

Chapter 6:

The Gospel of Luke and Acts of the Apostles: Jesus the Savior

Student Preparation

- Students were asked to read Chapter 6, pages 172-201.
- Students were assigned to complete Chapter 5 Review Questions 1-7 and 10-11.
- Students were asked to bring in a news story about a conflict in the Middle East or about the living conditions of women in these countries.

Warm-up (about 20 minutes)

- Read the Magnificat, Luke 1:46-56, as an opening prayer.
- Share and discuss the students' responses to Chapter 5 Review Questions which they completed prior to this session. Answers may be found on pages 119-120 of the Teacher's Manual.
- Give students a few minutes to look over the stories about the Middle Eastern conflicts they brought to class. Ask each student to give a brief summary of their story. Invite them to consider what the story reveals about the culture of the Middle East and of the challenging conditions under which people live. Have students list the ways in which conditions in the Holy Land today are similar to conditions in Jesus' time. (For example, many people live in poverty, violent conflict is familiar, in many countries the government is oppressive and women in particular have very little freedom, penalties for violating the law are very harsh.) Encourage them to envision these conditions as they read the Gospels.

Part 1:

Lesson (about 30 minutes)

Text Reference: Lost and Found, Background on Luke's Gospel and the Acts of the Apostles, Common Themes in Luke and Acts (pages 173-189)

- Referring to pages 175-177, fill in the spaces on author, audience, date, purpose, and themes of Luke's Gospel on the posterboard from previous classes. Then have students put away their books, cover or turn over the poster board, and quiz students with the questions found on page 128 of the Teacher's Manual.
- Have students complete the exercise on "Parable Themes and Reflections" on pages 174-175. Lead students in a discussion of their own self-rating, making sure that students feel safe in giving their responses.
- Have students read Luke 4:14-44. Review with students the role of a prophet: to speak God's message to people of the time. Some describe prophets as those who "comfort the afflicted and afflict the comfortable." Brainstorm with students the ways in which Jesus afflicted the comfortable of his day, and in which ways he brought comfort to the afflicted. Then brainstorm with students a variety of modern settings. Have them write in their journals about the message Jesus might bring if he came back to earth today. Invite students to share their thoughts with the group.
- Invite a speaker from a Catholic charismatic prayer group to address the students. Ask the speaker to describe the ways in which they see the gifts of the early Church being manifested in their community.
- Visit the website of Catholic Relief Services (www.catholicrelief.org) and make copies of some of the articles describing the work of the Church today. Ask the students to describe the ways in which the work of this agency reflects Jesus' goals described on page 181.
- Show a clip of the video, *Something Beautiful for God*, or another video on Mother Teresa. A remarkable characteristic of Mother Teresa's religious community is the incredible serenity and joy they exhibit while living in poverty and amidst great suffering. Ask students whether they know any other examples of strong Christians who have remarkable joy in the midst of suffering. How is this joy evidence of the presence of the Holy Spirit?
- Ask the students to brainstorm the positive benefits of a regular exercise regimen in their lives; record their responses on the board. Ask them what level of time commitment is required in order for exercise to have an impact. Then ask them to make a list of the benefits of having a regular prayer life (e.g., such as a greater sense of safety and serenity, the ability to recognize God's guidance in our lives, the opportunity to share our lives with God). Then ask students to consider approximately how often and how long one should pray in order to be able to quiet oneself and make that connection with God. Help them see that a commitment

to prayer is not a matter of obeying rules, but rather developing an internal capacity just as physical exercise develops physical capacity.

- Ask students to make a commitment to prayer or quiet time for the next two weeks. Let them know you will all be checking back in after the two-week period is over.
- Ask students to share what they know of the condition of women in some developing countries. Have those students who gathered information on the role of women share what they learned. While some countries educate women and have them fight as soldiers alongside men, in other countries women are denied education, medical care, or the freedom to walk outside independently. If possible, show students a photograph of a woman in a burqah, and have them discuss the symbolism of requiring women to wear such concealing and restrictive clothing. Jesus' treatment of women described on page 186 was as revolutionary then as it would be in some of these countries today.
- Review with students the teachings about Mary described on pages 188-89.

Break/Reading Exercise (about 15 minutes)

- Join students for a break with refreshments.
- Have students read Luke 1:5-3:6. Ask them to consider whether they notice a difference in tone among the Gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke, and which they prefer. They can refer to the poster board listing themes of each Gospel as they consider their answers to this question.

Part 2: Lesson (about 30 minutes)

Text Reference: Jesus: A Compassionate Messiah, Universal Savior, Overview of the Acts of the Apostles (pages 189-199)

- Jesus' instructions to care for the poor are unmistakable. Review Jesus' comments about money listed on page 194. Ask students to apply this teaching to teens' spending habits today.
- Consider leading your students in a service project as a sign of their commitment to follow Jesus' example and guidance. Suggestions are found on page 165. A group experience of direct service at an agency can be a wonderful way for students to get to know one another better, and can provide a solid foundation for future discussions.
- Invite students to make a commitment during the following week to reach out to one person in their community who is excluded. They could greet or sit with another student, or consciously treat individuals on the street or in service settings, such as restaurants or stores, with greater respect. Ask them to remember that being a follower of Jesus means making Jesus present to others, and seeing Jesus present in others.
- Forgiveness, discussed on pages 191-192, is one of the most important and most difficult aspects of spiritual growth. Jesus' underscored its importance when he taught us to pray, "Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us." Take some time to do a "resentment inventory" with students. Ask them to consider their lives, from early childhood to today, and call to mind individuals, groups, and events which hurt them and about which they still feel resentment today. Many, but not all, students will find that forgiveness is hard for them in some instances. Ask them to consider which people, whether in their own personal lives or people they may hear about in the news, they find most difficult to accept. Invite them to bring those people to prayer at the close of the session.
- Have students take turns reading Luke 15 aloud. These parables reinforce Jesus' attitude toward sinners (which includes every person in the room).
- The Acts of the Apostles describe the life of the early Church. Assign each student to silently read one chapter of Acts (each student should read a different chapter). Working consecutively, have each student summarize the results of his or her reading. Compile a list of characteristics of the early Church, based on students' reading.

Prayer Experience (about 20 minutes)

- Set up your prayer space, and invite students to quiet themselves in preparation for prayer.
- Use the instructions on page 202 as a guide for prayer, reminding students of the type of meditative prayer they tried in response to Mark's Gospel. Play some quiet music, and allow plenty of time for students to enter into prayer.
- Close by having the group read aloud together Luke 7:47, 50.

Conclusion (5 minutes)

- Assign Chapter 6 Review Questions 6-15 and 20-24.
- Direct the students to read Chapter 7, pages 205-230.
- Ask students to bring in a CD with a piece of music which for them sets a tone for prayer.
- Make a commitment to reach out to a person in your school or community who feels excluded.