with a desire for just living.

During the time of Paul’s ministry, there were as many as 60 million slaves in the Roman Empire. Most slave owners worked to subjugate their slaves. They also tried to keep their slaves separated from one another, because they feared a mas-

sive rebellion. Slaves in this culture were treated as tools, not humans. A master had absolute control over his slaves.

Many slave owners took delight in beating their slaves for the slightest infraction. Slaves who seemed rebellious or uncooperative were often killed. Slaves that ran away and were later found were often branded on the forehead with the letter F to symbolize their status as *fugitivus*, or runaway. Some slaves were crucified as a penalty for escaping from their master's household.

In Paul's letter to Philemon, he wrote on behalf of Onesimus. Onesimus had been one of Philemon's slaves in Colosse. Apparently, Onesimus had run away. In fact, he somehow managed to travel the distance from Colosse to Rome, where he became a Christian and began working with Paul.

Apparently, Onesimus stole something from Philemon before he escaped. This makes sense, as he would have needed money while traveling. The extent of his theft is unknown, but the penalties could have been severe.

The situation was unusual. A runaway slave of a Christian slave owner escapes and finds his way to Rome, where he becomes a Christian and begins working as one of Paul's right-hand men. What was Paul to do? Philemon was one of his friends and co-workers from the church in Colosse. Regardless of his position concerning slavery, it seemed that reconciliation between Philemon and Onesimus was needed.

Paul did not mention Philemon's prior treatment of Onesimus as a slave. Instead, he interceded on Onesimus' behalf. Paul asked Philemon to treat Onesimus as a brother in the Lord and reminded him of God's grace. He offered to repay Philemon for anything Onesimus stole and suggested that, as a Christian brother, Philemon treat Onesimus even better than requested.

The name Onesimus means "the profitable one." Paul suggests that Onesimus had become an important part of Christ's work in Rome and that he could continue his profitable work in the churches near Colosse. Fifty years later, Ignatius wrote several letters which affirm the gifts of a certain bishop of the church whose name was Onesimus. It is possible that this man was the former slave of Philemon who ran away, became a Christian, and returned to the area to make amends. Perhaps Philemon forgave Onesimus and welcomed him with open arms. We have no way of knowing.

We do know that becoming a Christian meant a new way of living for people who were slaves, as well as for those who owned slaves. Teachings concerning the relationship between slaves and their masters are found in Ephesians 6:5-9; Colossians 3:22-4:6; 1 Corinthians 7:21-24; 1 Corinthians 12:12-13; Galatians 3:26-29; and 1 Timothy 6:1-2.

Slaves who were abused by their masters were called to respond to this treatment in loving ways when they became Christ's followers. Masters who became part of the new faith community were taught to treat all persons with love and mercy. How might this change their relationship with their slaves?

Furthermore, slaves and their masters worshiped together as equals in small house fellowships and church gatherings. It must have been difficult for all concerned. Imagine participating in a worship service led by your slave, or sharing bread with your master at a love feast.

ESSENTIAL UNDERSTANDINGS

- The Bible and literature give us models of justice, mercy, and humility.
- God calls each one of us to treat others with love.
- In loving others, we are called to show mercy and work toward justice.

WORSHIP

1. Worship should be reflective in nature. The theme can be “justice,” with Micah 6:8 and “Make me a channel of your peace” (*Sing the Journey* #56) as the theme verse and theme song.

2. Stories. If you do not use all the stories that accompany Lesson 3, you may choose to read several of them to the class during worship time.

3. Discussion. Use this time of worship to discuss justice, mercy, and humility in the students’ daily lives. Help them think about where and how they can demonstrate these characteristics. Examples:

- cooperating with a sibling
- creating peaceful families by being obedient
- respecting other students and their points of view
- following school rules out of respect for school authorities

4. Watch for ideas in the lessons that you want to carry into the worship setting. Lesson 4 has an activity using the song, “Make me a channel of your peace,” and suggests extending the activity into worship. You can lead the students in a time of quiet, to reflect and pray about their responsibility to justice. A prayer found in *Sing the Journey*, #128, might be used as a beginning to this experience.

5. Take time to discuss the fruits of the Spirit found in Galatians 5:22-23. Discuss the relationship of these verses to Micah 6:8.

MEMORY PASSAGES

The memory text, Micah 6:8, is an important focus for each one of the five lessons. Expect your students to memorize it and pray that they will carry it in their hearts. The verse is beautifully paraphrased in *The Message* by Eugene Peterson. Be sure to read it!

ASSESSING TEACHING / LEARNING

Several activity sheets and the unit assessment provide formal assessment for this unit. Discussions and group activities provide informal assessment. Consider using this unit for reflection, application, and worship, rather than assessment.

What Does the Lord Require?

LESSON 1: WHAT DOES GOD WANT FROM US?

Objective

Students will search Scripture to find answers to the question, “What does God want from us?” They will learn how Christ’s message of love breaks down barriers.

Key Concepts

- The Bible is a road map for godly living.
- Christ’s message of love breaks down barriers that create classes of people.
- Philemon, a slave owner, was asked to accept Onesimus, his slave, as a brother in Christ.

Text: Deuteronomy 6:4-8; Matthew 20:26-28; Matthew 22:37-40; John 4:15-21; John 12:23-28a; Philemon

Memory Text: Micah 6:8

Estimated Lesson Time: 40-45 minutes

Materials

- Bibles
- “Scripture References” (p. 397)
- “What Does the Lord Require?” (p. 398)
- Transparency/projection of Micah 6:8 (Unit 7, p. 236)
- For Extend the Lesson: “A Letter to Philemon” (p. 399)

Teacher Preparation

- The title of this lesson is considered the lesson question. You will begin a list of ideas to answer this question, first by brainstorming and then through Scripture study. The chart “What Does the Lord Require?” bears the unit title, since it will be used in following lessons. It needs to be kept in student notebooks.
- In preparation for telling the story of Onesimus, study the biblical background (pp. 392-393) and the additional notes below. Be sure you are prepared to share the cultural practices of slavery, the story of Onesimus, and the radical social change that becoming a follower of Jesus brought to this society.

Notes: *In all nations and societies, and throughout history, there have been barriers that separate people from each other. The Roman, Greek, and Jewish societies were no exception. They assigned people to classes and saw to it that they stayed in their classes of rich and poor, men and women, Jews and Gentiles, slave and free—to name a few. However, these barriers started to come down when Jesus Christ and his ministry of love came into the picture. The story of Paul’s letter to Philemon about his slave, Onesimus, is a beautiful example. Christ’s love was breaking down the barrier between slave and free, recognizing their brotherhood in the fellowship of believers, and bringing about radical social change in the hearts, minds, and actions of Christ’s followers.*

- Make one copy each of “Scripture References” and “What Does the Lord Require?” for every student.
- If using the Extend the Lesson activity, make one copy of “A Letter to Philemon” for each student

INTRODUCING THE LESSON

“What does God want from us?” Write this question on the chalkboard. Beside it, write “Examples.” Explain, “We know that Jesus gave his life so we can be saved and have everlasting life. The first thing that God wants is for us to accept this free gift.”

Write “Accept God’s free gift” on the board, under the question. Now ask the students to suggest answers for the question. Write their ideas on the board. When their ideas are exhausted, tell them you want them to look at several Scriptures that might help them add to the list.

LESSON STEPS

1. Search the Scripture. Hand out the reading activity sheet, “Scripture References.” Have the students quickly form teams of two, and then read Deuteronomy 6:4-8 with their partners. Ask if there is anything from this Scripture they would like to add to the list on the board. Continue in this way with all five references on the sheet.

2. Study the memory text. Have students find Micah 6:8 in their Bibles. Display the transparency/projection of the text and discuss what it means. Ask, “Is there anything in this Scripture that helps to answer our lesson question?” List the students’ thoughts on the board.

3. Philemon, an example of justice. Explain that you want to share a story (*the book of Philemon*) that was written by the apostle Paul, but first you need to give them some background. Share the information from Teacher Preparation about the practice of slavery in the Roman Empire during the time of Paul.

Then tell the story, making sure students understand three things: 1) the cultural practice of slavery in the Roman Empire, 2) that Christ’s message of love breaks down social barriers, and 3) Christ’s followers must be ready to accept others no matter what the rest of society thinks. Finally, ask students to add additional ideas from this story to the list on the chart that answers today’s lesson question. Ask if they have found any examples of people who did things God wanted them to do. Then have students copy the information from the board onto the chart, “What Does the Lord Require?” Ask them to write neatly, as they will be using this chart in other lessons. They should keep the charts in their notebooks.

EXTEND THE LESSON

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

- **“A Letter to Philemon.”** Hand out the activity sheet. Ask students to open their Bibles to Philemon, read the letter, and answer the questions on the sheet. The way they answer the last question will help you know how well they are catching the message of “just living.”

Scripture References



⁴ Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one.

⁵ Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength.

⁶ These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts.

⁷ Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up.

⁸ Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads.

Deuteronomy 6:4-8



²³ Jesus replied, “The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified.

²⁴ I tell you the truth, unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds.

²⁵ The man who loves his life will lose it, while the man who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life.

²⁶ Whoever serves me must follow me; and where I am, my servant also will be. My Father will honor the one who serves me.

²⁷ “Now my heart is troubled, and what shall I say? ‘Father, save me from this hour?’ No, it was for this very reason I came to this hour.

²⁸ Father, glorify your name!”

John 12:23-28a

¹⁵ The woman said to him, “Sir, give me this water so that I won’t get thirsty and have to keep coming here to draw water.”

¹⁶ He told her, “Go, call your husband and come back.”

¹⁷ “I have no husband,” she replied. Jesus said to her, “You are right when you say you have no husband.

¹⁸ The fact is, you have had five husbands, and the man you now have is not your husband. What you have just said is quite true.”

¹⁹ “Sir,” the woman said, “I can see that you are a prophet.

²⁰ Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, but you Jews claim that the place where we must worship is in Jerusalem.”

²¹ Jesus declared, “Believe me, woman, a time is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem.”

John 4:15-21

²⁶ “Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant,

²⁷ and whoever wants to be first must be your slave—

²⁸ just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”

Matthew 20:26-28

³⁷ Jesus replied: “ ‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’

³⁸ This is the first and greatest commandment.

³⁹ And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’

⁴⁰ All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.”

Matthew 22:37-40



Name _____

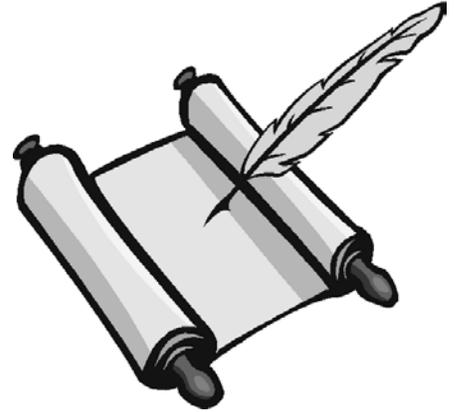
Date _____

What Does the Lord Require?

| <i>What God requires of us</i> | <i>Examples of godly living</i> |
|--------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| | |

A Letter to Philemon from Paul, a Prisoner of Christ Jesus

Find the book of Philemon in your Bible and read it. This short book is a letter from the Apostle Paul to Philemon, a slaveholder. In the letter, Paul asks Philemon, a Christian brother, to go against what is normal in his culture and accept his slave Onesimus, also a Christian, as a brother. Fill in the blanks below.

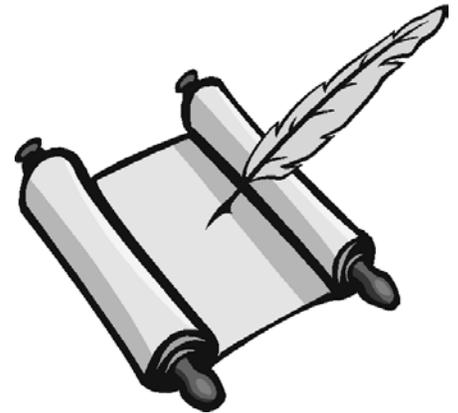


1. At the start of the letter, Paul offers Philemon a blessing of _____ and _____.
2. Paul mentions that he is thankful for Philemon because of his _____ in Jesus Christ and his _____ for all the saints.
3. Paul says Philemon's love has given him great _____ and _____.
4. When Paul is writing this letter, he is a _____.
5. Paul wants to keep Onesimus because he is a great _____ to him while he is in chains for the gospel.
6. Paul thinks Onesimus may have been separated from Philemon for a while so he could have him back for _____, not as a _____ but as a _____.
7. Paul tells Philemon he could _____ anything Onesimus owes to Paul's account.
8. Paul is confident that Philemon would be _____ to his Christian beliefs.
9. The Bible doesn't tell us how Philemon reacted to this letter and the return of his runaway slave that became a believer and follower of Christ. What do you think happened?

10. What is the important lesson from this story?

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- At the start of the letter, Paul offers Philemon a blessing of grace and peace.
- Paul mentions that he is thankful for Philemon because of his faith in Jesus Christ and his love for all the saints.
- Paul says Philemon’s love has given him great joy and encouragement.
- When Paul is writing this letter, he is a prisoner.
- Paul wants to keep Onesimus because he is a great help to him while he is in chains for the gospel.
- Paul thinks Onesimus may have been separated from Philemon for a while so he could have him back for good, not as a slave but as a brother.
- Paul tells Philemon he could charge anything Onesimus owes to Paul’s account.
- Paul is confident that Philemon would be obedient to his Christian beliefs.
- The Bible doesn’t tell us how Philemon reacted to this letter and the return of his run-away slave that became a believer and follower of Christ. What do you think happened?

(Answers will vary.)

- What is the important lesson from this story?

There are no barriers in the family of God—all are equal as brothers and sisters.

What Does the Lord Require?

LESSON 2: TOOLS OF JUSTICE

Objective

Students will learn that each person has a unique perspective. The ability to see from another’s point of view is a tool that helps us work for justice.

Key Concepts

- Micah, a minor prophet, explained God’s judgment and pardon for the people of Israel and Judah.
- God requires us to act justly, show mercy, and walk humbly.
- Each person experiences life in a unique way.
- We must try to understand the feelings and experiences of other people.

Memory text: Micah 6:8

Estimated Lesson Time: 40-45 minutes

Materials

- Bibles
- Transparency/projection of Micah 6:8 (from Lesson 1)
- “Point of View” playing cards (pp. 403-404)
- “What Does the Lord Require?” chart from Lesson 1
- For Extend the Lesson: “The Wise Men and the Elephant” (p. 405)

Teacher Preparation

- Make enough copies of the playing cards so each student has one card and each player in a group of four has a different card (*see lesson step 2*).
- Read directions for the game ahead of time, so you can explain it clearly.

INTRODUCING THE LESSON

Display the transparency/projection of Micah 6:8. Read the verse several times—have all the girls read it, then all the boys, and then you, the teacher. Ask, “Who does the pronoun ‘he’ refer to?” (*God*) Then give some background information about the verse:

Micah was a prophet who saw how evil the people of Israel and Judah were during the reigns of King Jotham, King Ahaz and King Hezekiah. Micah’s message, which we read in the book of Micah, is God’s warning of judgment and offer of pardon. The entire book is written like a trial of (1) the capitals, (2) the leaders, and (3) the people. In chapter six, speaking God’s words of judgment, Micah tells the people what they have done wrong to God and to other people. He also tells them what God, the judge, requires of them: to (1) be just, (2) offer mercy, and (3) walk humbly with God.

People try many ways to please God, but this memory text explains what God wants from us. Explain that in this lesson you will explore the meaning of justice, mercy, and humility. You will also be reminded of characteristics that can help or hinder you in being just and merciful people.

LESSON STEPS

1. “Perspective” or point of view. Share with the students that each of us has our own point of view, or *perspective*. This perspective comes from what we believe. Our beliefs come from what we have been taught and what we have experienced ever since we were born. We each have a different perspective, and must learn to respect other people’s points of view.

Sometimes someone else’s perspective can help us see something better. Explain that they will play a game that helps them see how different people’s perspectives can work together. Then they will work together to develop definitions for justice, mercy, and humility.

2. “Point of View” game. Divide the class into groups of four. Give each one in the group a “Point of View” card. (*Make sure that each group has four different points of view.*) Tell them to absolutely not share the information on their cards with anyone.

To begin the game, tell students that they have just returned from the playground after playing a game of kickball. Something happened to each one of them during the game, which is printed on their secret card. They should look at the card and decide how they feel about the kickball game, based on what happened to them. Give the following directions, allowing time for each step shown.

- 1) Each group member tells the rest of the group how they feel about the kickball game, without revealing what happened to them. (*1-2 minutes*)
- 2) Each group member gets 30 seconds to defend his/her point of view—again without revealing what happened. (*Call time at the end of each 30 seconds.*)
- 3) One group member starts a discussion by asking another member why he/she feels that way about the game. (*Students should make up a short story about what happened to them, based on the card.*) This discussion continues until all members have expressed their feelings (*3-5 minutes*).
- 4) Call students back together and ask: If this really happened, and you were on the kickball field, how would you have responded to the different attitudes? Was it important to understand the other person’s point of view? How would you have shown justice, mercy, or humility in this situation? (*Pursue the discussion until the students have shared meaningful ways of demonstrating these characteristics in real situations.*)

3. Justice, mercy, and humility. Ask each group to develop and write definitions for these three words. Each person should 1) share his/her perspective with the group, 2) listen to the others’ viewpoints, and 3) help write one group definition for each word. Explain that if they are willing to listen to each other’s viewpoints and agree on definitions, they will be acting out the words they’re defining. Collect the definitions and save them for a worship discussion.

4. “What Does the Lord Require?” Have students check their charts from Lesson 1. Ask if there is anything from today’s lesson that needs to be added to the chart.

EXTEND THE LESSON

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

• **Read a story about points of view.** Read “The Wise Men and the Elephant” and discuss how each man had a different point of view based on what part of the elephant he experienced. (*The point of this story is not to discuss the points of view but to recognize the legitimacy of each point of view.*)

"Point of View" Playing Cards

| | |
|---------------------------|------------------------------------|
| <i>Kicked a home run!</i> | <i>Fell and sprained an ankle!</i> |
| <i>Kicked a home run!</i> | <i>Fell and sprained an ankle!</i> |
| <i>Kicked a home run!</i> | <i>Fell and sprained an ankle!</i> |
| <i>Kicked a home run!</i> | <i>Fell and sprained an ankle!</i> |
| <i>Kicked a home run!</i> | <i>Fell and sprained an ankle!</i> |
| <i>Kicked a home run!</i> | <i>Fell and sprained an ankle!</i> |
| <i>Kicked a home run!</i> | <i>Fell and sprained an ankle!</i> |
| <i>Kicked a home run!</i> | <i>Fell and sprained an ankle!</i> |
| <i>Kicked a home run!</i> | <i>Fell and sprained an ankle!</i> |
| <i>Kicked a home run!</i> | <i>Fell and sprained an ankle!</i> |

| | |
|----------------|------------------------------------|
| Kicked an out! | Ran home on another player's kick! |
| Kicked an out! | Ran home on another player's kick! |
| Kicked an out! | Ran home on another player's kick! |
| Kicked an out! | Ran home on another player's kick! |
| Kicked an out! | Ran home on another player's kick! |
| Kicked an out! | Ran home on another player's kick! |
| Kicked an out! | Ran home on another player's kick! |
| Kicked an out! | Ran home on another player's kick! |
| Kicked an out! | Ran home on another player's kick! |

The Wise Men and the Elephant

Once there were six blind men who lived in a small village near a forest. Each of the men was wise beyond his years. One day an elephant wandered into their town. People couldn't believe their eyes! They didn't know what to call this humongous beast, for they had never seen such a thing before.

"Go get our blind friends," suggested the mayor, "for they are known to see those things that sighted people cannot see. They will know what to do."

The wise men were brought to the center of the town, where the people asked them to decide what this lumbering mass of wrinkle was. After discussing the matter, the six men agreed that they should feel the creature, and then they would know what it was.

The first blind man touched the elephant's hind leg. "This is not an animal," he remarked. "It is a tree." The crowd gasped and turned to the second man in disbelief. "You try," the mayor said.

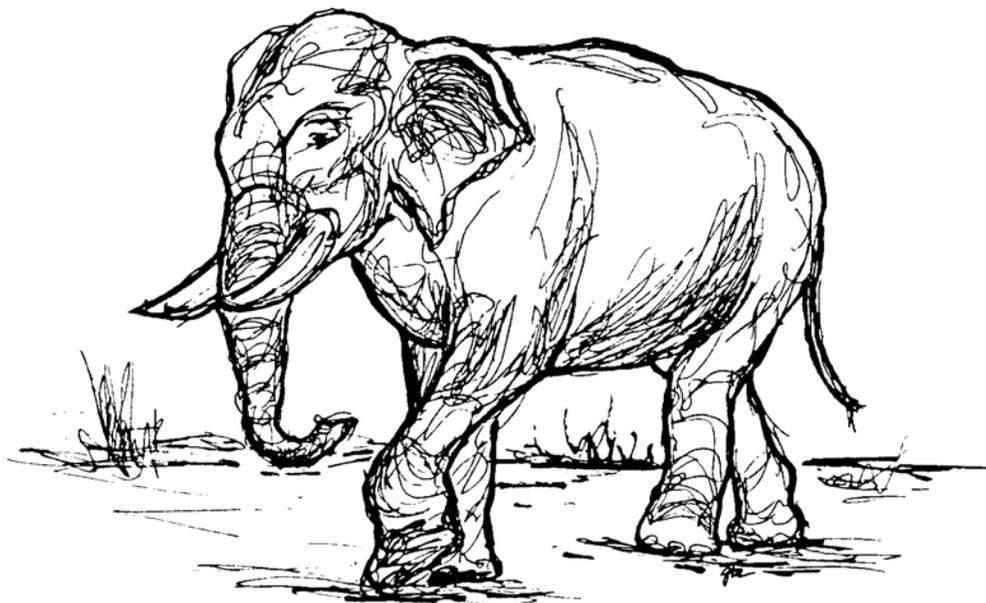
So the second man was led to the front of the elephant and he felt the animal's trunk. "Oh, my!" he exclaimed. "It's not a tree, but a snake!" And he jumped back with a shriek.

The third man walked over to the elephant and felt its large, floppy ear. "Hmmm," he said as the elephant's ear flicked at a fly. "My dear friends are mistaken. It is a fan! Didn't you feel the air move?"

The fourth man moved to the elephant's head and moved his hand up and down the elephant's tusk. "Ouch!" he exclaimed as he pushed his hand against the point. "This is no fan. It is a spear!"

As the fifth blind man leaned against the elephant's side, he assured the people that it was like a high wall, strong and unyielding. The sixth man was eager to know more. He leaned out and felt the elephant's tail. "I know," he said, speaking softly to the crowd. "It is neither tree, nor wall, nor snake, nor spear, nor fan. It is a rope!"

The people began arguing among themselves as the blind men repeated their findings. For lack of interest, the elephant lumbered through the streets of the town and into the countryside, never to be seen again. To this day, the people of the town disagree on what actually came to visit their cozy little village one sunny day.



What Does the Lord Require?

LESSON 3: EXAMPLES OF JUSTICE

Objective

Students will explore short literary stories to find examples of justice or injustice, mercy, and humility.

Key Concepts

- Acting out justice in our daily lives requires courage, commitment, and faith.
- Acting justly can be difficult and unpopular.
- We demonstrate justice in small ways in our daily living.

Memory text: Micah 6:8

Estimated Lesson Time: 40-45 minutes (*Reading circles will take 3 to 5 additional class periods.*)

Materials

- Bibles
- “What Does the Lord Require?” chart from Lesson 1
- “Discussion Activities” for reading circles (p. 409)
- Short stories:
 - “Take the Pizza and Run” (pp. 410-411)
 - “Hospitality Amidst Ashes” (p. 412)
 - “The King’s Visit” (pp. 413-415)
 - “God Is the Greatest” (pp. 416-417)
 - “The Kittens and the Thief” (pp. 418-419)
 - “The Tiger’s Whisker: A Korean Folktale” (pp. 420-421)
 - “Lion’s Lament” (p. 422)
 - “Average Amy” (pp. 423-424)
 - “The Argument Sticks: Iroquois Tale” (p. 425)
 - “Already Paid” (pp. 426-428)
- Folders (1 for each reading circle)
- Reading circle number cards (*see Teacher Preparation*)

Teacher Preparation

- This lesson contains stories to be used for reading circles. Each story illustrates an aspect of Micah 6:8. Read each one carefully before assigning them to students. Directions for reading circles are found in Extend the Lesson. You may choose to spend 3-5 days on this activity. If you run out of stories, recycle stories from the first days, arranging the groups so students do not repeat stories. When you complete the activity, make copies of the stories available on the worship table, so students can read the stories they missed.
- Make 5 copies of each story you choose. (*Be sure to save the copies for next year.*) If you have 3 circles, you will need 3 stories. Put them in three separate folders, numbered #1, #2, and #3. For each day you have circles, you will need to choose a new set of stories or switch the stories to different groups.
- Use index cards to make reading circle number cards. (*You will pass out cards to*

the students to divide them into groups.) The number you need depends on the number of circles and the number of students in each circle (*no more than 5*). For example, if you have 15 students, you can have 3 groups of 5. You will need 15 cards; five of #1, five of #2, and five of #3. *OR*, you could have 5 groups of 3, with three cards each of numbers 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5.

- Make a copy of “Discussion Activities” for each student, for each day of reading circles.

INTRODUCING THE LESSON

Review Lesson 2 by briefly sharing several of the definitions the groups wrote for justice, mercy, and humility. Explain that for the next three to five days (*your choice*), they will gather in small reading circles to stories they have read ahead of time. Each of the stories has something to do with justice. It might talk about justice, portray justice or injustice, or call us to “just living.”

LESSON STEPS

1. Introduce reading circles. Give the following explanation:

- Today I will give you a card with a number on it. This is the number of the reading circle you will meet with tomorrow. Each day that we have reading circles, I will give you a new number.
- After you receive your card, listen for me to call your number. When you hear me say your number, come to me and lay your number card on the table. You will take your story from the folder with the same number.
- You will read your story during our class silent reading time or for homework (*teacher’s choice*). When you read your story, think of about the themes of justice, mercy, or humility. It could have more than one of these.
- You will also receive an activity sheet with some directions and questions. You will fill out part of the sheet when you are reading, but you will do most of the work during your reading circle discussion tomorrow. The directions will tell you what to do.
- The first thing you will do when you meet in your reading circle tomorrow is choose a leader. You may choose your leader by consensus or draw straws. If you cannot agree quickly, raise your hands and I will come and help you. The leader is responsible to make sure the discussion stays focused, that all group members are involved in the discussion and listening to each other, and are treating each other justly. Finally, the leader will raise his/her hand and ask for my help if there are problems.
- The other members in the group are responsible to support the leader, be part of the discussion, be good listeners, and respond to each other with mercy. Each group will discuss the story according to the directions on the activity sheet.
- When you have finished your discussion, take out your “What Does the Lord Require?” charts and add any new ideas or examples. At the end of the unit, you will need to turn in this chart to me. (*Have extra charts available for students who run out of space on their first chart.*)

2. Begin the activity. Distribute the number cards, and then the folders with the stories, to the students. Give them time to read their stories silently. Also distribute

the discussion activity sheets, so they can fill in the part they are to do on their own. *(The rest of the sheet will be completed in the reading circle.)*

3. The following day, have students gather in their reading circles and proceed with the discussions.

Note: At the end of each reading circle session, collect the discussion activity sheets. The students' written work will help you understand what is happening in the groups and what you might need to address before the next session. Each day you do reading circles, you will need to provide another set of stories, re-number the groups, provide another activity sheet for each student, repeat the group session directions, and remind students to update their "What Does the Lord Require?" charts.

Discussion Activities for Reading Circles

For You to Fill Out

Read the story assigned to you. Make notes below. Remember that you want to explore the story characters as examples of *JUSTICE* or *INJUSTICE*.

A. Story title: _____

B. Characters: _____

C. What characteristics shown by story characters seem important to you, and why?

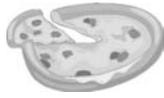
D. What event was most surprising, story-changing, interesting, sad, happy, exciting, etc.?

E. Write at least one question you want to explore with your reading circle.

For the Circle to Fill Out

Choose your leader quickly and start the discussion. The leader must make sure the discussion stays focused and that all members are included. Group members must participate and help the leader by being respectful of each other's point of view.

1. Briefly discuss the characters and how their characteristics demonstrate justice or injustice.
2. Talk about the story events that stood out to group members.
3. Discuss the questions each member brought to the group.
4. Discuss: Did the story have an important message? If so, what? What character trait is something you want to copy?
5. On a separate sheet of paper, write a short essay that will help your teacher understand what you learned from the story. Be sure to include what is important in the story; where justice or injustice was demonstrated; and which character traits from the story you want to display in your actions. (*Attach your essay to this paper and give it to your teacher at the end of the reading circle time.*)



Take the Pizza and Run



It didn't take a genius to see that Robbie and Ryan had been in Sara's room again. Sara Roberts blinked twice as she scanned her room for damage. Comic books were strewn on the floor, her dresser drawers hung open and her clothes hamper sat on top of her bed, the dirty clothes scattered across her room.

Sara stopped to listen. Something else was bothering her—the silence. It was too quiet. Robbie and Ryan were never quiet, unless they'd done something wrong or were sneaking outside to . . . play ball!

Jumping over her unmade bed, Sara pushed her dresser few inches out from the wall.

"They got it!" she screamed. "They got my glove!"

Pieces of twisted masking tape dangled where Sara had taped her glove to the back of the dresser the day before. Sara wadded the tape into tight little balls and tossed them toward the wastepaper basket. Three hit the rim and one went in. This wasn't the first time Robbie and Ryan had used her glove without permission, but it would be the last!

Everything had been so nice and neat when it was just Sara and her mom. Nobody to share anything with, including the bathroom. Mom had her room and Sara had hers. Things changed when Sara's mom married Larry. Overnight, her nice, neat family of two evolved into five, not counting Larry's dog, Cuffy, and Robbie and Ryan's hamsters. It seemed like nothing belonged just to Sara anymore.

"I know," she said aloud. "I'll make a list of everything Robbie and Ryan have taken from my room and give it to Mom and Larry. They'll have to do something if I write it down."

Sara leaned her chair back on two legs and pulled out the top drawer where she kept her pencils. Flicking on the radio, she reached for the three red pencils she kept tucked in the right-hand corner of the drawer. The ones with Sara Roberts stamped in gold. The ones she used only for really important assignments. In their place, she found two broken crayons and a dried-out marker, an obvious attempt by Robbie and Ryan to replace what they had borrowed.

"Ah-h-h!" Sara screamed, slamming her desk drawer. "Not my pencils, too!"

Sara heard the boys yelling outside as they

tossed a ball back and forth. Sara wondered who was using her glove—Robbie or Ryan. It didn't matter. They were both in trouble.

Throwing open her window, Sara yelled, "Who took my glove?"

Robbie and Ryan squinted up at Sara. "We did. Want to play?" Robbie yelled back.

"Why'd you tape to your dresser, anyway? We had a hard time finding it!" Ryan added.

Sara stuck her head farther out the window. "That's the whole point!" she screamed louder. "You weren't *supposed* to find it!"

"Uh-oh!" Ryan answered, looking at Robbie. "But Robbie and I share everything. You don't have to be so piggy!"

"Piggy! *Piggy!*" Sara shouted back, bumping her head on the window. "It's my stuff! Mine! Stay out! And that's an order!"

She slammed down the window and huffed her way back to her desk. It would take more than a letter to Mom and Larry to straighten out Robbie and Ryan.

"That's right, folks! A free extra-large pepperoni pizza with double cheese, delivered tonight to your doorstep," Sara's radio blared. "Just be the sixth caller to identify this 'oldie but goodie,' and that pizza is on its way."

Sara reached for the off button, but stopped as the song began to play.

I know that song, she thought. *Someone sang it at Larry and Mom's wedding. Something about beginnings . . .*

"Call now! 555-2211," the radio announcer boomed. "One pizza, just for you."

Sara tore down the stairs to the kitchen and dialed the number.

"You're the sixth caller," the man's voice from the radio answered. "Go ahead."

"Is it 'We've Only Just Begun'?" Sara gasped into the phone, out of breath from her sprint down the stairs.

"We have our winner," the man announced. "No more calls, please. Hold on and we'll get your name and address."

Sara squealed into the phone. One extra-large pepperoni pizza with double cheese, and she didn't have to share. The man said so.

Hanging up the phone, Sara breezed back to her room. Never mind the borrowed glove. Never mind that her three favorite pencils were

missing. Tonight she would eat an entire pizza in front of Robbie and Ryan. And even if they begged, they weren't getting any.

Sara began to throw her clothes back into her hamper. She hadn't felt so good in weeks.

It was Larry's night to cook, which meant vegetable-something was on the menu. Larry was into vegetables, whole grains, and anything else to "keep the old machine in good working order."

"What's for supper?" Robbie asked, sniffing the air.

"Zucchini casserole, my specialty," Larry answered. "Did you kids wash up?"

"Yeah."

"Kind of."

Larry turned and pointed to the bathroom, and Ryan and Robbie marched off obediently.

Sara hadn't told anybody that at 5:45 p.m. her prize-winning pizza was being delivered. It would be a surprise, and that's the way she wanted it. She looked at her watch. Eight minutes till showtime.

Larry threw a piece of zucchini to Cuffy, who gobbled it in mid-air. Larry even had Cuffy liking vegetables.

"Sara, could you put these plates on for me?" Larry asked. "I'm just about ready."

Sara grabbed the plates off the counter and finished setting the table in silence. She liked Larry okay. It's just that when they were alone she never knew what to say.

"The boys are kinda getting to you, aren't they?" Larry asked. "I know. They get to me sometimes, too."

Sara looked up from the table. "What do you mean?" she asked, surprised that Larry knew what she was thinking.

"For Robbie and Ryan, whatever one has, the other has. They've always been like that. They have a hard time understanding that they need to ask to use some things. We're working on it, Sara," Larry said kindly.

"It's my stuff," Sara said. "Nobody's ever wanted to use my stuff before. I guess it's hard for me to share everything."

"Well, you've been great about sharing your mom with me," Larry answered.

"At least you asked," Sara reminded him. "I could have said no."

"I guess I did ask," Larry laughed, "and I'm glad you said yes."

"I said maybe," Sara reminded him, smiling slightly. Larry put the steaming casserole on

the table and called the boys back. "You're quite a girl, Sara. I'm happy that we're a family. And I'll talk to Robbie and Ryan about staying out of your room. Okay?"

Sara grinned. If Larry could make a dog eat vegetables, he could make Robbie and Ryan stay out of her room. "Okay," she agreed, flashing a thumbs-up.

A loud rumble from the garage made Cuffy charge into the room and wait by the back door. "There's your mom," Larry announced. "Right on time. Places everyone."

The back door slammed and Sara's mom walked in—a big pizza box balanced in her hand. "Anybody know anything about this?" she asked, placing the extra-large pepperoni pizza with double cheese down on the counter. "I met the delivery girl in the driveway. She insisted it was ours and had already been paid for, so I took it."

"Pizza!" Robbie yelled.

"Pizza!" Ryan echoed.

Larry removed the zucchini casserole from its place of honor. "We can have this tomorrow," he said. "I can see I'm outnumbered tonight!"

"Sara, you're the only one who doesn't look surprised," her mom said.

Sara gulped. This was not going the way she'd planned. Somehow eating the whole pizza in front of her family didn't have the same appeal as it did an hour ago. Maybe some things, like pizza, belonged to everybody.

"I won it on the radio," said Sara. "I was the sixth caller, and I remembered the song from your wedding."

"Cool," Robbie said. "Sara won this huge pizza. Let's eat!"

"Maybe it's hers," Ryan butted in. "Is it yours, Sara?"

"Well," Sara began, "I did win it . . . and I could eat it all by myself . . . but I won't!"

"Hurrah!" Robbie and Ryan whooped it up as they started to dig in.

"Whoa, boys," Sara's mom laughed. "Pray first!"

Twenty minutes later all that remained of the pizza was the cardboard. Sara slipped Cuffy the last bite of her last piece of crust and moaned, "I'm stuffed."

"Compliments of WRXX, your local radio!" Larry announced, using his best radio voice.

"No way!" Robbie said. "This pizza's from Sara!"

"What did I tell you, Sara?" Larry whispered. "They're shaping up already!"

Hospitality Amidst Ashes

We were instantly awake as the 105-millimeter cannons at the airport started their nightly booming. We listened to the whine of each shell as it arched through the night. The earth rumbled as each shell exploded. They sounded uncommonly close, perhaps landing in Nghia Hanh. We thought of friends in the refugee camps there. Whose life would be snuffed out tonight? Whose home destroyed?

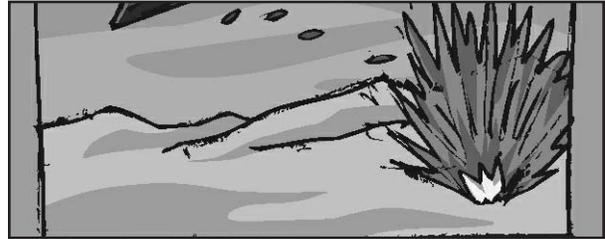
In the morning, Earl and I got on the Lambretta and headed the scooter south from the MCC house, asking people as we went where the artillery shells hit. About ten kilometers out of town, we were directed west across the rice paddies toward a large grove of tall bamboos.

We turned onto a dirt path between hedges of bright pink bougainvillea and banana trees, greeting villagers on their way to the market or to rice fields. They pointed to an opening in the thick green foliage.

Parking the scooter outside, we entered a clearing where an older couple in their black peasant pajamas stooped over, picking up pieces of bamboo and tin roofing. What remained of their home and belongings was scattered around their scorched courtyard.

Seeing us enter, they quickly stood up and came toward us with welcoming smiles. They seemed to know who we were. They had seen us drive in and out of the refugee camp not far away.

Their story of the previous night's



events came tumbling out, not with self-pity but with a dignity and defiance that we found common among Quang Ngai peasants.

It was not the first time their house had been destroyed. In fact, this was the fifth time. When they heard the first artillery shell explode nearby, they quickly took refuge in their bunker, a pit dug in the earth beneath their bed. But one of the shells scored a direct hit on their small house. They graciously did not mention that our country had sent these shells. Rather, they drew us in with hospitality.

As the man told their story, I noticed the woman had moved away and was bent over, in the midst of her total loss, collecting splinters of bamboo and broken tree branches. She put them in a pile as if to start a fire, then stood up and looked at me apologetically.

“I was going to boil tea for you, but I just realized I have no teapot.” She moved across the courtyard and picked up the mangled remains of her teakettle. “Forgive me. Please come again when we have rebuilt our house.”

The King's Visit

Once there was a great and mighty king. While still a young man, he had led his mighty army in many battles. By the power of his army, he had conquered all the surrounding nations and had become their king as well.

This king was so powerful that whatever he asked for, whether great or small, was brought to him at once. His subjects feared him and the power that comes from mighty armies and great wealth.

But the king grew lonely. He was tired of the political advisers, the slavish courtiers, and the beautiful lords and ladies that waited on his every word. Because everyone seemed to be afraid of him, he no longer knew of anyone he could trust as a friend. He wondered if all the people in all his kingdoms were like the flatterers who surrounded him.

So he sent several trusted messengers to the towns and cities of his countries. They were to find a town or city where he could visit and speak to his people, a town where he could learn what it felt like to have real friends.

At last one town was chosen as suitable for the king to visit. In secrecy, but with great excitement, the townspeople prepared for their king's arrival. A few days before his visit, the king sent his most trusted servant to see that all things were ready.

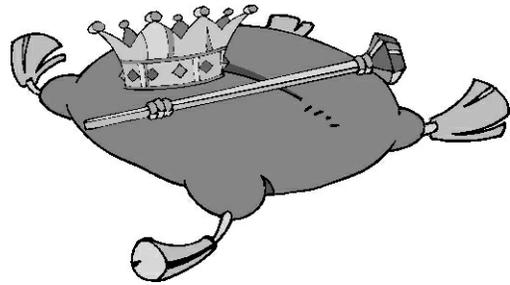
The servant found a town full of people cleaning and polishing their homes. Everyone, it seemed, was preparing wonderful gifts to impress the king.

The first home the servant visited was the mayor's household.

"Look how my house shines with beauty. I have marble floors in every room. I have the finest crystal and silver that money can buy. This is the finest home in the land—if not in all the lands the king owns. Look at these gold trimmings on the eaves. They were made by hand. Nothing is too good for the king!" the mayor boasted.

The trusted servant made notes in the little notebook he carried. But he said nothing.

The mayor went on. "Why, when the king visits my house, he will think he is still at the palace. He will not have to lift a finger to ask for anything. My household and I will see that he lacks nothing."



The servant thanked the mayor. Then he went to the priest's home.

The priest took him to the great cathedral standing in the center of town. "This is the grandest cathedral in the land, if not in the world. I'm sure the king will be proud to be seen worshiping in such a fine cathedral. When the townspeople heard the king was coming, they flocked to the porch and gladly poured out their contributions. We built a new altar, made of the finest wood and gilded with gold from the farthest country. Nothing is too good for our king."

Again the trusted servant smiled, but said nothing. He just made a note in his book.

The servant of the king went to every home in the town. The goldsmith had made a crown of the finest gold, set with precious stones. The carpenter had made a beautiful throne, inlaid with mother-of-pearl. The tailors and seamstresses were making a magnificent robe of silk and gold braid, all made with wondrous embroidery.

At the end of his visit, the trusted servant returned to the mayor. He opened his notebook. After consulting several pages, he turned to the mayor. "All does seem to be ready," he said. "I wonder though—of all the towns I have seen, yours is the only one with no poor people, no beggars at your gates. Have you no needy people in your town? Or is there some place, some home I have missed?"

The mayor looked pleased at the question.

"We did have some poor—not many, of course. As for what became of them . . . if you look in the center of town, you'll see a great house that once belonged to a certain woman. Many people thought the woman should not be allowed to live here because of her reputation.

"But when she moved here, she kept to herself. We were not about to call on her, but she did not seem to expect us to welcome her anyway.

“But then one day, can you imagine? She invited the beggar who used to sit in the town square into her home. The next day she took in the crippled boy his parents were ashamed to look at. The next thing you know, she had a dozen such people with her.

“Then we heard that the king was coming. We asked her to please take her little group somewhere else, so they wouldn’t make the town look bad.

“So she sold her house in town and moved to an old farm on the edge of town.”

After the mayor’s speech, the king’s servant made a few notes. Then he said, “Since I have to visit all the homes, I must visit hers as well. Then a decision will be made in a few days about which day the king will visit.”

The servant shut his book. He bid the mayor goodbye and set out for the edge of town.

As the king’s servant rounded the bend in the road, he saw an old stone farmhouse. A young girl in a wheelchair was cheering two small boys as they played with a ball in the dirt road. The ball sailed through the air and landed at the servant’s feet. With a smile, he rolled it back to the boys. The girl applauded him.

“Our mother’s in the house, if you’re looking for her,” the taller of the boys volunteered.

Thanking them, he knocked on the door of the house.

“Come in,” a gentle voice called. A woman of indefinite age sat at a table in the neat but bare room, feeding a tiny baby. Her warm brown eyes were all that were left of what must have been great beauty.

At the far end of the room, an old man and woman sat in equally ancient rocking chairs. Two small, shabbily dressed children were setting the table for a meal. The servant noticed that the bowls and plates were old and didn’t match. The silverware was battered.

The woman at the table spoke. “Can I help you?”

The king’s servant explained his mission.

“Are all of these people part of your family?” he asked.

“These are the family I have chosen: my parents, my sisters and brothers, my children.” With a wave of her hand, the woman included the children, the old people, and seemingly all the people and creatures outside and in.

As he was about to continue his explanation, the woman put up her hand to stop him. She smiled at him as she laid the sleeping baby in a cradle that had been broken and mended.

“It is time for our evening meal. We would be honored if you could join us,” she said.

The king’s servant realized that the day was almost gone and he was indeed hungry. As he accepted her invitation, he realized that in all the grand and beautiful houses he had visited that day, no one had even offered him a cup of water.

The other children came in from the yard, along with the old woman who had been hanging the wash. The servant joined them as they said a prayer of thanksgiving for their simple meal of soup and bread.

When the meal was ended, the children asked him questions about the king’s visit.

The woman said to the king’s servant, “We know why you have come. We know the great king longs to see how his people live, and we hope to have a glimpse of him as he passes through the village. We have no rich gifts to offer him, for we are the humblest of his people.”

“How is it that you have this house so far from the town?” the servant asked, although he knew part of the story from the mayor.

The woman and all those at the table smiled. “Long years ago, I was a beautiful and proud woman,” she began. “Many men bought me jewels and fine clothes. I was their toy, their decorated doll.

“One day, after a feast at my fine mansion, I noticed that there were poor people at my gate waiting for the scraps from my table. Yet of all the people in at the feast, I alone noticed them.

“After that, I found myself noticing the ragged beggars in the streets, the abandoned children, and yes, even the birds with broken wings.

“It no longer seemed right that I had so much wealth and so many jewels simply because men thought me beautiful.

“So I sold my mansions and my jewels and moved to this village. There I found these friends in need of what I could provide.”

“But the people were not kind to us in the village,” one of the boys added. “They turned away when they saw us coming near them.”

“They liked us even less when they found out the king was coming,” said the other boy.

The woman smiled and shrugged. “It seemed easier to live out here than to live in the midst of people who saw us as animals or less.”

“But you will not see the king when he comes to the village,” said the servant.

The woman paused for a moment and looked around the table at the faces there. Around the table were the old and the young, those with eyes that had seen pain, those with lined faces and those with the flush of youth.

“There was a time when it was important to me to welcome kings and spare no expense to create gifts and wonders for that king. But that time is long past. I have no regrets at the choice I made to give what I had, even if it means I can offer the king nothing but the hospitality of this home.”

The servant wrote in his notebook for a long time.

Then he said, “I must return and tell the king all the things I have seen today.”

The woman smiled. “Go in peace. And if you

ever come this way again, our door is always open. There will always be a place for you at our table.”

As he walked back down the road, the king’s most trusted servant looked back. He saw the woman and the children and the old ones waving at him as though in a final blessing. And when the king came, the people of the town did not see him. Not the mayor. Not the priest. Not the goldsmith. Not the carpenter. Not the tailor.

When the king came to the village, he visited only the humblest of his subjects. It was said that the king and his most trusted servant stayed for many days with the woman and her family.

Often, it is still rumored, when the king longs to be with his people again, he comes with his trusted servant to that special place. There the door is always open. The bowls do not match and the spoons are battered, but there is always a place at the table.



God Is the Greatest



Jonathan Cruz had just finished attending the Boy Scouts Regional Jamboree in Zamboanga City. He had received more awards than any other scout in Mindanao. He wished the ship would sail faster. He could hardly wait to show them off to his family and friends.

The trip by boat from Zamboanga to Davao City took a night and a day. This day seemed long to the scouts traveling home. Out on the sun deck, they played games, told stories and jokes, and sang songs.

Late in the afternoon, the water became rough, and huge waves rose and rocked the ship. Many of the boys became seasick and stayed in their cots. But Jonathan and some others remained on the deck, even in the drizzle. Sitting on top of a wooden table, they laughed and yelled as they swayed back and forth with the boat.

The scoutmaster stuck his head out of a cabin window. "Time to leave the sun deck, boys."

As the boys jumped off the table, a giant wave hit the boat, and it swayed violently.

Jonathan slipped on the wet floor, slid under the railing and overboard. The other boys looked at each other with fear and rushed to the railing, hoping to pull Jonathan back in. But he was nowhere in sight.

The captain ordered the crew to stop the ship. Now the sky was dark with clouds, and rain fell heavily. The crew turned on bright lights and searched the waters. A rescue team boarded a lifeboat and were lowered into the sea at the spot where Jonathan had fallen. They searched for hours without success.

Meanwhile, the captain radioed the Coast Guard. After being told that a rescue boat was on its way, he ordered the ship to move on.

As he swam in the waves not far away, Jonathan felt terrible as he watched the searchlights go off and the ship slowly disappear. He was weak from swimming against the big waves. Whenever he had been on the top of a giant wave, he had yelled at the top of his lungs, but the wind and the rain had drowned out his voice.

Now he was all alone, bobbing up and down in the choppy water. Luckily, he was a good swimmer. But he was scared. How long could he survive in the freezing wind and rain? The thought of sharks also scared him. He wondered if sharks could smell fear the way dogs could.

To calm his fears, he prayed the Lord's Prayer. It worked. His fears lessened.

Exhausted, Jonathan let the waves carry him and drifted with the tide toward the coast. It stopped raining, and the waves grew smaller. He remembered the words of his Sunday school teacher: "Every time you are afraid or feeling helpless, pray. Our loving God is Lord everywhere." He remembered a picture of Jesus walking on the sea and telling the winds and the waves to be still. Again he prayed, "Jesus Christ, please save me."

As if in answer to his prayer, tiny points of light appeared in the darkness. Then he heard human voices.

"HELP!" Jonathan screamed.

But the voices shouted in fear and confusion. "It's a merman! A sea monster! Let's get out of here." And they briskly paddled away. Some made the sign of the cross to protect themselves from the evil one.

"Please don't go away. I'm a real boy!" Jonathan shouted after them.

To his joy, one canoe turned back. Two people were aboard. One raised a lantern to have a good look. Jonathan splashed his legs and said, "Sir, I have two legs. I'm not a sea monster. I fell off a ship."

"He's okay. Shall I pull him in?" the boy in the boat asked. The older fisherman answered yes.

Jonathan swam close, and a pair of hands pulled his shivering body into the canoe.

"Thanks a lot for helping me. I'll never forget your kindness." Jonathan said.

"We're glad we could help you," the older man said. "But you're very lucky. Even a grown-up could easily have drowned. That's why the other fishermen thought you were a sea monster. Now we'd better go ashore so you can put on dry clothes. You might get sick."

Jonathan observed that the old man spoke in a way that sounded different. There was no doubt in his mind. These fishermen were *Moros*—Muslims! He knew many Christians and Muslims still thought of each other as enemies. "They must know from my speech that I am a Christian," thought Jonathan uneasily. "I wonder why they saved me?"

"My name is Jonathan. What's yours?" he asked the boy in the boat.

“Mine is Kamar,” the boy answered. “My father’s name is Abdullah.”

When they reached the shore, Kamar’s father told the boys to go ahead of him as he tied the canoe to a fallen coconut tree. On the dark beach the boys walked between sharp coral rocks, climbed up to the cement sea wall, and then balanced on a bridge made of three cane poles tied together by rope. Jonathan saw houses made of palm and cane, standing on tall poles partly under the sea.

Kamar opened the door to one of the houses and asked Jonathan to come in.

“Who’s with you, Kamar?” a woman’s voice asked from the other side of a wall. Kamar went behind the wall, and Jonathan could hear his excited voice telling his mother what had happened. Even though he couldn’t understand the language, Jonathan heard his name.

He looked around the tiny one-room house. In one corner was a stove made of three stones sitting on a wooden box filled with earth. A few tin cups and dishes were piled neatly on a bamboo shelf. Jonathan smiled as Kamar and his mother came out.

“Mother, this is Jonathan,” Kamar said.

Jonathan bowed and said, “Good morning.”

“Poor child, it is a good thing Kamar and his father found you before the sharks did. But you must be cold,” she said, touching Jonathan’s wet shirt. “Let me get you some dry clothes.” She brought out a *malong*, and Kamar showed Jonathan how to wear it.

Next, Kamar’s mother served Jonathan some boiled rice, broiled fish, and a hot drink made from roasted corn grits.

“Aren’t you eating with me?” he asked.

“We are observing *Ramadan*,” she replied. “Good Muslims take neither food nor drink from sunrise to sunset during Ramadan.” Then Jonathan saw the soft sunlight coming in through the windows and holes in the *nipa* thatch walls.

After he had eaten, Kamar’s mother spread a straw mat on the floor so Jonathan could rest. He slept soundly. He didn’t feel the wind seeping through the uneven bamboo floor or the thin mat. He did not miss his comfortable bed at home. He slept through the day and the night.

When Jonathan finally awoke, the family was chanting their morning prayer. He heard the words “*Allahu akbar*” many times.

“It means ‘God is the greatest,’” Kamar told him later. “We’ve ended our Ramadan fast and

now we’re having the festival of *Hariraya Puasa*. Tomorrow our friends and relatives will come and have dinner with us. We’ll give each other gifts. It’s going to be great!”

“Is that why your house looks bright and beautiful?” Jonathan asked, looking at the red, green, and yellow paper decorating the walls and windows.

“Yes. We’ve been busy. My mother cooked rice cakes, chicken, and coconut candies,” Kamar said excitedly. “I hope you can stay.”

“I’d like to, but my parents must be worried about me. I need to let them know I’m all right.”

“You’re right,” said Kamar’s father. “We need to take you home as soon as possible.”

“Thank you!” said Jonathan.

Jonathan’s mother cried for joy when she answered the doorbell and he rushed in shouting, “Mommy, Daddy, I’m home!” His father ran to the doorway and put his arms around his wife and son, who were hugging each other.

When he turned to welcome their visitors, Jonathan introduced them. “This is Kamar and his father. They saved me from drowning. They took me to their house, and Kamar’s mother lent me some dry clothes and fed me.”

“We owe our son’s life to you,” Mr. Cruz said as he shook Kamar’s father’s hand.

“How can we thank you?” his mother asked. “Please eat breakfast with us.”

“No, thank you. We have already had breakfast. We must hurry. We’re celebrating *Hariraya Puasa* and don’t want to be late for prayers at the mosque,” Kamar’s father said, fixing his cap.

“Please, at least tell me what kind of reward you want and when we can give it to you,” Jonathan’s father said.

“Oh, no. Let Allah reward me. I did only what is expected of any human being. If Kamar were ever in the same situation, I hope to God someone would also help him.” Kamar’s father patted Jonathan on the back and nodded for Kamar to follow him as he walked out the door.

The following Sunday, Jonathan’s minister preached a sermon on the message of Easter, though Easter was two months earlier. She said Jonathan’s experience showed that God’s Spirit and power are at work in our world.

Before the closing hymn, the minister asked Jonathan to come up to the front of the church, so everyone could see him. Never before had the words of the hymn “He Lives” rung with such truth and joy.

The Kittens and the Thief

“Someone’s taking grain, it looks like,” Papa said.

“Why, who would do a thing like that ?” Mama asked.

“I don’t know,” said Papa. “That’s what bothers me. But it keeps disappearing from the pile we ground for the cows’ winter feed.”

Sarah sat at the long dining room table finishing her pumpkin pie. She liked to listen to Papa and Mama and the hired man, Dan, talk about the farm. But she didn’t like to hear about a thief in the big barn—a bad man who maybe wore a mask and came in the night to take grain. Sarah was frightened. She hoped it wasn’t true.

Just then the cat walked by and rubbed her thin black body against Sarah’s legs. *Thin?* Suddenly Sarah dropped her fork. Without thinking, she cried out, “Blackie’s skinny now! She must have kittens somewhere!”

Mama, Papa, and Dan stopped talking and looked at her. Her brothers and sisters looked at Blackie. Yes, she was skinny. Her kittens might be hidden somewhere up in the big hay loft.

Mama smiled at Sarah. “When the dishes are finished, you’ll want to go look for them, won’t you?”

And that’s just what Sarah did. One of the best things about living on the Yoder dairy farm was looking for new families of kittens. Barns needed cats to catch the mice that would love to eat up all the grain.

Hey, thought Sarah, as she climbed up the ladder to the loft. *Maybe the mice have been taking Papa’s grain and he just thinks it’s a thief.*

Sarah lurched and tumbled through the piled hay. *I hope I find these kittens in time,* she thought. *If they’re too old when I find them, they’ll be wild. They’ll hiss and spit and scratch and run away from me, like Blackie’s last kittens. They were good at catching mice, but they were no fun for me.*

Sarah looked in all the dips and hollows in the hay; she looked behind the sacks of grain; she looked in the feed boxes that the cows ate from; she even looked in the old bobsled covered with cobwebs. No kittens.

“Blackie, won’t you tell me your secret?” Sarah begged. But Blackie lay in the dust of the barn-



yard as if she had never heard of kittens. She licked her black fur and squinted at the sun.

Sarah watched all afternoon, but Blackie just lay in the sun. “I guess she’s trying to keep it a secret,” Sarah said to Mama as she set the table for supper.

Then Sarah had an idea. She didn’t think she’d tell Mama. Mama might not want her out in the dark barn at night. But at night surely Blackie would be sleeping with her babies.

That night, Sarah waited until everyone was in bed. Then quietly she slid from the covers and pulled on her warm bathrobe. She tiptoed through the house and out into the barnyard.

The cedar trees looked black as Sarah crept through the barnyard and the shadowy barn door. The moonlight showed her where to go, but it was dim. Suddenly Sarah froze. She heard the sound of a shovel scraping through the grain. Who would he filling sacks with grain in the middle of the night when all the cows were asleep? Maybe it was the thief. Sarah peeked over the edge of the ladder. No, it was not a thief. It was Dan, the hired man. But why was he in the barn when it was time to be in bed? And why was he trying to be so quiet?

Just then she heard another noise. It was Papa, with a lantern. Papa was supposed to be in bed asleep! Dan stopped shoveling grain and just stood there, looking at his boots. Papa set the lantern down and picked up a shovel.

“Let me help you fill that sack, Dan,” he said. The grain slid from his shovel into the fat brown sack. “How much more do you need?”

Dan didn’t answer. So Papa just stood there

in the lantern light, looking at the sacks Dan had already filled and was going to take away. Sarah wanted to cry out to Dan and ask him why he was stealing their cow's feed. Why was he acting like a thief when he was a friend they had trusted? But Papa didn't say that. Papa was kind and gentle, as he always was.

Finally Dan threw down his shovel. "I had no right to take your grain. You folks have been good to me. I'll see that you're paid back." He headed toward the door.

Papa followed him. "We'll talk about it in the morning." He reached out to shake his hand. "Now you'd better get some sleep. We'll be getting in the hay tomorrow morning as soon as the dew dries. Goodnight."

"Papa!" Sarah whispered loudly when Dan had left the barn—without the grain. "I'm over here!"

Papa picked up the lantern and watched Sarah jump off the ladder to the loft and come wading through the slippery grain. "What are you doing in here, Sarah?"

"Looking for Blackie's kittens. And did you come to find out who was taking the grain?"

"Yes," Papa answered.

"Why didn't you scold Dan?" asked Sarah. "He was doing a bad thing."

Papa smiled at Sarah. "Yes, he was, but he already knew that. He didn't need me to tell him."

"Still, weren't you mad at him?"

"Jesus said that if a man takes your coat you should give him your cloak also," said Papa. "So I just offered him a little more grain. But I think that's the last grain he'll ever take."

"Look!" Suddenly Sarah pointed to a thin, black shadow. "There's Blackie! Papa, can you help me find her kittens?"

And that is how Sarah and her father found the nicest nest of kittens ever—five of them—on a soft pile of empty grain sacks. And even though it was the middle of the night, Papa let Sarah pick up and cuddle each warm, sleepy kitten before going back to bed to sleep in the Yoder farmhouse.

The Tiger's Whisker: A Korean Folktale

A young woman named Yun Ok came one day to the house of a mountain hermit, to seek his help. He was a sage of great renown and a maker of good-luck charms and magic potions.

When Yun Ok entered his house, the hermit said, without raising his eyes from the fireplace, "Why are you here?"

Yun Ok said, "Oh, Famous Sage. I am in distress! Make me a potion!"

"Yes, yes! Make a potion! Everyone needs potions! Can we cure a sick world with a simple potion?"

"Master," Yun Ok replied, "if you do not help me, I am truly lost!"

"Well, what is your story?" the hermit said, resigned at last to listen.

"It is my husband," Yun Ok said. "He is very dear to me. For the past three years he has been away fighting in the wars. Now that he has returned, he hardly speaks to me or to anyone else. If I speak, he doesn't seem to hear. When he talks at all, it is roughly. If I serve him food not to his liking, he pushes it aside and angrily leaves the room. Sometimes when he should be working in the rice field, I see him sitting idly on top of the hill, looking toward the sea."

"Yes, so it is sometimes when young men come back from the wars," the hermit said. "Go on."

"There is no more to tell, Learned One. I want a potion to give my husband so that he will be loving and gentle, as he used to be."

"Ha! So simple, is it?" the hermit said. "A potion! Very well; come back in three days and I will tell you what we need for such a potion."

Three days later, Yun Ok returned to the home of the mountain sage. "I have looked into it," he told her. "Your potion can be made. But the most important ingredient is the whisker of a living tiger. Bring me this whisker and I will give you what you need."

"The whisker of a living tiger!" Yun Ok said. "How could I possibly get it?"

"If the potion is important enough, you will succeed," the hermit said. He turned his head away, not wishing to talk any more.

Yun Ok went home. She thought a great deal about how to get the tiger's whisker. Then one night when her husband was asleep, she



crept from her house with a bowl of rice and meat sauce in her hand. She went to the place on the mountain where the tiger was known to live. Standing far off from the tiger's cave, she held out the bowl of food, calling the tiger to come and eat. The tiger did not come.

The next night Yun Ok went again, this time a little bit closer. Again she offered a bowl of food. Every night Yun Ok went to the mountain, each time a few steps nearer the tiger's cave. Little by little the tiger became accustomed to seeing her there.

One night Yun Ok came within a stone's throw of the tiger's cave. This time, the tiger came a few steps toward her and stopped. They stood looking at each other in the moonlight. It happened again the following night, and this time they were so close that Yun Ok could talk to the tiger in a soft, soothing voice.

The next night, after looking carefully into Yun Ok's eyes, the tiger ate the food she held out for him. After that, when Yun Ok came, she found the tiger waiting for her on the trail. When the tiger had eaten, Yun Ok could gently rub his head with her hand. Nearly six months had passed since the night of her first visit.

At last one night, after caressing the animal's head, Yun Ok said, "Oh, Tiger, generous animal, I must have one of your whiskers. Do not be angry with me!" And she snipped off one of the whiskers.

The tiger did not become angry, as she had

feared. Yun Ok went down the trail, not walking but running, with the whisker clutched tightly in her hand.

The next morning, she was at the mountain hermit's house just as the sun was rising from the sea. "Oh, Famous One!" she cried, "I have it! I have the tiger's whisker! Now you can make me the potion you promised, so that my husband will be loving and gentle again!"

The hermit took the whisker and examined it. Satisfied that it had really come from a tiger, he leaned forward and dropped it into the fire that burned in his fireplace.

"Oh, sir!" the young woman called in anguish. "What have you done with it?"

"Tell me how you obtained it," the hermit said.

"Why, I went to the mountain each night with a little bowl of food. At first, I stood afar. Then I came a little closer each time, gaining the tiger's confidence. I spoke gently and soothingly to him, to make him understand I wished him only good. I was patient. Each night I brought him food, knowing that he would not

eat. But I did not give up. I came again and again. I never spoke harshly. I never reproached him. And at last one night he took a few steps toward me. A time came when he would meet me on the trail and eat out of the bowl that I held. I rubbed his head and he made happy sounds. Only then did I take the whisker."

"Yes, yes," the hermit said. "You tamed the tiger and won his confidence and love."

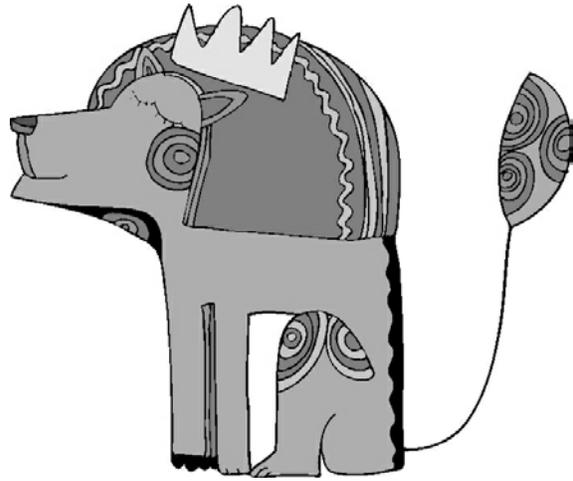
"But you have thrown the whisker in the fire!" Yun Ok cried. "It is all for nothing!"

"No, I do not think it is all for nothing," the hermit said. "The whisker is no longer needed. Yun Ok, let me ask you, is a man more vicious than a tiger? Is he less responsive to kindness and understanding? If you can win the confidence of a wild animal by gentleness and patience, surely you can do the same with your husband?"

Hearing this, Yun Ok stood speechless for a moment. Then she went down the trail, turning over in her mind the truth she had learned in the house of the mountain hermit.

Lion's Lament

"How times have changed," the lion said,
With a sad and rueful smile.
"I am no longer Jungle King,
Since kings are out of style."
The animals had said he should
Turn in his resignation.
They'd conferred and they preferred
A democratic nation.
Now all this came as quite a shock
And not anticipated.
But, with majestic dignity,
The lion abdicated.
The animals had had their say
And shortly they departed.
The lion sat in stunned dismay,
No longer lion-hearted.
"Not to be King?" the lion cried.
"I can't believe I'm through!
To be a king's the only thing
That I know how to do."
But life was not so different,
He found to his surprise.
The animals asked his advice
For he was fair and wise.
He was not "Your Royal Highness"
In the way he used to be.
He was just plain Mr. Lion now
And not "Your Majesty."
But he consoled and counseled,
As leaders often do.
He often changed or rearranged
Or recommended new.
He furthered aims and settled claims
When things were in dispute.
He sought and bought and taught and fought
When problems were acute.
And then one day some animals
Came visiting his lair
A committee stern and solemn,
With a most official air.



Their spokesman then stepped forward
And with great deliberation,
He pronounced to Mr. Lion,
An important proclamation.
"Our nation needs a leader,
And we'd like for you to note
That in democratic fashion
We have put this to a vote.
From North and South and East and West
And every latitude,
The animals have spoken out
In grateful gratitude."
"You were King," the spokesman said,
By accident of birth.
But to be a chosen leader
You have had to prove your worth.
And so because you are our most
Respected resident,
We've selected and elected you
To be our President!"
"A call to serve," the lion said,
"Is one I can't ignore."
Mr. Lion then accepted
With a very modest roar.

Average Amy

“I’m sick of myself!” Amy jerked her shirt over her head and glared at herself in the mirror. She gave the curly hair another lick with the brush and groaned. No matter how much she fussed with it, her hair just refused to behave.

“So, I’ll just look like a goat,” Amy told herself. “A skinny, average goat!”

“What’s all this?” Amy’s mother stood in the doorway smiling. “I don’t see any goat.”

Amy shrugged. “It’s me, Mom. I’m skinny, I have horns and what’s worse, I’m average! Average Amy!”

Amy’s mother frowned. “What do you mean, average?”

“You know. Average at everything! I’m average at basketball, average at softball, average at swimming. I’m even a medium speller and reader. I wish I could be really good at something!”

Her mother gave her a hug. “You are, Amy.”

“What? What am I good at doing?”

“Wait and see. Everyone has something they do especially well. So do you. Now, hurry up or you’ll be late for Anna’s party. Lisa’s waiting.”

Lisa was Amy’s best friend and Lisa wasn’t average at all. She could run faster than any girl in the neighborhood and catch on in class so fast that even the teacher found it hard to keep up.

“I hope we don’t have to play any of those stupid games,” Amy said as she and Lisa walked to Anna’s house. “I never win.”

Lisa started to run. “This party is different, didn’t you know? It’s a scavenger hunt. Hurry or we’ll be late.”

“What’s a scavenger hunt?” Amy asked, trying to keep up.

“It’s kind of like a race. This one’s an ecology scavenger hunt to clean litter off the streets. It’ll be fun.”

“A race? Oh, no!” Amy grumbled as they saw the group in Anna’s yard. “I’ll never win a race.”

But she laughed when she saw the list of objects she and Lisa were to find. Like the other teams, they were to collect as many of the items as possible in an hour. The team that returned first, with the most items, would win a prize.

“Be careful crossing streets and don’t go out of the neighborhood,” Anna’s mother warned. “Good luck!”

They were off! Amy and Lisa found the first three items easily: five popsicle sticks, five candy wrappers, and one empty paper sack. The fourth item took more work. Amy thought they would never find three discarded cigarette packages. They finally found their third one on someone’s driveway and went on to find three drinking straws and a paper cup.

Amy’s side was hurting. “I’ve got to rest a minute. What’s left now?”

Lisa checked the list and giggled. “Would you believe 10 gum wrappers?”

“Yuck! What else?”

“It’s not bad. A potato chip bag, three empty cans and . . .” Lisa laughed.

“What is it?” Amy asked.

Lisa gave Amy the list. “The last one—any litter of your choosing! I guess that means we can use just any old junk for that.”

Amy grinned. “Kind of like a free square on your Bingo card. I see a gum wrapper—hurry!”

It didn’t take long for the two girls to collect the gum wrappers. Then Amy saw an empty potato chip bag on the side of the road. A soggy copy of an old newspaper made a good choice for number 10; but they still needed the three cans.

Amy looked down the sidewalk for the gleam of metal. “Why is it when you want something, it’s never there?”

Lisa stopped suddenly. “Come on! I just remembered where I saw some. There’s a ditch in the next block. We can get the cans there and take a short cut back to Anna’s.” They raced toward the ditch laughing. Their paper sack bulged with its strange assortment of “treasures.”

“Have you . . . seen any of the . . . other teams going back?” Amy asked in jerks. It was hard to talk when you were running as fast as you could.

“Not yet,” Lisa answered, jumping whole squares of sidewalk at a time. “If we really hurry, we might win.” Amy saw something



shining behind a rock. “There’s one!” Small stones went scuttling into the ditch with a gravelly sound as Amy slid down to get the can. There were two of them!

“I’ve found the third one—hurry!” Lisa called from the other side of the ditch. Amy jumped across with the open sack. Their last piece of litter!

Just then the hedge above them rustled and another team burst through. They sailed over the ditch with a full sack! Startled, Lisa stepped back. Amy grabbed her friend’s arm just as she slid backwards into the ditch, but Lisa’s ankle had twisted under her. When she tried to take a step, she made a face and there were tears in her eyes.

“Oh, I can’t run. You go on, Amy, or they’ll beat us!” The thought of winning that prize ran through Amy’s head, but only for a second. If she took the shortcut they still had a chance.

But it was just a game, and Lisa was hurt. The race just didn’t seem important any more.

“Hurry, Amy,” Lisa was urging her. “I’ll be okay.”

Amy shook her head. “Don’t be a dummy,” she said grinning. “Here, let me help you up. Just lean on me.”

Slowly Lisa hobbled up the bank. “We could have won the prize if I hadn’t slipped,” she said. “I’m sorry, Amy.”

“Maybe we’ll come in second,” Amy said. “Anyway, it was fun—except for your ankle, I mean.”

Lisa laughed. “You don’t come in second as a friend, Amy. You’re a Supergood, Number One Winner.”

That doesn’t sound like Average Amy at all, thought Amy, as she grinned and tucked the soggy sack under her arm.

The Argument Sticks: An Iroquois Tale

Two Iroquois boys were arguing. Neither would admit he was wrong. They were about to come to blows over this. Their mother gave them three sticks:

“These are special Argument Sticks. They will solve this argument for you.

“Set your sticks up in the woods, leaning one against the other so they all stand up. Leave them there for one month.

If they fall over toward the north, the one who sets up the northern stick is right in this matter.

If they fall over toward the south, the one who sets up the southern stick is right in this matter.”

The boys took their sticks into the woods and set them up. They were satisfied that this would solve their argument. A month later, the boys remembered the Argument Sticks. They went into the woods to find out who had won the argument.

The sticks had fallen in a heap and begun to rot. There was no winner. And the boys couldn't remember what the argument had been about in the first place.



Already Paid

In a small village, a certain store sold a little bit of everything: food, cloth, nails, boots, whatever you might need. For many years, it had been run by one man. Since his death a year ago, his widow had run the store. Although she was good at this, the things her husband had done to keep the roof in repair, the lamps mended, and the windows tight seemed beyond her.

But she struggled to deal with the repairs as best she could, until she finally admitted she needed help. So she placed a notice in her front window. It said,

HANDYMAN NEEDED! INQUIRE WITHIN

The next day, a stranger came into her store and told her he was a handyman. He was passing through town and saw her sign. He asked what she needed done. After she gave him her long list, she was afraid to ask what he would charge. Seeing her hesitation, he said, “I will ask only what is fair for wages. You will be able to afford it, I assure you.” Still nervous, she agreed.

In just a few days, the man had fixed everything on her list—and a few things that weren’t. The roof was whole, the windows were tight, the lamps were mended.

“What do I owe you?” she asked, feeling that even a vast sum was well worth the price.

“Nothing,” the man said. “Nothing!”

“I have already been paid for my work here,” he said.

“Who paid you?”

“A friend of yours. I’m afraid I don’t remember the name, but I assure you, you owe nothing.” The man was firm.

“But surely you will take something—as a gift.”

The man smiled. “Yes, I could do that. I need two small lamps and a warm blanket.”

The storekeeper gave him the lamps and the blanket gratefully, adding extra oil for the lamps and a pillow. He thanked her and turned to go.

“If you know of anyone else who needs a handyman, ask them to put a note in their windows as you did.” And he left.

It was then the storekeeper realized she had never asked his name.

The next day, one of the poor villagers who lived out beyond the river visited the storekeeper.

The woman, bent with age, seemed uncomfortable being in the store.

“Can I help you?” the storekeeper asked.

The old woman shook her head. “I came to thank you for the lamp and the blanket.”

The storekeeper was puzzled.

“I haven’t given you any lamps or blankets.”

“Your friend came to my door with them yesterday. He said they were a gift from you. He said I should thank you.” The old woman turned to leave. Then she turned back.

“I haven’t had a pillow to sleep on in many, many years. Thank you, my dear.” And she walked out of the store, leaving the other woman staring at her in wonder.

When the news of the extraordinary handyman made its way through the village, many of the villagers decided that things in their homes needed repairing. Each time they placed a note in their windows, the man would come and do as they requested. It seemed as though there was nothing he could not fix, whether in the garden, the barns and sheds, or the kitchen.

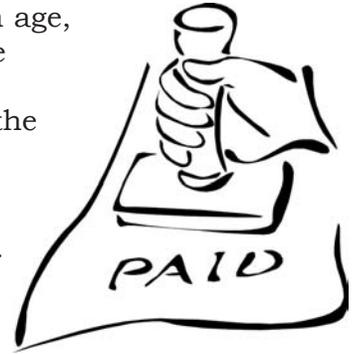
Each time he refused payment, saying he had already been paid in full. But each time he was willing to accept small gifts.

From the gardener, he received seeds for vegetables and flowers. From the baker, he received a measure of flour. From the woodsman, he received a barrow full of small logs.

The weaver gave a length of heavy woolen cloth. When he fixed the tailor’s sewing machine, he asked the tailor to make a winter coat from the cloth.

A few days after the handyman had taken the coat, the weaver and the tailor were both visited by a poor fisherman from the dockside. The fisherman thanked them for their gift of the coat, which allowed him to take his boat out in cold weather and feed his children.

And in a few days, people came and thanked the gardener and the baker and the woodsman for their gifts.



Little by little, the village changed. Once the rest of the villagers had neglected the poor people among them. Now they knew and cared for even the poorest person.

In time, all the villagers became kinder—except the doctor. The doctor had been raised in the village, but had gone away to school. He had returned to the village several years before, when the previous doctor died.

It was rumored the doctor had suffered greatly in his life, for there was no other explanation for his grim face and angry scowl. Although he was a capable doctor, many people were afraid of him. He was often called far too late to help the sick in the village.

The doctor had an antique clock in his parlor that was one of his many objects of pride. One of his instructors at medical school had given it to him. But it hadn't worked in years, and the doctor didn't trust the village clockmaker to fix it.

As always, the handyman came in response to the doctor's message.

The doctor began, "Unlike many of my neighbors, I am well able to pay you. You cannot tell me that you have already been paid by a friend, for I have no friends who would do such a thing. If you are able to fix my clock, I will pay any price."

The handyman went to the clock and looked at it for a long moment. "I can fix this clock, but it will cost you a great deal. Are you certain that is what you want to do?"

The doctor frowned and nodded. "It is worth any price."

The handyman smiled. "Do not be so quick to answer, my dear sir. You haven't yet heard my price."

The doctor waved his hand. "I can afford it. I am a wealthy man."

The handyman only smiled again. "Very well. I can begin now."

The doctor nodded abruptly and went back to see one of his few patients.

The next day, the doctor was awakened by the sound of the clock in his parlor ringing the hour. He ran to the clock and saw that the handyman had indeed fixed it.

When the handyman returned for his payment, the doctor asked, "What is your price?"

The handyman said, "Before I answer, I would like to ask you something."

The doctor nodded.

"How did you come to be a doctor?"

"I was always interested in medicine and I did well in school. When I said I wanted a career in medicine, my mother and father agreed it was a good choice."

The handyman interrupted. "And did they pay for your schooling?"

"Yes, of course they did. Some of the people in the village also helped, with the condition that I would come back to the village to be their doctor for ten years. The years I promised the village are nearly up. Soon I will be free to move to the city and live as a wealthy and influential man."

After a pause, the handyman asked another question. "Did you ever pay your parents back for the sacrifices they made so you could have this education and privilege?"

The doctor smiled. "They were pleased that I wanted to spend my life in service to others and said they were willing to make any necessary sacrifices."

The handyman went on. "Did you ever thank them?"

The doctor frowned. "For what? They did not ask me to repay them. I do not owe anyone for who I am, except the villagers. I have very nearly paid that debt. Now, what do I owe you for fixing my clock?"

The handyman stood up and said sadly, "Nothing."

"I told you that I am well able to pay my debts. How much do I owe you?" the doctor responded angrily.

"You owe me nothing. I fixed your clock because it is a clock of great beauty, and things of beauty should not be silent. It will keep perfect time for you for many, many years. But because it is only a timepiece to you, it is not worth fixing. Therefore, I will not charge you."

The handyman turned to go. "It's too bad, in a way. You have the finest house, the most beautiful clock I have ever seen. Indeed, your possessions make you the envy of many poor people. But of all the people I have met in your village, you are the most in need. You have nothing I would even ask for a gift."

After the handyman left, the doctor stormed angrily from room to room in his lovely house. He admired the fine furnishings, the expensive paintings on each elegant wall, the imported lace curtains on each window.

As he walked through his house, he raged at the handyman. “How dare a wandering handyman, a tinker with no place to lay his head, say such things? Doesn’t he know who I am?”

On the hour, his clock chimed its lovely voice. For a moment, the doctor was tempted to smash the clock and end its voice forever. But he could not destroy his expensive and beautiful clock.

For days after, the doctor was more grim and angry than usual. Every time the clock chimed, he was filled with fury at the handyman who had dared to say such things about him.

A few weeks later, the doctor stood waiting for his carriage and saw the handyman across the street. The doctor wanted to confront the handyman and demand that the man take back the things he had said. But as he stepped off the curb, a great rush of sound enveloped him.

There were loud shouts of “Runaway!” and a clatter of horses’ hooves on the cobblestones. A tremendous push shoved the doctor backward onto the curb as the immense wheels of a carriage passed close to his face. With a mighty surge of deafening noise, the runaway coach passed down the street.

As the doctor lay stunned on the stone curb, he was aware of a new sound, that of heartbreaking sobs. The doctor pulled himself to his feet, and saw the handyman lying broken and bleeding. He had been struck by the coach and horses after he had pushed the doctor to safety.

Several townspeople were already at the handyman’s side, and one was weeping bitterly.

When the doctor reached the injured man’s side, he saw that the man was beyond help. The doctor knelt by his side and took one of the handyman’s bloody hands in his own. For a

moment, the doctor thought the man was already dead, but slowly the handyman opened his dimming eyes and looked into the doctor’s eyes.

“Why?” was all the doctor could murmur to the dying man.

A smile lit up the handyman’s broken face. “You are my friend,” he said in faint tones.

The doctor’s eyes filled with tears that poured down his cheeks unnoticed. “Thank you,” the doctor murmured to the dying man.

With a smile still on his face, the handyman died.

The townspeople buried him in the old graveyard behind the church. They did not know his name, so the stone marker simply read “Our Friend.”

In his office, after the man’s interment, the doctor was slowly packing up his equipment and books. As he had told the handyman, his ten years of service to the town was ended. A new doctor had been hired. As he looked over the last set of bills to go out to his patients, his office sign, now leaning against the wall, caught his eye. The sign read “Doctor Within” and gave his office hours.

The doctor sat there for a long time. Finally, with a great sob, the doctor took the bills he was about to mail, wrote “Already Paid in Full” across all of them, and thrust them into their envelopes. Then he took the office sign and went outside and hung it back where it had been for ten years.

When he came back in, he drew out his pen and paper and began to write, “Dearest Mother and Father, I can never thank you enough for your gifts of love and support that have made my life and my occupation possible . . .”

From the parlor behind him, the doctor heard his clock chiming the hour.

What Does the Lord Require?

LESSON 4: CHANNELS OF PEACE

Objective

Students will examine the life of St. Francis and his famous prayer, write skits, and produce a short play that shows justice, mercy, and humility in action.

Key Concepts

- St. Francis not only believed, but acted out the message of the gospel in his daily life.
- St. Francis' prayer contains biblical truths for just living.
- Jesus expects us to demonstrate the characteristics of "loving our neighbor" in our everyday lives and actions.

Prayer Text: Prayer of St. Francis

Memory text: Micah 6:8

Estimated Lesson Time: 40-45 minutes (*Additional sessions needed to write scenes and produce play*)

Materials

- Bibles
- *Sing the Journey* songbooks (at least one for every 2 students)
- *Sing the Journey* CD (*optional*)
- "Make Me a Channel of Your Peace" activity sheet (p. 433)
- "What Does the Lord Require?" charts from Lesson 1
- "Love Dust" play (pp. 434-435)

Teacher Preparation

- Make copies of "Make Me a Channel of Your Peace" and "Love Dust," one of each for every student.
- Ahead of time, assign the two main parts in the play, Earthling and Plutonian. Be sure that these characters are memorizing their parts.
- Make arrangements with the principal to perform the play in chapel or at another school function. If this is not possible, consider presenting the play for several classes.
- Your most challenging task for this lesson is facilitating the groups as they prepare to present the play. Keep this in mind as you plan the groups.

INTRODUCING THE LESSON

Introduce St. Francis. Tell the students that a special person who was born in 1181 dedicated his life to literally following the message of Jesus in the gospels. He showed justice and mercy to even the smallest of creatures. He lived in total poverty, believing that this would help him be a humble person. This person was St. Francis of Assisi. Allow the students to discuss what they know about this great man.

LESSON STEPS

1. Biography of St. Francis. Share this short biography and add information that you know about his life:

St. Francis was born in Assisi, in Umbria, Italy, in 1181. He died in 1226 at the age of 44. Francis was the son of a rich cloth merchant. As a teenager, he was rebellious and participated in many street brawls. At least once, he spent some time in jail. While in jail, Francis he had a conversion experience. It was reported that Christ directly called to him to give up his worldly life. After that, Francis got serious about religion. He read and reread the gospels and came to believe that in order to be Christlike, he needed to live in accordance with Christ's teachings.

His daily life became one of living out his belief. Francis dressed in ragged clothes and begged for his food and other needs. He preached his message of purity and peace everywhere he went. Francis believed that every person was his brother or sister, and the way he treated people that way. He visited hospitals, cared for the sick—even lepers, and preached in the streets. To pay for the food he was given, he cleaned churches and did other work with his hands.

Francis lived with the animals and treated them with mercy and care. He realized that even the smallest creature was precious to his Lord. He composed many prayers and hymns. One of the greatest of these is “The Prayer of St. Francis.” We know this piece as a hymn, titled “Make me a channel of your peace.”

2. “Make Me a Channel of Your Peace.” *(If you have a CD with this piece of music, play it to begin and end this activity. It would be most beneficial, since the idea of the activity is contemplation and reflection.)*

Distribute *Sing the Journey* songbooks and ask students to find #56. Also hand out copies of the activity sheet. Have students work with one other person to create the list titled “Problems People Face.” *(These are mentioned in verse 2—hatred, injury, doubt, despair, darkness, sadness.)*

Then ask them to look at verses 1 and 2 again and complete the second list, titled “Solutions” *(love, forgiveness, faith, hope, light, joy)*. For verse 3, they should answer the question, “What is my responsibility?” *(console others, understand others, love others)*.

Finally, ask students to return to the first line of verses 1, 2, and 4 to answer the last question, “How will others find solutions to their problems?” *(“I” need to be a channel of God’s peace in my daily life.)*

Note: Be sure to review this activity during worship and include a time when students can pray silently about their responsibility to create peace wherever they are.

3. “What Does the Lord Require?” charts. Ask students if they have learned anything from St. Francis that should be added to the chart. *(Consider this idea: daily living out the teachings of the gospel.)*

4. Introduce the play. Explain that the students are going to create skits for a short play called “Love Dust.” Then add, “The purpose of the skits is to show ways you can solve problems peacefully. This activity will help you think about being a person of faith, hope, and joy—about forgiving others and bringing light to people who feel like they are in darkness. It will help you think about consoling, understanding, and loving others—being a person of peace.”

5. “Love Dust.” Distribute copies of the play to the students. Read it and talk about what the Plutonian is trying to do. Have students remember situations in

which they had to choose whether or not to respond with love. Ask them to think about the story characters in this unit and their choices to love or not love in their situations. Have them share some of their thoughts.

Tell the class who will play the parts of Plutonian and Earthling. Explain that the rest of them will create and perform their own scenes that will be part of the play. Make sure students understand that Plutonian wants desperately to squirt someone with the love dust, but never gets a chance. The earthlings have opportunities to do bad things, but they choose the way of love. This means that in order for the scenes to fit the play, they need to demonstrate the way of love, as in Micah 6:8.

Encourage students to be creative and come up with their own situations. However, giving the following examples might help them get started:

- A group of students break a neighbor's window while playing softball. Some students run away, but several choose to tell the neighbor and pay for the damages.
- Several students choose to shovel snow from an elderly lady's driveway.
- Some students see another student stealing and choose to confront him/her in a loving way.
- Friends help another friend who is hurt, or care for a wounded animal.
- A student decides not to hit back when another basketball player intentionally hits him.

Tell students that you have made arrangements with the school principal to perform this play. (*Share your plan.*) This means that they must work hard to write scenes that will help other students learn about justice.

Divide the class into groups of 2-5 students, excluding the lead characters. You will need at least five scenes. If your class is small, you may need to allow some students to participate in more than one scene. Students can choose to work with their friends as long as everyone is graciously included and no one person is dominating the situation. (*Handle the groupings in the way most comfortable for you.*)

Have students gather in their groups and begin to brainstorm ideas. Ask them to be prepared to give you a one-sentence summary of their scene at the beginning of the next session. Remind them that their scenes will demonstrate Micah 6:8.

EXTEND THE LESSON

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

Write the scenes and produce the play "Love Dust."

1. Write the scenes. These do not need to be written word for word. They will be better if they are somewhat spontaneous. However, students must know what to expect from each other.
2. Gather props and costumes. Students participating in scenes need to create or bring in their own costumes and props. Insist that they keep them simple. Plutonian will need a spaceship, possibly created out of cardboard, or a toy. He/she will also need "love dust." This can be created by covering a can of baby powder with decorative paper and "poofing out" the powder. If you want a less messy version, change the wording to "love spray" or "love mist" and use a spray bottle with water in it. Earthling needs to bring a basketball and practice dribbling.

3. Practice the play several times. Be sure to have at least one dress rehearsal. Help children think about talking loudly, speaking slowly and clearly, and facing toward the audience whenever they are speaking.
4. Extras. Consider assigning one person as the prompter. You may also want an understudy for Earthling and one for Plutonian, in case of illness.
5. Perform the play in chapel or for another class. You could even have an end-of-school night and share it with parents.

Name _____

Date _____

Make Me a Channel of Your Peace



This is a class activity you will complete with directions from your teacher. Please follow the directions carefully.

Problems People Face

Solutions

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____

7. What is my responsibility?

- a. _____
- b. _____
- c. _____

8. How will other people find solution to their problems?

Love Dust

Cast: Earthling, Plutonian, actors in scenes

Props: Basketball, Plutonian's rocket, love duster (or sprayer), other objects for use in scenes

Setting: Anywhere on Earth

(Earthling is throwing a basketball up in the air and catching it. Plutonian rushes in and makes a not-so-soft landing on earth.)

Earthling: Where did you come from?

Plutonian: *(Acts confused and stutters.)* Well-ll . . . hm-m-m. Wait just a minute here. Where am I?

Earthling: You're in (town, state) . Are you all right? And where did you get that thing?
(Points to Plutonian's rocket.)

Plutonian: Oh, this old thing? It's my . . . uh . . . transportation. I'm not from around here, you know.

Earthling: I figured that out. Where are you from?

Plutonian: I come from the planet Pluto. I was sent here on a special mission.

Earthling: Welcome to Earth. I'm (name) . What kind of mission did you come here for?

Plutonian: A mission of love.

Earthling: Huh?

Plutonian: See . . . we Plutonians watch all you Earthlings from the planet Pluto, and we're sad because of what we see happening on this planet. Why, you Earthlings are always so busy running around! You can be downright mean to one another at times, too!

Earthling: What do you mean?

Plutonian: You Earthlings seem to be so wrapped up in your own problems that you don't have time to really care about someone else. That's why my planet sent me.

(Two people enter. They're so absorbed in conversations that they walk past Earthling and Plutonian. The people almost bump into them, so Plutonian has to quickly move out of the way. The people don't notice them. They walk offstage.)

See what I mean? Why, if I would be hurt and lying there, they'd step right on me!

Earthling: Not all Earthlings are like that . . .

Plutonian: Oh yes, you are. My boss says all Earthlings are alike.

Earthling: Well, uh, what are you going to do?

Plutonian: Oh, that's easy. I just brought some of the special love powder we use all the time on Pluto.

Earthling: Love powder?

Plutonian: *(Gets out love duster.)* Whenever it looks like someone is going to say something mean, we just squirt them with this love powder. *(Squirts.)* Then they say something nice instead. That's why there's such a cloud around our planet. It's all that love dust.

Earthling: Not everyone needs your love dust. There are lots of people who are concerned about others here on Earth.

Plutonian: That's not what my boss says.

Earthling: Come on! I'll show you some people who have lots of love for each other. They get their love from Jesus Christ. They're called Christians.

Plutonian: I'll take my duster along, just in case. *(Squirts it a little as they move over to the first scene.)*

Earthling: Sure. But I think you'll be surprised.

(Plutonian and Earthling watch some scenes. Your group will create these scenes ahead of time. Act out situations where you could act unkindly, then surprise the Plutonian by acting with love instead. Use your imagination. Use as many actors as you have, and collect the props you will need. Plutonian will always be ready to squirt the love dust, but the Christians never give the opportunity!)

Plutonian: *(After the scenes)* Hey! I didn't have to use my love dust at all. What's going on around here? Did some quick Plutonian get here before me? I don't understand all this. Earth is just no fun.

Earthling: No, a Plutonian didn't do all of this. But a man named Jesus did.

Plutonian: Oh, so a man named Jesus got the scoop on me! Where did he get all his love dust?

Earthling: He didn't need love dust. He just used *real* love.

Plutonian: What? I never heard such a thing!

Earthling: Jesus came and lived with Earthlings many years ago. He showed us how to love one another. He taught us how to put other people first.

Plutonian: Where is this Jesus now?

Earthling: Jesus lives in heaven with God. But he sent the Holy Spirit to help us when we don't feel like loving other people. It's kinda like your love dust! He also gave us a book called the Bible, which helps us learn how to live.

Plutonian: Why doesn't every Earthling do what Jesus taught?

Earthling: Not everyone understands or knows about Jesus and his teachings. That's where Christians come in. We're supposed to be like love dust to all the people here on earth.

Plutonian: Well, I guess we won't need this. *(Gets rid of love duster.)* Boy, will my boss be surprised!

Earthling: You can tell your boss about Jesus. Then maybe there won't be such a big cloud around your planet. Come on, let's join my friends for a game of basketball.

(They walk away together.)

What Does the Lord Require?

LESSON 5: THE GOD OF PEACE AND LOVE WILL GO WITH YOU

Objective

Students and teacher will give words of encouragement and support to each other as they go, remembering that the God of love and peace will be their guide and companion for the journey.

Key Concepts

- Each person has a special God-given gift to be used in building God’s kingdom.
- God will be with us no matter what.

Text: 2 Corinthians 13:11

Memory text: Micah 6:8

Estimated Lesson Time: 40-45 minutes for making the gift *(plus 45-60 minutes for the ceremony)*

Materials

- Bibles
- Small slips of paper
- Small basket
- Letters from teacher, with envelopes
- Ribbon award (p. 438)
- Colored pencils, scissors
- “Litany for the Last Day of School” (p. 439)

Teacher Preparation

- Write each student’s name on a small slip of paper. Fold the papers and put them in the small basket. Students will draw a name from the basket and make a ribbon for that person.
- Write a letter to each student that includes a paragraph of thanks for the gift(s) the student shared in the classroom that helped to make this a good year. Consider ending each letter with a version of 2 Corinthians 13:11. Place in a sealed envelope.
- Make copies of “Ribbon Award” and “Litany for the Last Day of School,” one of each for every student.
- This lesson will be presented in three parts: 1) The introduction, which needs to be done first thing in the morning; 2) Lesson step 1—creating the ribbons, which can be done when you think students have had enough time to think about the gift they want to give; and 3) The celebration, which needs to fit into the busy final day of school. The lesson lends itself to the closing of the day, if possible.
- The celebration ends with the litany and a personal benediction from the teacher. Read over the litany ahead of time to prepare.

INTRODUCING THE LESSON

Draw secret names. When the students first enter the classroom in the morning, explain that this will be a special day of celebration. They will each draw a secret name out of a basket and make a gift for that person—a “first place” blue ribbon. On the ribbon, they will write their secret person’s name and a special gift that person has. Give some examples of what gifts might be (*best reader, #1 writer of stories, best encourager, #1 in sportsmanship, best mathematician, best peacemaker, #1 friend, #1 listener, etc.*).

At the celebration in the afternoon, they will present the ribbon and tell the person and the class the reason they wrote down this gift for this person. (*Examples: I think you’re the #1 reader because you helped me read difficult words when we were in a small group together. I think you’re the best sport because you always stayed happy, even when your team lost the game.*)

Assure students that if they have trouble thinking of a gift for their person you will be there to discuss it with them. Let them know they have several hours to think about the gift before working on it.

Finally, draw names and remind students to keep the name a secret.

LESSON STEPS

1. Create the ribbons. Give each student a copy of the ribbon award. Have scissors and colored pencils available. Talk to them about being extremely neat and careful while completing this ribbon for a classmate. It should be something that the student will be proud to hang on the bulletin board at home to remember this school year. Explain that students should:

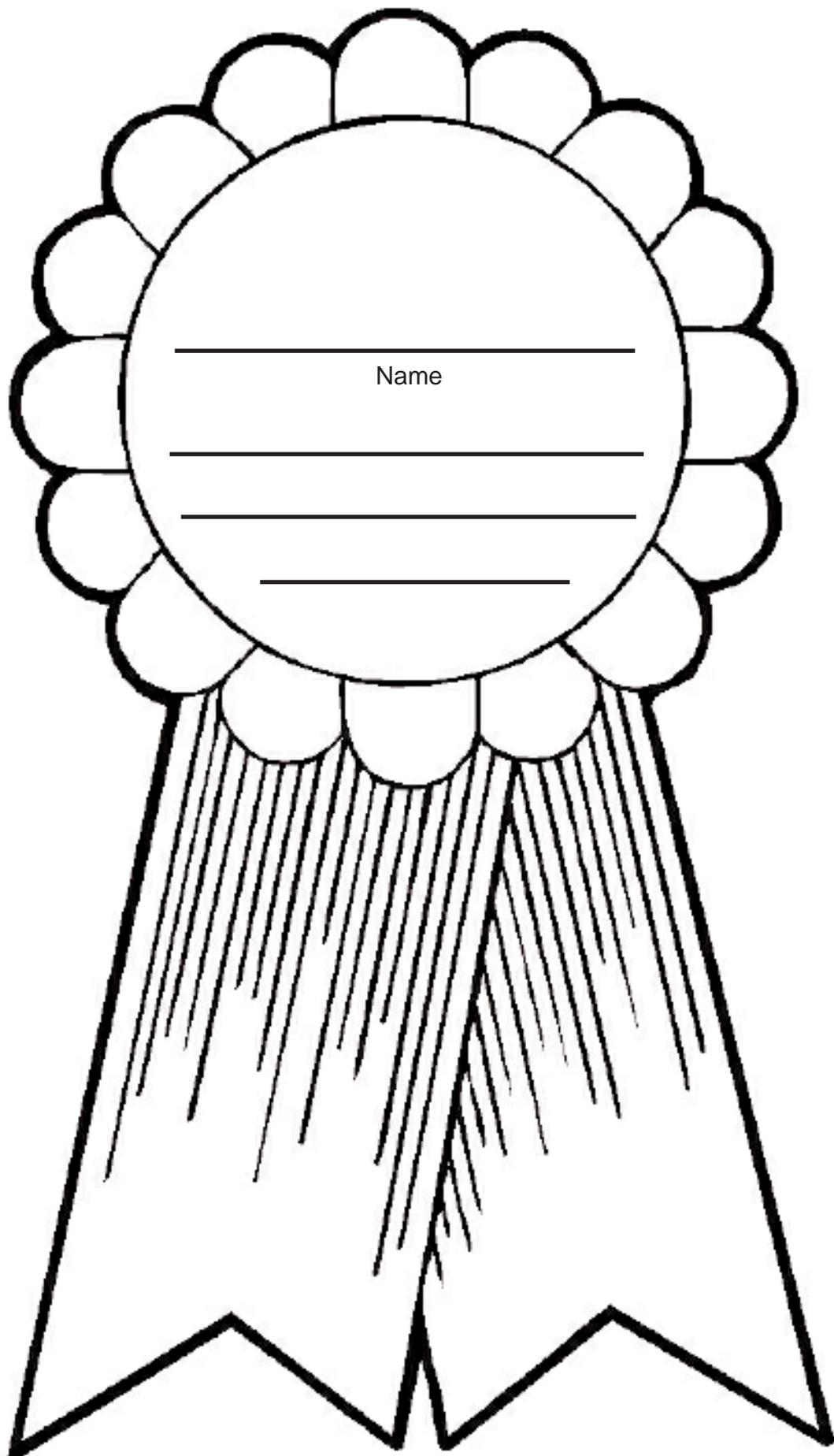
- Write #1 and the person’s gift on the lines.
- Consider writing something like “First Place” on the ribbon streamers.
- Shade the ribbon with colored pencils. (*First-place ribbons are usually blue.*)
- Secretly write the person’s name on the name line.

2. Celebrate. Ask the students to place their chairs in a circle. Be sure there is one for you. (*If possible, this celebration should take place in the classroom worship center.*)

Begin by asking the students to share their ribbons with each other. Each student should call the person’s name, read the gift(s) they wrote down, and then give a reason or example for their choice(s).

Distribute the letters you have written for each student, in sealed envelopes. (*You can take several minutes to let them open and read their letters, or ask them to take them home and read them later.*) Talk to your students from your heart, with the Spirit’s leading, about the wonderful memories of this year that they have helped to create and how thankful you are for each one of them—for who they are, and who they are becoming. Share the hopes and prayers you have for their future.

3. Litany. End the celebration with the “Litany for the Last Day of School.” (*Distribute the litany and hold hands around the circle.*)





Litany for the Last Day of School

Teacher: This year we have been on a journey together. We have laughed together, cried together, prayed together and learned together. We have nurtured and encouraged each other. We have learned many new things.

Students: How great is God's love that we should be called children of God!
(based on 1 John 3:1)

Teacher: As you travel on life's road, you will trek over mountains and marvel at the beauty of God's creation. Always remember that God is there directing, guiding, and loving you. You are God's creation, made in God's image, and gifted by God to build God's kingdom in ways that only you can do.

Students: I praise you, O Lord, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made.
(based on Psalm 139:14)

Teacher: Dear Jesus, please give each one of us a servant's heart and help us walk in the way of peace. Be especially close to each one of us this summer.

Students: Guide our path, guard our words and grant us courage. We give you thanks!

All: Amen!

Teacher: Finally, good-bye. Aim for your best, listen to God's spirit, be good-natured and peaceful people. And the God of love and peace will go with you.
(2 Corinthians 13:11 paraphrased)



What Does the Lord Require?

Unit 12 Assessment

Part 1

Write true or false on the line in front of the statement.

- _____ 1. Onesimus had been Philemon's slave.
- _____ 2. Philemon wrote the book of Philemon.
- _____ 3. Onesimus was a runaway slave.
- _____ 4. Philemon had to go against the usual way things were done in his culture to accept Onesimus back as a brother.
- _____ 5. Onesimus became a Christian and began to help Peter.
- _____ 6. The theme of the book of Philemon is slavery.
- _____ 7. "Just" people are willing to see from another person's point of view.
- _____ 8. Micah was a prophet of God who praised the people for their behavior.
- _____ 9. Micah explained God's judgment and God's pardon to the people.

Part 2

Answer the following questions in your own words.

10. Name some things the Lord requires of us.

11. Write definitions for the following words.

Justice: _____

Mercy: _____

Humility: _____

12. Write about an example of justice from literature or from your own experience.

ANSWER KEY

What Does the Lord Require?

Unit 12 Assessment

Part 1

Write true or false on the line in front of the statement.

- True 1. Onesimus had been Philemon's slave.
- False 2. Philemon wrote the book of Philemon. *(Paul)*
- True 3. Onesimus was a runaway slave.
- True 4. Philemon had to go against the usual way things were done in his culture to accept Onesimus back as a brother.
- False 5. Onesimus became a Christian and began to help Peter. *(Paul)*
- False 6. The theme of the book of Philemon is slavery. *(justice)*
- True 7. "Just" people are willing to see from another person's point of view.
- False 8. Micah was a prophet of God who praised the people for their behavior. *(warned)*
- True 9. Micah explained God's judgment and God's pardon to the people.

Part 2

Answer the following questions in your own words.

10. Name some things the Lord requires of us.

(Accept reasonable answers.)

11. Write definitions for the following words.

Justice: *(Accept reasonable answers.)*

Mercy: _____

Humility: _____

12. Write about an example of justice from literature or from your own experience.

(Accept reasonable answers.)
