



## MUSICAL PRELUDE

**June:** “I Will Trust in the Lord,” AME Zion Bicentennial Hymnal, #75, or “Keep the Faith,” Charles Jenkins and Fellowship Chicago, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yJHc86XcQLI>.

**July:** “Come to Jesus,” AME Zion Bicentennial Hymnal, #408, or “Everlasting God (‘The Lord Is My Light and Salvation’), William Murphy, [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qQIDLMaWHQA&list=PLac6pnP5yUvuPIby9Rsfwr9f-h4h\\_VRMk8](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qQIDLMaWHQA&list=PLac6pnP5yUvuPIby9Rsfwr9f-h4h_VRMk8).

**August:** “Come, Ye Disconsolate,” AME Zion Bicentennial Hymnal, #447, or “Never Lost,” CeCe Winans, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZPHXL-8Poku0>.

## CALL TO WORSHIP

**June:** Led by the VBS Director (1st Sunday); a child (2nd Sunday); a father (3rd Sunday); and a youth (4th Sunday).

**Leader:** “Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest.” (Matthew 11:28 NRSV)

*All: “For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.” (Matthew 11:30 NRSV)*

**July:** Led by a military service member or veteran (1st Sunday); a senior (2nd Sunday); an adult (3rd Sunday); and a young adult (4th Sunday).

Leader: "For I am not ashamed of the gospel; it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who has faith, to the Jew first and also to the Greek."  
(Romans 1:16 NRSV)

*All: "For in it the righteousness of God is revealed through faith for faith; as it is written, 'The one who is righteous will live by faith.'" (Romans 1:17 NRSV)*

**August:** Led by the Sunday Church School Superintendent (1st Sunday); the Young People-Adult teacher (2nd Sunday); the Intermediate-Senior teacher (3rd Sunday); the Junior teacher (4th Sunday); and the Primary or Beginner teacher (5th Sunday).

Leader: "Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight and the sin that clings so closely..."  
(Hebrews 12:1a)

*All: "[A]nd let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus the pioneer and perfecter of our faith..." (Hebrews 12:1b-2a)*

### **CHORAL INVOCATION:**

(Sung corporately)

"Let It Breathe on Me" (AME Zion Bicentennial Hymnal, #225)

### **MORNING HYMN:**

**June:** "Great Is Thy Faithfulness," (AME Zion Bicentennial Hymnal, #80)

**July:** "To God Be the Glory," (AME Zion Bicentennial Hymnal, #50)

**August:** "My Hope Is Built on Nothing Less," (AME Zion Bicentennial Hymnal, #286)

### **RESPONSIVE READING:**

2 Corinthians 5:17-21 NRSV

Leader: So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new!

*People: All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation;*

Leader: [T]hat is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting the message of reconciliation to us.

*People: So we are ambassadors for Christ, since God is making his appeal through us; we entreat you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.*

*All: For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.*

### **RALLY SONG:**

"We've Come This Far by Faith," Donnie McClurkin, [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dqPO\\_wtfKmQ](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dqPO_wtfKmQ).

### **STUDY PERIOD:**

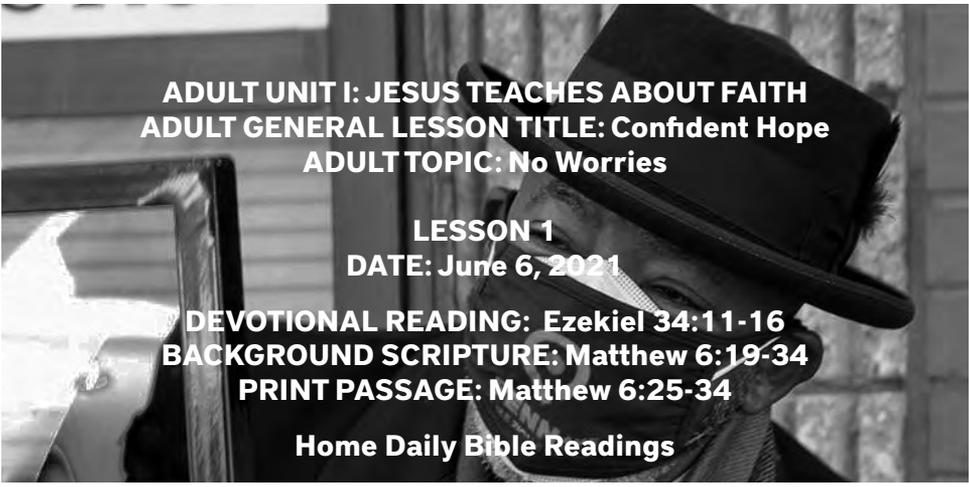
Learners study the lessons in their classes.

### **CLOSING ASSEMBLY:**

Class members will commit and dedicate themselves to living in the confident hope found in our faith in God and the promises found in the salvation of God.

### **SUNDAY SCHOOL BENEDICTION:**

Sunday school is over for another day. Hear us, Heavenly Father, as to Thee we pray. Through the week be with us in our work and play; Make us kind and loving, help us to obey. Amen.



**ADULT UNIT I: JESUS TEACHES ABOUT FAITH**  
**ADULT GENERAL LESSON TITLE: Confident Hope**  
**ADULT TOPIC: No Worries**

**LESSON 1**  
**DATE: June 6, 2021**

**DEVOTIONAL READING: Ezekiel 34:11-16**  
**BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE: Matthew 6:19-34**  
**PRINT PASSAGE: Matthew 6:25-34**

**Home Daily Bible Readings**

May 31	M	1 Samuel 9:5-10	Worried? Seek God's Counsel
Jun. 1	T	Ezekiel 34:11-16	God Cares for His People
Jun. 2	W	1 Timothy 6:17-19	Rich? Set Your Hope on God
Jun. 3	Th	Matthew 17:14-20	Enlarge Your Faith Practices
Jun. 4	F	Luke 12:22-34	Overcome Worry through Faith
Jun. 5	Sa	Matthew 6:19-24	Serve God with Your Whole Heart
Jun. 6	Su	Matthew 6:25-34	Live Worry Free Every Day

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**EXALT!**

**Invocation** – Teacher or Learner

**Celebration** – “My Faith Looks Up to Thee!” - #468 A.M.E.Z. *Bicentennial Hymnal*

**Declaration** – Matthew 6:25-34 (*Read together by class, by a volunteer or responsively.*)

**Do Not Be Anxious**

<sup>25</sup> “Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing?”

<sup>26</sup> Look at the birds of the air: they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? <sup>27</sup> And which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to his span of life? <sup>28</sup> And why are you anxious about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin, <sup>29</sup> yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed

like one of these. <sup>30</sup> But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is alive and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? <sup>31</sup> Therefore do not be anxious, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' <sup>32</sup> For the Gentiles seek after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. <sup>33</sup> But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.

<sup>34</sup> "Therefore do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble.

**Affirmation** – We embrace the opportunity to trust God in everyday life. (*Spoken together by class and teacher*).

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**ENGAGE:** (5-10 min.)

This quarter's study looks at God's gift of faith as the source of hope. Sessions from the Gospels illuminate hope and faith in the teachings and miracles of Jesus. Sessions from the Epistles show how the early church understood God's gift of salvation through faith in Christ as the source of hope.

Unit I, "Jesus Teaches about Faith," has five sessions that reveal the hope and faith that come through Jesus' teachings and miracles. The sessions from Matthew demonstrate that faith in God is the primary source of hope and confidence. The miracles in Mark and Luke illustrate the power of faith.



Life's uncertainties can cause people to worry about how to obtain basic needs. Who can we trust to meet all our needs? Jesus declares in his Sermon on the Mount in the Gospel of Matthew that our God who is truly sov-

ereign will fulfill our needs.

If able, in groups of three or four persons discuss: How often have you and others you know become overly stressed in striving to earn a living. Explain what you believe is the extent to which you should be concerned about providing for yourself and your family. Can excessive concern for this cause us to lose sight of what is most important in life? Explain your answers. What happens when we become wrapped up in the pursuit of money and possessions above all else? What is the role of faith in our daily struggle to manage economic survival?

## EDUCATE: (10-15 min.)

**Matthew 6:25-27:** Jesus used his teachings to shift the ancient understanding of riches from the strictly temporal to those that are eternal (vv. 19-20). Jesus presents four arguments to teach his disciples about the dangers of greed for material gain and highlights the power of divine providence: (1) How God provides for the birds (v. 26), (2) Trusting God is more life-giving than worrying (v. 27), (3) trusting God for our daily needs (vv. 28-31), and (4) A lack of trust in God is living as if we don't know God (v. 32). Worry upsets faith in the worst way. Worry has no use or purpose except to rattle the soundness of our minds. Like Erma Bombeck said: "It is like a rocking chair; it gives one a lot to do but gets one nowhere." Yet, it is an experience to which all are subject. It is well said that it is normal for us to "evaluate our circumstances and identify threats to our well-being. Threats are many, but even when they are minor, we exaggerate them or imagine threats that do not exist. We leave ourselves with restlessness, loss of appetite, short tempers, and feelings of hopelessness" (*Standard Lesson Commentary 2020-2021, Large Print Edition*, p. 346). Jesus was striking at the heart of a troubling threat to our faith in God in elaborating on this human trait, and He gave us the perfect answer with plenty of evidence to bolster our trust in God.

**Matthew 6:28-32:** Jesus does not say "be like the birds" but rather "look at the birds." He does not say be exactly like grass or flowers or other things in nature. The natural order provides a means to reflect upon God's providence, but not necessarily role models for human behavior. Other Scripture passages highlight the human obligation to engage in productive work. (See for example 2 Thessalonians 3:10.) However, we can certainly open our eyes and see the apparent and really marvelous truth of Jesus' words, the thoughts of which may never have occurred to us. We are absolutely under God's care as are any other of God's creation. Is it any wonder that John says that the world did not know God, but Jesus the only Son of God has made God known? If God is our Father, how can such a Father not take care of us and provide for all our needs, especially at times when we are unable to meet those needs ourselves?

**Matthew 6:33-34:** As so many commentators acknowledge, Jesus in His Sermon on the Mount (chapters 5 through 7 of Matthew's Gospel) is elaborating on the ethics of those who expect to dwell in God's kingdom and live under God's rule in this world or the next. Here we see Jesus pinpointing the primary focus of those who would be kingdom-dwellers. They must have faith, unwavering trust in God, whose kingdom must take absolute priority in their minds and interests. "In contrast to the one who worries unduly is the person who seeks *first* the kingdom of God. Jesus' followers desire, above all, for God's will to be done everywhere.... We are to be focused not on providing for ourselves...but on serving, obeying, and sharing God....To seek God's kingdom goes hand in hand with seeking [God's] righteousness. The two cannot be separated.... For those in the kingdom of God, nothing matters as much as having God's righteousness...prevailing in the world" (*Ibid.*, p. 349).

## **ELEVATE:** (10 min.)

As we grow in faith, a transformational process takes place in which we gain greater trust in God's promises as we witness his promises coming to fruition.

**If able, break into two groups:** Ask each group to discuss how they marvel at Jesus' words about God's creative work inspiring us to trust that God will take care of us as well. Consider whether Christians allow wealth to become their love and supersede their ability to love God. Share experiences in which you and others you know tend to gain spiritual insight and greater trust in God's plans when the things of God are put first. How would you say that distrust of God's providence is counterproductive to faith?



## **iTHINK:** (5–7 min.)

1. Use objects and pictures of the wonders of nature (fields of flowers, etc.) to point to and reinforce that God is over all providence.
2. Find medical data that details the health risks that can be caused or exacerbated by worry. Contrast those facts with information about the links between faith and positive health benefits.
3. Discuss some of the ways that Western culture puts great emphasis on self-reliance and the acquisition of things—money, possessions, power, social status, etc., and discuss why Jesus said, “You cannot serve two masters.”
4. Consider ways that ‘things’ can be taken away from us (theft, loss, fire, flood, bad reputation, etc.) and the lengths to which we go to attain those ‘things’. Then share how our faith in God cannot be stolen or eaten away.
5. Ask participants to look at their daily schedule and consider whether they are seeking God's kingdom and righteousness above all else.

**KEY VERSE: Your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. <sup>33</sup> But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you. Matthew 6:32b-33**

**ADULT UNIT I: JESUS TEACHES ABOUT FAITH**  
**ADULT GENERAL LESSON TITLE: Why Are You Afraid?**  
**ADULT TOPIC: Calming The Storm**

**LESSON 2**  
**DATE: June 13, 2021**

**DEVOTIONAL READING: Psalm 107:23-32**  
**BACKGROUND SCRIPTURES: Matthew 8:23-27; Mark 4:35-41;**  
**Luke 8:22-25**  
**PRINT PASSAGE: Matthew 8:23-27**

**Home Daily Bible Readings**

<i>Jun. 7</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>Mark 4:35-41</i>	<i>Do Not Fear the Storm</i>
<i>Jun. 8</i>	<i>T</i>	<i>Matthew 24:9-14</i>	<i>Do Not Fear Persecution</i>
<i>Jun. 9</i>	<i>W</i>	<i>Romans 8:31-39</i>	<i>No Separation from God's Love</i>
<i>Jun. 10</i>	<i>Th</i>	<i>John 16:25-33</i>	<i>I Have Overcome the World</i>
<i>Jun. 11</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>Matthew 8:18-22</i>	<i>Choose to Follow Me Now!</i>
<i>Jun. 12</i>	<i>Sa</i>	<i>Matthew 8:28-34</i>	<i>Jesus Delivers the Demon-Possessed</i>
<i>Jun. 13</i>	<i>Su</i>	<i>Matthew 8:23-27</i>	<i>Jesus Stills the Stormy Seas</i>

**EXALT!**

**Invocation** – Teacher or Learner

**Celebration** – “Stand by Me” - #633 A. M. E. Zion Bicentennial Hymnal

**Declaration** – Matthew 8:23-27 (Read together by the class, by a volunteer or responsively.)

**Jesus Calms a Storm**

**23** And when he got into the boat, his disciples followed him. **24** And behold, there arose a great storm on the sea, so that the boat was being swamped by the waves; but he was asleep. **25** And they went and woke him, saying, “Save us, Lord; we are perishing.” **26** And he said to them, “Why are you afraid, O you of little faith?” Then he rose and rebuked the winds and the sea, and there was a great calm. **27** And the men marveled, saying, “What sort of man is this, that even winds and sea obey him?”

**Affirmation** – We appreciate the calming presence of Christ when we are beset by life’s storms. (*Spoken together by class and teacher*).

**ENGAGE:** (5-10 min.)



People often lose confidence amidst the storms of persecution, rejection, and poverty. Where can we find assurance when beset by the storms of life? Fearing they would not survive the windstorm, the disciples turned to Jesus to save them.

Many of us have experienced the fear of thinking we have no way out of a problem. Some of us may have a trusted friend to whom we can go to share our troubles.

**Activities:** Allow participants to examine themselves as to whether they have had a friend come to their aid in a life-changing way. Talk with one another about becoming discouraged when feeling overwhelmed by a life storm. Have bad experiences caused you or some persons you know to believe that no one cares about your/their problems? Give one of three persons a verse each of the song “What a Friend We have in Jesus” and let each tell how her/his verse speaks to such situations as may have been expressed.

**EDUCATE:** (10-15 min.)

**Matthew 8:23-25:** It was apparently His vigorous ministry to the urgent needs of the people he encountered that exhausted Jesus and made it necessary for Him to get a bit of rest. His calm and ability to rest in the midst of the storm becomes a model for believers to trust God during difficult times. The disciples were seasoned fishermen who were familiar with bad weather and the dangers of the sea, yet, they were deathly afraid. The repetition of “Master” (Luke) indicates the sense of urgency felt by the boat’s occupants. The Synoptic Gospels (Matthew, Mark, and Luke) each portray the event as more than just a bad storm. Their situation was life-threatening. In Hebrew thought, the sea symbolizes the forces of chaos arrayed against God, which God brings into subjection (Genesis 1:2; Psalms 93:3; 104:6-9; etc.). So they were desperate for God’s control of the elements of His creation to bring peace and calm. When they appealed to Jesus, they were not aware that Jesus could exercise the power and control of God under such circumstances.

**Matthew 8:26-27:** The disciples showed a measure of trust by running to Jesus for help, yet Jesus rebuked them for not realizing that the situation was

under control, even as he slept. The disciples still had a lot to learn about Jesus' identity and powers. They also had much to learn in terms of faith and trust in God. "Jesus' peace (v. 24) contrasts starkly with the disciples' fear (v. 25); they are of *little faith* (v. 26), just like those who are anxious for tomorrow (6:30) or who doubt Jesus' power to work extraordinary miracles (14:31; 16:8; 17:20). Ability to sleep during trouble was often a sign of faith in God (Ps 3:5; 4:8)" (*The IVP New Testament Commentary Series*). After rebuking the disciples for their little faith, Jesus demonstrates his divine authority by speaking a word to calm the earth's elements.



"Jesus' rebuke of *the winds and the waves* is something of a counterpart to his rebuke of the disciples' little faith. Some believe that the Lord will meet their needs only if they have enough faith to satisfy him. But Jesus saves the small of faith even as he urges them on to greater faith. We should realize, however, having little faith is perilously close to having no faith (compare Matthew 17:14-20). And paradoxically, belief and unbelief can exist side by side (Mark 0:24)" (*Standard Lesson Commentary, Large Print Edition, p.358*).

### **ELEVATE:** (5-10 min.)

**If able, break into two groups:** Ask group one to discuss and elaborate on the following points:

1. Believers are not exempt from experiencing life's storms, both outer and inner. What keeps you calm in the times of storm?
2. Seasoned believers can become fearful that God is nonchalant toward their difficulties. How do they overcome such fears?
3. God may not answer believers at the immediate signs of trouble. How do we develop the patience to wait on God?

Ask group two discuss and elaborate on the following points:

4. Believers must trust God's timing, while recognizing God's sovereign power over our lives/world. How is our faith strengthened through waiting on God and seeing Him come through in the nick of time?

5. Believers are encouraged and amazed by God’s power to swiftly restore order and calm to life. Do we share this experience with one another to help fellow-believers grow in faith?

6. Believers find assurance in knowing that God cares about our issues and concerns and will respond to our earnest pleas for help. What experiences have you had that brought you such assurance?

Allow both groups to share views as a whole.

**iTHINK:** (5-7 min.)

1. Ask participants to reflect on a time when they experienced a major life storm. Encourage them to recall and share the feelings they had during the storm (e.g., pain, anxiety, doubt, anger, confusion, fear, uncertainty, calm, peace, hope, joy). It is not necessary for learners to share the details of the life storm. If able, ask students to write their feelings inside a circle on a large sheet of paper or a board. Remind learners that all of these experiences comprise our faith journey.

2. Create a faith acronym for STORM, thinking of words that reflect the issues we may have dealt with while wrestling with life storms.

3. Share several news stories about people who are experiencing great difficulty in a life storm, either personally or collectively. Discuss ways that believers are called to be the hands and feet of God in helping to address human need.

4. If able, ask learners to form teams to conduct a Scripture search that can offer verses of encouragement during times of storm. Ask them to share their personal favorites with the group. Write the verses on the board. Ask learners to record them on their calendar (paper or electronic) and commit to reading one verse daily until all have been read.

5. Compose a litany that expresses a response to the promised presence of Jesus in bad times as well as good times.

**KEY VERSE: And he said to them, “Why are you afraid, O you of little faith?” Then he rose and rebuked the winds and the sea, and there was a great calm. Matthew 8:26**





**ADULT UNIT I: JESUS TEACHES ABOUT FAITH**  
**ADULT GENERAL LESSON TITLE: Healed by Faith**  
**ADULT TOPIC: A Healing Touch**

**LESSON 3**  
**DATE: June 20, 2021**

**DEVOTIONAL READING: Proverbs 3:1-8**  
**BACKGROUND SCRIPTURES: Matthew 9:18-26; Mark 5:21-43;**  
**Luke 8:40-56**

**PRINT PASSAGE: Matthew 9:18-26**

**Home Daily Bible Readings**

<i>Jun. 14</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>Numbers 15:37-41</i>	<i>Fringe, Aid to Remember God's Commandments</i>
<i>Jun. 15</i>	<i>T</i>	<i>Luke 8:40-42a, 49-56</i>	<i>Disciples and Family Witness Girl's Healing</i>
<i>Jun. 16</i>	<i>W</i>	<i>Luke 8:42b-48</i>	<i>Woman Testifies to Jesus' Healing Touch</i>
<i>Jun. 17</i>	<i>Th</i>	<i>Matthew 9:27-31</i>	<i>Jesus Opens Eyes of the Blind Man</i>
<i>Jun. 18</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>Matthew 9:32-34</i>	<i>Jesus Restores Speech to Mute Man</i>
<i>Jun. 19</i>	<i>Sa</i>	<i>Matthew 9:35-10:1</i>	<i>Join the Lord's Harvest Today</i>
<i>Jun. 20</i>	<i>Su</i>	<i>Matthew 9:18-26</i>	<i>Faith in God Heals Many Ills</i>

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**EXALT!**

**Invocation** – Teacher or Learner

**Celebration** – “He Touched Me” - #629 A.M.E. Zion Bicentennial Hymn

**Declaration** – Matthew 9:18-26 (Read together by the class, by a volunteer or responsively.)

**A Girl Restored to Life and a Woman Healed**

**<sup>18</sup> While he was saying these things to them, behold, a ruler came in and knelt before him, saying, “My daughter has just died, but come and lay your hand on her, and she will live.” <sup>19</sup> And Jesus rose and followed him, with his disciples. <sup>20</sup> And behold, a woman who had suffered from a discharge of blood for twelve years came up behind him and touched the fringe of his garment, <sup>21</sup> for she said to herself, “If I**

only touch his garment, I will be made well.”<sup>22</sup> Jesus turned, and seeing her he said, “Take heart, daughter; your faith has made you well.” And instantly[a] the woman was made well.<sup>23</sup> And when Jesus came to the ruler’s house and saw the flute players and the crowd making a commotion,<sup>24</sup> he said, “Go away, for the girl is not dead but sleeping.” And they laughed at him.<sup>25</sup> But when the crowd had been put outside, he went in and took her by the hand, and the girl arose.<sup>26</sup> And the report of this went through all that district.

**Affirmation** – We rejoice in the healing power of God as manifested in our own lives. (*Spoken together by class and teacher*).

**ENGAGE:** (5-10 min.)



People often look to others to help them with their health issues. Where does healing come from? Jesus told the woman with the issue of blood that she was healed because of her faith and told Jairus that his daughter was healed and restored to life.

**If able, break into two groups:**

Ask each group to discuss the issues of healing and faith and discuss in each group the issues of healing and faith experienced in this time of a worldwide pandemic. From these experiences of loss of loved ones and grave illnesses, what evidence have you witnessed that prove that Jesus is still in the healing and saving business? What evidence can you share to prove that the power of prayer and faith brings healing? What evidence can you share that proves that more and more people are coming to faith in Jesus because of their experiences with COVID-19 and other illnesses or viruses?



**EDUCATE:** (10-15 min.)

**Matthew 9:18-22:** It was customary for Jewish prophets, in dispensing blessings, to lay a hand on the person being benefited. The leader of the synagogue may have witnessed Jesus or another rabbi laying on hands previously. The hemorrhaging woman touched the tassel (*tzitzit*) of Jesus' prayer shawl, a symbol of God's commandments and a reminder to be holy (see Numbers 15:37-39). Reaching out to touch the tassel expressed the woman's faith in the power of Israel's God to heal, as well as in Jesus, as one sent from God. The woman's condition involved ritual uncleanness and thus was a source of shame as well as physical discomfort. Instead of spreading her uncleanness to Jesus, her trusting touch invites Jesus to impart healing and transformation. Jesus' acts of healing and restoration were not just personal but restored the woman and the girl to the community.

**Matthew 9:23-26:** The stories in Matthew 9:1-17 cast Jesus as a controversial figure, the kind of person an upstanding leader of the synagogue might not want to invite into his house. The fact that the synagogue leader does seek his help is indicative of his faith that Jesus can, in fact, restore his daughter. He "held a prominent position in the local Jewish community in that he oversaw the day-to-day operations of the synagogue. This man's title suggests that he was respected and mature in his faith in God. Though Matthew did not name the leader, Luke identified him as Jairus (Luke 8:41)" (*Ibid.*, p. 363). The presence and performance of the musicians was a sign of the acceptance of the girl's final demise. The musicians (Matthew 9:23) were a Gentile custom. They would play melancholy tunes to stir up the grief and mourning of those in attendance. "Both the story of the ruler's daughter and the story of the woman with a hemorrhage illustrate the relation between the work of Jesus and the role of



faith in the kingdom. The same point appears in the following accounts of the blind man and the mute demoniac. These works (raising the dead, healing the sick, etc.) are in response to faith, not because faith causes them, but because without faith in the King Himself, they are not signs of the Kingdom but only unaccountable events with no special meaning" (*The Reformation Study Bible*).

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**ELEVATE:** (10 min.)

We can see that our humble approach to God can stir divine intervention, which may yield miraculous responses. We may pray at any time, but at times, we must remove the distractions that hinder our interactions with God. We certainly look to God (or Jesus) to help us with our health issues. In our present times of numerous crises, we recognize that Jesus cares for every person, our personal circumstances, and our lives. We are not fearful of approaching God with our dire needs.

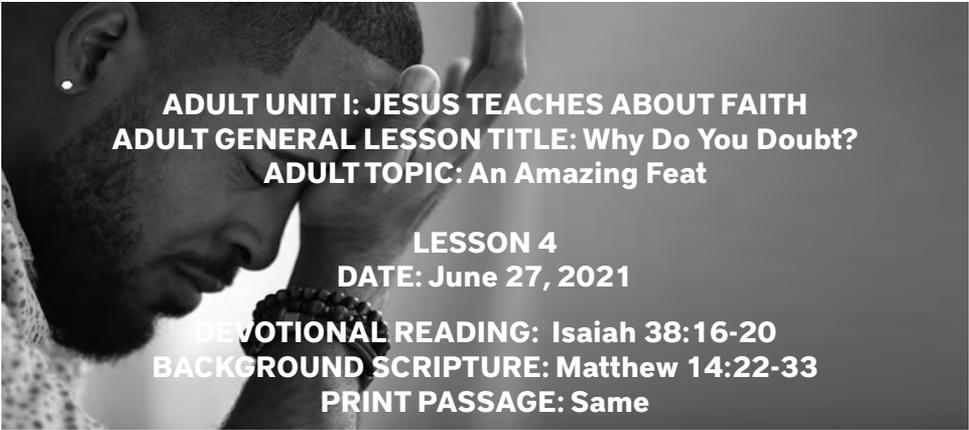
As a whole, allow the group to share recent experiences of believing in God's power over life, death, and healing-- recognize that God does not always heal according to human desires. Consider the struggle some may have with disappointment or anger because God did not heal or save a loved one.

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**iTHINK:** (5-7 min.)

1. Ask someone who has been healed of a disease to share that experience with the group. Celebrate together God's healing power.
2. Research information on the connection between faith and healing and share the information with the group.
3. Discuss the role of women during biblical times. Using commentaries, study Bibles, or Internet searches, review Mosaic law, which addresses why the hemorrhaging woman was regarded as unclean.
4. Say: "Touching the hem of Jesus' garment was a radical, perhaps, even desperate move." Share stories of people who have taken bold action to obtain an answer from God. Share how Jacob wrestled with the angel of the Lord (Genesis 32:22-31) and refused to let go until he obtained a blessing. Open the group for discussion about how we sometimes wrestle with God for an answer to our prayers.
5. Read the prayer of Jabez (1 Chronicles 4:10). Discuss how believers can also pray for healing from emotional pain as well as physical pain.

**KEY VERSE: Jesus turned, and seeing her he said, "Take heart, daughter; your faith has made you well." And instantly the woman was made well. Matthew 9:22**



**ADULT UNIT I: JESUS TEACHES ABOUT FAITH**  
**ADULT GENERAL LESSON TITLE: Why Do You Doubt?**  
**ADULT TOPIC: An Amazing Feat**

**LESSON 4**

**DATE: June 27, 2021**

**DEVOTIONAL READING: Isaiah 38:16-20**

**BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE: Matthew 14:22-33**

**PRINT PASSAGE: Same**

### **Home Daily Bible Readings**

<i>Jun. 21</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>Isaiah 38:16-20</i>	<i>Let's Sing of the Lord's Faithfulness</i>
<i>Jun. 22</i>	<i>T</i>	<i>Matthew 14:1-12</i>	<i>The Baptist Dies for the Faith</i>
<i>Jun. 23</i>	<i>W</i>	<i>Matthew 14:13-21</i>	<i>The Crowd's Hunger Satisfied</i>
<i>Jun. 24</i>	<i>Th</i>	<i>John 6:22-29</i>	<i>Believe the One Sent to You</i>
<i>Jun. 25</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>Matthew 14:34-36</i>	<i>The Sick Are Healed</i>
<i>Jun. 26</i>	<i>Sa</i>	<i>Mark 13:9-12</i>	<i>Speak Confidently to Civil Authorities</i>
<i>Jun. 27</i>	<i>Su</i>	<i>Matthew 14:22-33</i>	<i>Savior of the Fearful, Doubter, Needy</i>

### **EXALT!**

**Invocation** – Teacher or learner

**Celebration** – “When I Can Read My Title Clear”- #506 A.M.E. *Zion Bicentennial Hymnal*

**Declaration** – Matthew 14:22-33 (*Read together by class, by a volunteer or responsively*)

### **Jesus Walks on the Water**

<sup>22</sup> Immediately he made the disciples get into the boat and go before him to the other side, while he dismissed the crowds. <sup>23</sup> And after he had dismissed the crowds, he went up on the mountain by himself to pray. When evening came, he was there alone, <sup>24</sup> but the boat by this time was a long way from the land, beaten by the waves, for the wind was against them. <sup>25</sup> And in the fourth watch of the night he came to them, walking on the sea. <sup>26</sup> But when the disciples saw him walking

on the sea, they were terrified, and said, "It is a ghost!" and they cried out in fear. <sup>27</sup> But immediately Jesus spoke to them, saying, "Take heart; it is I. Do not be afraid."

<sup>28</sup> And Peter answered him, "Lord, if it is you, command me to come to you on the water." <sup>29</sup> He said, "Come." So Peter got out of the boat and walked on the water and came to Jesus. <sup>30</sup> But when he saw the wind, he was afraid, and beginning to sink he cried out, "Lord, save me." <sup>31</sup> Jesus immediately reached out his hand and took hold of him, saying to him, "O you of little faith, why did you doubt?" <sup>32</sup> And when they got into the boat, the wind ceased. <sup>33</sup> And those in the boat worshiped him, saying, "Truly you are the Son of God."

**Affirmation** – We repent of our failure to trust in God when caught up in a crisis. (*Spoken together by class and teacher*).

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### **ENGAGE:** (5-10 min.)

In the depth of crisis, people are often caught between trust and doubt. Will we trust that our help will come? Jesus, by walking on water to save his disciples, demonstrated his divine empowerment to be the Savior of all. Share with the group such experiences one may refer to as the "storms of life." How do we get through such troubling experiences?



Break into small groups and discuss a time when you may have been extremely fearful. Share your reactions at such a time. Where did you look to find rescue? Have you ever undertaken a risky venture with zeal only to lose heart later? Upon whom might you rely to save you from a bad situation? Someone whom you respect and admire? A friend whom one can trust in difficult times?

**Matthew 14:22-30:** The storm rescue in Matthew 14 is the second time Jesus rescues His disciples from a potential boating disaster on the same lake (Matthew 8:23-27). In both incidents, Jesus calls attention to the lack of or weakness of faith on the part of his followers. Mark's account (Mark 6:45-52) focuses on the disciples' lack of understanding rather than Peter's lack of faith. By walking on water, Jesus suspended the laws of gravity. Job spoke of the capacity to walk on water as a means by which the omnipotence of God is demonstrated (Job 9:8). By faith, Peter was also able to suspend the laws of gravity as long as he trusted Jesus that it was possible. Jesus represents faith as a powerful entity by which God enables one to even have control over natural elements, a power which belongs only to God. This is to say that God highly honors human faith, as we recall Jesus pointing out in that well-known statement of His that with only faith the size of a mustard seed, we can move mountains.



However, as Jesus often demonstrates, the power does not belong to us, in particular, for we must look up to heaven and rely on the power of God to honor our faith.

**Matthew 14:31-33:** Jesus chided Peter for a lack of faith, but it did not prevent him from giving the disciple immediate assistance when Peter cried for help. It is only when Peter is restored to the other disciples on the boat that *all of them together* worshipped Jesus and declared Him to be the Son of God (v. 32). What might this detail reveal about the nature, faith, and witness of the church? "The disciples had just wit-

nessed Jesus demonstrate power available only to God. They saw him empower one of their number to join him in his sovereign control of the deep. As they were reunited with their master, they *worshipped him*, acknowledging his authority and expressing submission and dependence. They could conclude nothing less than that Jesus was utterly unlike any other" (*Standard Lesson Commentary, Large Print Edition*, p. 375). Calling Jesus the Son of God showed the disciples' recognition of him as that promised Messiah, Immanuel, God with us, the witness to which they would eventually be able to carry to all the world.

**ELEVATE:** (10 min.)



This powerful and deeply meaningful incident in today's lesson of Jesus walking on the water and Peter doing the same, even if only for a moment, has had a great impact on the church and its faith and trust in the Gospel. This is one of the most impressive moments where Jesus commands our faith and belief.

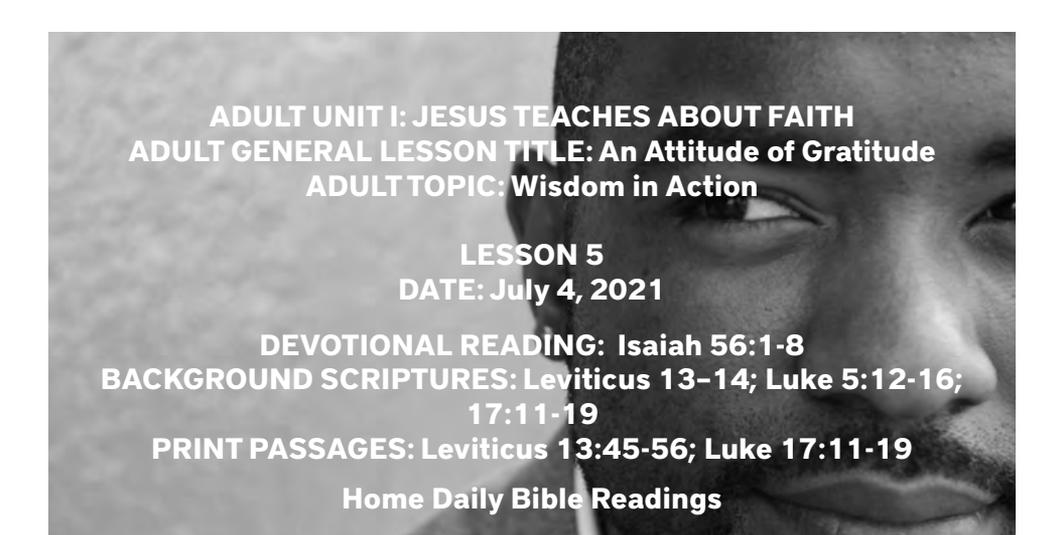
In light of this compelling incident, discuss in small groups, if able, how we may feel alone during times of struggle, but still be assured that Christ is never far away when we call on Him.

As believers, we desire to participate in adventures of faith, trusting that God will be with us, even when our faith falters. Give testimonies of the same among participants. During times of personal storm, do you trust in Christ? Do we all trust God to hear our cries for help? Do we continue to trust even when divine intervention is not immediate? Is He an on-time God?

**iTHINK:** (5-7 min.)

1. Ask participants to share times of personal storms when God clearly intervened and brought calm into the circumstances. You may invite a special guest to share. Ask: How should we respond to God's intervention?
2. Study the geographical position of the Sea of Galilee, which is actually a lake. Discuss why storms in this body of water are particularly menacing.
3. If able, ask participants to form two debate teams and discuss the merits of Peter, who got out of the boat, but began to sink, versus the remaining eleven, who did not attempt to get out of the boat.
4. Discuss how life's storms help us build trust in Christ and his ability to intervene in our circumstances.
5. Ask participants to use a notecard to write the "walking on water" experience they would like to have. On the back side, they should write obstacles to carrying out their vision. Close with a prayer, asking for a renewed spirit of adventure and increased faith to do that which may seem impossible.

**KEY VERSE:** Jesus immediately reached out his hand and took hold of him, saying to him, "O you of little faith, why did you doubt?" Matthew 14:31



**ADULT UNIT I: JESUS TEACHES ABOUT FAITH**  
**ADULT GENERAL LESSON TITLE: An Attitude of Gratitude**  
**ADULT TOPIC: Wisdom in Action**

**LESSON 5**  
**DATE: July 4, 2021**

**DEVOTIONAL READING: Isaiah 56:1-8**  
**BACKGROUND SCRIPTURES: Leviticus 13-14; Luke 5:12-16;**  
**17:11-19**

**PRINT PASSAGES: Leviticus 13:45-56; Luke 17:11-19**

**Home Daily Bible Readings**

<i>Jun. 28</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>Isaiah 56:1-8</i>	<i>God Welcomes Foreigners</i>
<i>Jun. 29</i>	<i>T</i>	<i>Ruth 4:3-6,13-15</i>	<i>Naomi's Sorrow Turns to Joy</i>
<i>Jun. 30</i>	<i>W</i>	<i>Leviticus 13:1-8</i>	<i>Symptoms and Treatment of Leprosy</i>
<i>Jul. 1</i>	<i>Th</i>	<i>2 Kings 7:3-11</i>	<i>Lepers Share Their Good News</i>
<i>Jul. 2</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>John 4:39-42</i>	<i>Many Samaritans Believe in the Savior</i>
<i>Jul. 3</i>	<i>Sa</i>	<i>Luke 17:1-10</i>	<i>Doing What Needs to Be Done</i>
<i>Jul. 4</i>	<i>Su</i>	<i>Leviticus 13:45-56;</i> <i>Luke 17:11-19</i>	<i>Cultivate Gratefulness for Acts</i> <i>of Healing</i>

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**EXALT!**

**Invocation** – Teacher or learner

**Celebration** – “O For a Thousand Tongues to Sing”- #20 A.M.E. Zion Bicentennial Hymnal

**Declaration** – Leviticus 13:45-46; Luke 17:11-19 (Read together by class, by a volunteer or responsively)

<sup>45</sup> **“The leprous person who has the disease shall wear torn clothes and let the hair of his head hang loose, and he shall cover his upper lip and cry out, ‘Unclean, unclean.’** <sup>46</sup> **He shall remain unclean as long as he has the disease. He is unclean. He shall live alone. His dwelling shall be outside the camp.**

<sup>47</sup> **“When there is a case of leprous disease in a garment, whether a woolen or a linen garment, <sup>48</sup> in warp or woof of linen or wool, or in a skin or in anything made of skin, <sup>49</sup> if the disease is greenish or red-**

dish in the garment, or in the skin or in the warp or the woof or in any article made of skin, it is a case of leprous disease, and it shall be shown to the priest.<sup>50</sup> And the priest shall examine the disease and shut up that which has the disease for seven days.<sup>51</sup> Then he shall examine the disease on the seventh day. If the disease has spread in the garment, in the warp or the woof, or in the skin, whatever be the use of the skin, the disease is a persistent leprous disease; it is unclean.<sup>52</sup> And he shall burn the garment, or the warp or the woof, the wool or the linen, or any article made of skin that is diseased, for it is a persistent leprous disease. It shall be burned in the fire.

<sup>53</sup> "And if the priest examines, and if the disease has not spread in the garment, in the warp or the woof or in any article made of skin,<sup>54</sup> then the priest shall command that they wash the thing in which is the disease, and he shall shut it up for another seven days.<sup>55</sup> And the priest shall examine the diseased thing after it has been washed. And if the appearance of the diseased area has not changed, though the disease has not spread, it is unclean. You shall burn it in the fire, whether the rot is on the back or on the front.

<sup>56</sup> "But if the priest examines, and if the diseased area has faded after it has been washed, he shall tear it out of the garment or the skin or the warp or the woof.

### Jesus Cleanses Ten Lepers

<sup>11</sup> On the way to Jerusalem he was passing along between Samaria and Galilee.<sup>12</sup> And as he entered a village, he was met by ten lepers, who stood at a distance<sup>13</sup> and lifted up their voices, saying, "Jesus, Master, have mercy on us."<sup>14</sup> When he saw them he said to them, "Go and show yourselves to the priests." And as they went they were cleansed.<sup>15</sup> Then one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, praising God with a loud voice;<sup>16</sup> and he fell on his face at Jesus' feet, giving him thanks. Now he was a Samaritan.<sup>17</sup> Then Jesus answered, "Were not ten cleansed? Where are the nine?<sup>18</sup> Was no one found to return and give praise to God except this foreigner?"<sup>19</sup> And he said to him, "Rise and go your way; your faith has made you well."

**Affirmation** – We sense the need in our lives for increased expressions of gratitude to God. (*Spoken together by class and teacher*).

### **ENGAGE:** (5-10 min.)

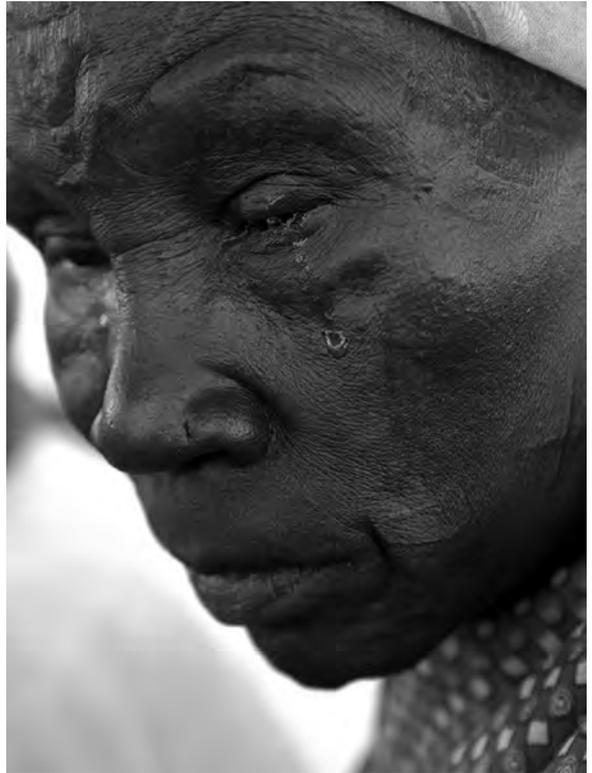
People often receive mercy but do not acknowledge the one who extended the mercy. Do you show appreciation? Ten lepers, isolated by their skin diseases, were healed; but only one, who was a foreigner, was saved by his faith and offered thanks.

**If able, break into small groups and discuss the following questions:**

Are there persons treated as outcasts in our communities? If so, what are the reasons? What prejudices do we harbor toward certain groups? Are people discriminated against because of conditions beyond their control? Can we imagine the harm done to such persons? What can we do to overcome such divisiveness among us and help to build harmony and peace? Finally, what is the problem of showing gratitude especially, when we have been helped in a major way? What is the importance of expressing thanks?

**EDUCATE:** (10-15 min.)

**Leviticus 13:45-46; Luke 17:11-14:** Lepers were required by Jewish law to take several precautionary steps to forewarn others of their condition and to prevent the likelihood of infecting others (Leviticus 13:45-46). The lepers' shared misery brought them together despite their religious and ethnic differences. In this light, the fact that Jesus finds them on the borderlands between Samaria and Galilee is evocative of their liminal space: They are literally marginalized by their disease and forge their own unclean community on the borderlands. Jesus showed no reservation regarding his proximity to the ceremonially unclean men. His openness is a testimony to those who follow Jesus to extend hospitality and kindness to those who are rejected by society. Note that these lepers had obviously heard of Jesus as a divine healer and believed He could bring them relief. Therefore, in their desperation, they appealed to His mercy and grace. "Jesus' immediate response was not to heal the men but to command an act that required faith (compare 2 Kings 5:10). To be recognized as cleansed, they needed to be certified by a priest.... The men were thus rendered clean and free of disease when they obeyed in faith" (*Ibid.*, p.381).



**Luke 17:15-19:** At least one of the ten lepers was a Samaritan. Jews ordinarily despised Samaritans (See John 4). The tensions between the Jews and

the Samaritans are an undercurrent in the story. "Jews and Samaritans were religious and ethnic cousins, sharing a common ancestry and both loyal to their version/interpretation of the Law of Moses (compare John 4:5-26). But events [caused their separation] starting with the division of Israel into two kingdoms in about 950 BC, and exacerbated by the northern kingdom's exile, those remaining intermarried with the peoples that the conquerors resettled in the land.

This mixture of [two] different people[s] and culture[s] resulted in the Samaritans. The Old Testament traces the time line of these events from 2 Kings 17 through Ezra 4 and Nehemiah 4 (compare Luke 9:51-56)" (*Ibid.*, p. 379). Knowing this history, Jesus deliberately showed no favoritism and healed all ten lepers. Unlike the other nine lepers, the Samaritan's heart was filled with praise and thanksgiving for the blessing he received.



"First, he delayed his trip to a priest as he *came back* to Jesus; the man's burning desire to be declared clean by a priest was trumped by his desire to show gratitude. Second, in his loudest *voice* he praised God (compare Luke 5:6; 7:16). His words are not recorded, but we can imagine something like our familiar, 'To God be the glory, great things he has done!'" (*Ibid.*, p. 381).

## **ELEVATE:** (10 min.)

If able, break into two groups and **let group one discuss the following issues:**

1. To what extent are we likely to seek God's presence to heal and restore us? How does our faith in God figure into our reliance on God's healing?
2. Do we realize that we should not take God's blessings for granted and should not forget to demonstrate thankfulness? When should our thankfulness be demonstrated, before or after God acts in our favor, or at all times?
3. Do we also express gratitude to others who have helped us in our time of need? If not, why not?

**Allow group two discuss the following questions:**

4. Are we to minister to the needs of persons who are regarded as outcasts? What type of groups might those be in our time?

5. Do we have problems in understanding and dealing with the necessity of obeying human laws but still seek ways to minister to persons in need?
6. Do we continually find the need to examine ourselves and strive to live free from prejudices and biases against other ethnicities or faiths?

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**iTHINK:** (5-7 min.)

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1. Use Bible resources or go online to study the life of a leper in biblical times. Review Leviticus 13 for a fuller understanding of the Law's requirements. Ask: what people groups do religious communities tend to treat like lepers today?
2. Challenge believers to think of a time when they bonded with someone unexpectedly because they shared a common view or condition or cause.
3. How do you feel when God blesses a person you don't think deserves it? Talk about ways such experiences can open our hearts to God's vast depth of love for all humanity, whether they are believers or not.



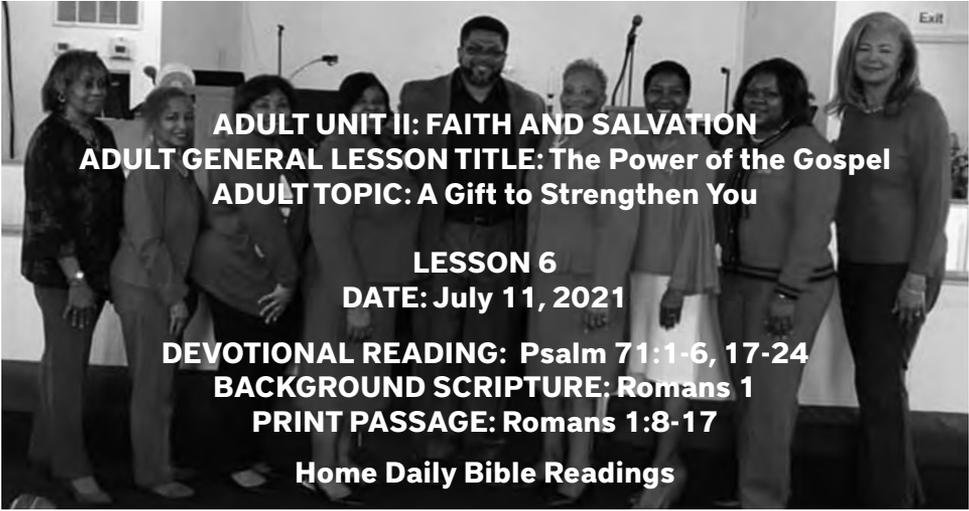
4. Are you the one, or are you one of the nine? Challenge participants to think about ways they take God's blessings for granted. Encourage participants to share reasons why this is so.

5. Give each participant a sheet of paper and ask them to write down 25 things for which they are grateful. After a few moments, invite them to share a few responses. Ask participants to think about the last time they thanked God for each blessing they listed. Explore reasons why believers are sometimes prone

to overlook God's blessings and take them for granted.

6. Give each participant a sheet of paper with 52 numbered lines (in two columns). Ask them to create a gratitude sheet that will last for one year. In each blank, write down a blessing they will concentrate on thanking God for this week (e.g., family, spouse, job, home, health, friends, healing, spiritual gifts). They can repeat a particular blessing as many times as they choose.

**KEY VERSE:** Then one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, praising God with a loud voice;... Luke 17:15



**ADULT UNIT II: FAITH AND SALVATION**  
**ADULT GENERAL LESSON TITLE: The Power of the Gospel**  
**ADULT TOPIC: A Gift to Strengthen You**

**LESSON 6**  
**DATE: July 11, 2021**

**DEVOTIONAL READING: Psalm 71:1-6, 17-24**  
**BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE: Romans 1**  
**PRINT PASSAGE: Romans 1:8-17**

**Home Daily Bible Readings**

<i>Jul. 5</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>1 Corinthians 3:1-11</i>	<i>Apollos and Paul, Builders</i>
<i>Jul. 6</i>	<i>T</i>	<i>Galatians 2:1-10</i>	<i>Entrusted to Take Gospel to Gentiles</i>
<i>Jul. 7</i>	<i>W</i>	<i>Romans 1:1-7</i>	<i>Grace and Peace to All</i>
<i>Jul. 8</i>	<i>Th</i>	<i>Romans 1:18-23</i>	<i>God's Righteous Wrath</i>
<i>Jul. 9</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>Romans 1:24-32</i>	<i>God's Actions Are Fair and Just</i>
<i>Jul. 10</i>	<i>Sa</i>	<i>2 Peter 2:4-9</i>	<i>God's Righteous Actions for Saints, Sinners</i>
<i>Jul. 11</i>	<i>Su</i>	<i>Romans 1:8-17</i>	<i>The Gospel Changes Jews and Gentiles</i>

**EXALT!**

**Invocation** – Teacher or Leaner

**Celebration** – “Great Is Thy Faithfulness”- #80 A.M.E.Z. *Bicentennial Hymnal*

**Declaration** – Romans 1:8-17 (*Read together by class, by a volunteer or responsively.*)

**Longing to Go to Rome**

**<sup>8</sup> First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for all of you, because your faith is proclaimed in all the world. <sup>9</sup> For God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of his Son, that without ceasing I mention you <sup>10</sup> always in my prayers, asking that somehow by God’s will I may now at last succeed in coming to you. <sup>11</sup> For I long to see you, that I may impart to you some spiritual gift to strengthen you—<sup>12</sup> that is, that we may be mutually encouraged by each other’s faith,**

**both yours and mine.** <sup>13</sup> **I do not want you to be unaware, brothers, that I have often intended to come to you (but thus far have been prevented), in order that I may reap some harvest among you as well as among the rest of the Gentiles.** <sup>14</sup> **I am under obligation both to Greeks and to barbarians, both to the wise and to the foolish.** <sup>15</sup> **So I am eager to preach the gospel to you also who are in Rome.**

### **The Righteous Shall Live by Faith**

<sup>16</sup> **For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.** <sup>17</sup> **For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith, as it is written, “The righteous shall live by faith.”**

**Affirmation** – We affirm the power of God’s salvation in family and friends. (*Spoken together by class and teacher*).

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### **ENGAGE:** (5-10 min.)

Unit II, “Faith and Salvation,” has four sessions that explore Paul’s Letter to the Romans and his understanding about the hope of salvation through faith. The letter teaches that God’s righteousness is revealed in those who live by faith. Paul illustrates faith through the example of Abraham. He unpacks the teaching about being reconciled to God by justification through faith and teaches that salvation is for all.

People often look to be in relationships that provide strength and stability. Where do you find your strength? The Gospel is the power of God that can save all who believe. Many people develop a number of relationships over the years that span great physical distances. We may keep in touch with friends and loved ones through e-mail or social media. **If able, break into small groups:** Discuss how sharing joys and sorrows with a close friend or relative, either over the Internet or in person, and reflecting on life experiences help us grow and mature spiritually. Discuss other ways Christians may encourage and help strengthen one another spiritually. How necessary is such group sharing and interaction for Christian nurture and growth?

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### **EDUCATE:** (10-15 min.)

**Romans 1:8-12:** Paul teaches elsewhere in this Epistle that the blessings of the Messiah were intended for the Gentiles as well as the Jews (Romans 3:29-30; 9:24, 30; etc.). He hoped eventually to preach in Spain (Romans 15:22-29). To do this, he needed the support of the Roman church. Therefore, he was eager to minister among the Romans so that they might bless each other in their common work of the gospel. It should be noted that Paul did not establish the church at Rome, as he had founded other churches. It is not made clear who founded the church, but the church was strong in faith and striving well. The

Romans not only believed the gospel and lived it, but their faith was so strong that they had gained renown. This pleased the Apostle Paul greatly, and he was grateful for their example of faith to other believers. For more than one reason, Paul longed to visit this church. For one thing, “Worldwide Christianity would be blessed by a strong, faithful congregation in the great city of Rome. Its location at the transportation hub of the empire would allow the church’s witness to spread in all directions. For this and for his anticipated trip, Paul prayed sincerely. He valued the advance of *the gospel of God’s Son* as his primary objective. His budding relationship with the Christians in Rome was part of his grand vision for bringing the message of salvation to all people of the world” (*Ibid.*, p. 387).

**Romans 1:13-15:** Paul understood that his commission to spread the gospel was not confined to a nation or group of people. He would preach to all nations—Jews and Gentiles alike. He “had a strong sense of God’s direction of his ministry. Though [he] had long *planned* to visit Rome, he had been hindered in each instance. Various circumstances and even spiritual directions changed Paul’s plans (see Acts 16:6). And at the time of the writing of Romans, his choice to go to Jerusalem rather than Roman was driven by a deep-seated conviction that no one around him shared (Acts 21:12-14). Paul explained later in the letter that part of what *prevented* him was his great burden to preach among unevangelized *Gentiles* (Romans 15:17-22) Paul’s travels had been to serve Christ, not simply to find personal fulfillment.... His spiritual duty could only be discharged by preaching the gospel to the unsaved. This concept was central to his passion for the Gentile mission” (*Ibid.*, p. 389).

**Romans 1:16-17:** Verse 16 is very well-known, often used as a Pauline testimonial that is highly inspiring and encouraging to devoted Christians, especially ministers of the gospel. “To the Jew first, and also to the Greek” (v. 16): the gospel was first to be announced to the Jews, and then to the Gentiles, whom Paul refers to here as Greeks (see Luke 24:47; Acts 1:8). The other apostles observed this order accordingly (see Acts 13:46). “Elsewhere, Paul noted that the message of the cross was a ‘stumbling block to Jews’ (I Corinthians 1:23). The core elements of Paul’s preaching would not avoid the historical truth that Jesus had been executed like the worst criminal (2:2). Jesus’ death was easily dismissed by critics as neither heroic nor in obedience to God’s will, but as only shameful. Of course, the shame of the cross was real (Hebrews 12:2). But the gospel reveals that shame was not the full story of Jesus’ execution (see Philippians 2:5-11). Therefore, Paul was *not ashamed* of the cross. Rather, he glorified in it (Galatians 6:14)” (*Ibid.*, p. 390). In verse 17, Paul quotes Habakkuk 2:4. In the original context of Habakkuk, the point may be God’s faithfulness in keeping the covenant despite Israel’s sin and punishment in the form of exile. The faithful God is working in the people of faith to reveal God’s righteousness (or justice) to the world. This reading also sheds light on the difficult phrase, “through faith for faith” (literally, out of faith toward faith). That faith has been effectively working throughout the Old Testament, starting with Abraham, and

has been passed on to us mysteriously by way of the miraculous workings of God in Christ.

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**ELEVATE:** (10 min.)

**If able, break into small groups and ask each group respond to the following issues:** Christians believe that the gospel is for all people and that believers have a responsibility to spread the gospel around the world, according to the Great Commission (Matthew 28:19-20). How is your church responding to this call and responsibility?

We, as Christians, seek the company and companionship of other believers to gain comfort and strength for our Christian journey. Discuss how we are inspired by the example of others to live faithfully.

What convictions encourage Christians not to be ashamed to let people know wherever they go about their faith in Jesus Christ?

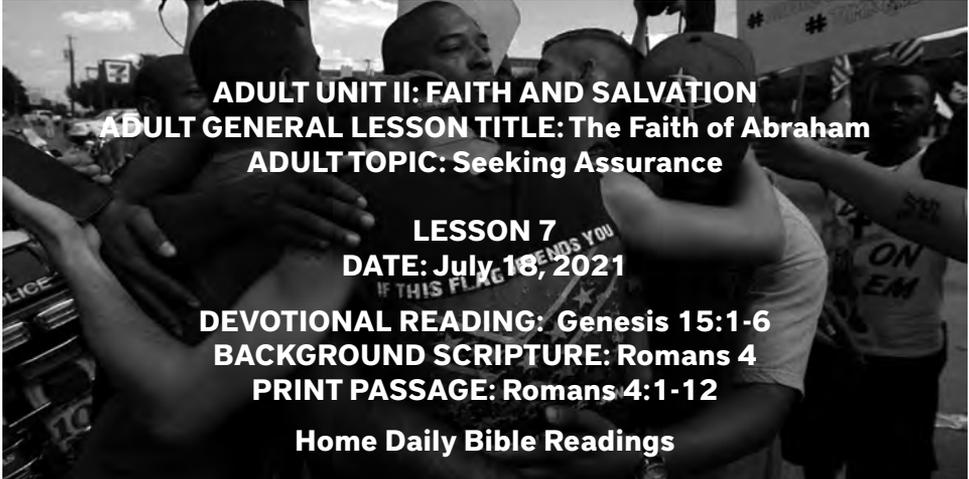
How do we as Christians recognize and show that faithful obedience to Christ calls us to action in service to him and obedience to God?

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**iTHINK:** (5–7 min.)

1. Ask participants to share how the power of the gospel has impacted their life and their faith journey.
2. Read Acts 22 and discuss Paul's unique qualifications to minister to both Jews and Gentiles, spread the gospel, and write powerful letters of encouragement to the early churches.
3. Ask participants whether they have ever stepped outside of their personal comfort zones to share the gospel or minister to others. Conduct a scripture search and find verses that affirm that the Gospel should be made available to everyone without regard for ethnicity or culture.
4. Discuss why it is helpful for Christians to share with and encourage each other in the faith. Ask participants to make a personal commitment to encourage someone to continue to be a strong example of faith.
5. Have participants write a prayer, seeking God's will for how they are to participate in the salvation of the world (Matthew 28:19-20).
6. Discuss the meaning of verse 17 (Habakkuk 2:4) that the righteous shall live by faith.

**KEY VERSE: For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. Romans 1:16**



**ADULT UNIT II: FAITH AND SALVATION**  
**ADULT GENERAL LESSON TITLE: The Faith of Abraham**  
**ADULT TOPIC: Seeking Assurance**

**LESSON 7**  
**DATE: July 18, 2021**

**DEVOTIONAL READING: Genesis 15:1-6**  
**BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE: Romans 4**  
**PRINT PASSAGE: Romans 4:1-12**

**Home Daily Bible Readings**

<i>Jul. 12</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>Genesis 15:1-8</i>	<i>God's Covenant with Abraham</i>
<i>Jul. 13</i>	<i>T</i>	<i>Genesis 12:1-9</i>	<i>All World's Families Blessed Through Abraham</i>
<i>Jul. 14</i>	<i>W</i>	<i>Romans 4:13-15</i>	<i>Promise Realized by Faith Not Law</i>
<i>Jul. 15</i>	<i>Th</i>	<i>Romans 4:16-18</i>	<i>For All Who Share Abraham's Faith</i>
<i>Jul. 16</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>Romans 4:19-21</i>	<i>Abraham Believed Despite Impossible Odds</i>
<i>Jul. 17</i>	<i>Sa</i>	<i>Romans 4:22-25</i>	<i>In Christ, Believers Share Abraham's Faith</i>
<i>Jul. 18</i>	<i>Su</i>	<i>Romans 4:1-12</i>	<i>Abraham, Father of the Faithful</i>

**EXALT!**

**Invocation** – Teacher or Learner

**Celebration** – “My Faith Looks Up to Thee” - #468 A. M. E. Zion Bicentennial Hymnal

**Declaration** – Romans 4:1-12 (Read together by the class, by a volunteer or responsively.)

**Abraham Justified by Faith**

**<sup>1</sup> What then shall we say was gained by Abraham, our forefather according to the flesh? <sup>2</sup> For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God. <sup>3</sup> For what does the Scripture say? “Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness.” <sup>4</sup> Now to the one who works, his wages are not counted as a gift but as his due. <sup>5</sup> And to the one who does not work**

but believes in him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is counted as righteousness,<sup>6</sup> just as David also speaks of the blessing of the one to whom God counts righteousness apart from works:<sup>7</sup> “Blessed are those whose lawless deeds are forgiven, and whose sins are covered;<sup>8</sup> blessed is the man against whom the Lord will not count his sin.”

<sup>9</sup> Is this blessing then only for the circumcised, or also for the uncircumcised? For we say that faith was counted to Abraham as righteousness.<sup>10</sup> How then was it counted to him? Was it before or after he had been circumcised? It was not after, but before he was circumcised.<sup>11</sup> He received the sign of circumcision as a seal of the righteousness that he had by faith while he was still uncircumcised. The purpose was to make him the father of all who believe without being circumcised, so that righteousness would be counted to them as well,<sup>12</sup> and to make him the father of the circumcised who are not merely circumcised but who also walk in the footsteps of the faith that our father Abraham had before he was circumcised.

**Affirmation** – We will identify ways in which we rely on our faith for a relationship with God (*Spoken together by class and teacher*).

### **ENGAGE:** (5-10 min.)

People often look to those older than themselves for assurance. Who is an example of someone you can trust? Through faith, Abraham, the father of all who believed, and proved he was in right relationship with God.

Have a general discussion in which participants are asked to share stories of how they may take great pride in their family heritage. Ask them to name and briefly describe personal heroes, whether living or historic. Ask if Christians should be concerned about the legacy they will leave as they grow older.



**EDUCATE:** (10-15 min.)

**Romans 4:1-3:** The Jews place great value in the fact that Abraham was the father and founder of Israel. Paul knew that an argument drawn from his example or conduct would be especially powerful to Christians of Jewish background in the church at Rome. In making his case for the argument of the power of faith, Paul asks: "What does the scripture say?" This phrase was commonly used by the Jews when questioning practices that seemed contrary to scripture. Paul produces verification from scripture (Genesis 15:6), proving that Abraham was justified by faith and not by works. "Abraham lived more than 2,000 years before Paul wrote the book of Romans. Abraham's history was preserved by the people of God in oral traditions for several hundred years before it was written down in the book of Genesis. That man had an incredible relationship with God. He trusted God even when called to journey to a place he had never seen, on the eastern end of the Mediterranean Sea (Genesis 12:1-9); see Romans 4:12). Later, Abraham trusted God to provide him with a legitimate heir, his son Isaac, when both he and his wife, Sarah, were advanced in age (Genesis 17:15-22; 18:10-15; 21:1-7). Abraham even trusted God when commanded to sacrifice Isaac on Mount Moriah (22:1-18). For these and other acts, Abraham is considered to be the father of faith (Matthew 3:9; Luke 1:73; etc.). He



was one of the first to model a faithful relationship with God. Paul focused these facts on his Jewish-Christian readers, identifying Abraham as their father *according to the flesh*. Paul spoke to those who traced their ancestry to the great patriarch of Genesis" (*Ibid.*, p. 395).



**Romans 4:4-8:** Paul wrote about human acceptance before God primarily as justification. We are made acceptable to God because the requirements of the Law have been fulfilled through the sacrifice of Jesus (Romans 3:21-26; 8:3-5). "To be justified by God can never be the result of our works, for we have too many debts in the form of sins. If we really earned what we deserve based on our works, we would remain dead in sins (Ephesians 2:1-3; Colossians 2:13-14) since 'the wages of sin is death' (Romans 6:23)... The line of reasoning moves from one revered Jewish figure (Abraham) to another

(David), a historical shift of about 1,000 years. Perhaps even more than Abraham's sins, David's sins are remembered to this day [memorialized in movies and films]. He committed adultery and murder (2 Samuels 11). The fallout from those sins dogged David's personal life (example: 12:14-18). But David eventually came to know the blessing of forgiven sin (2 Samuel 12:13), the essence of justification. David understood the grace of God as powerful to overcome the guilt of sins. That king's repentance and faithfulness, even when suffering the consequences of his sins, are a great part of why David is called 'a man after [God's] own heart' (1 Samuel 13:14; Acts 13:22)" (*Ibid.*, pp. 396 and 397).

**Romans 4:9-12:** Jews believed that all males should be circumcised. Paul showed that Abraham enjoyed the favor of God prior to his being circumcised; so, it followed that this might be true for others as well. The seal used in ancient times was a mark made of wax or other substance, and was attached to a document, such as a deed, etc., to confirm, ratify, or make it binding. Paul alluded to circumcision as a seal of the covenant God had made with Abraham. This was a public testament to the fact that God had previously approved of Abraham and made important promises to him. "The mark itself...did not make Abraham or the men in his house more righteous. Abraham was already reckoned as righteous because of his faith in God" (*Ibid.*, p. 397).

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### **ELEVATE:** (5-10 min.)

Consider how seriously Christians today take Paul's principles of salvation and justification by faith rather than works. **If able, break into two groups:** Ask each to respond to the following corresponding questions.

#### **Group one respond to the first three:**

1. Christians are concerned with setting a good example for new Christians or those who are younger in the faith. Cite examples of where you see this happening in your church.
2. As Christians, we accept that our salvation cannot be earned, yet, in obedience to God, we continue to serve our communities. How does this fact square with what Paul is saying about salvation by faith?
3. Christians are encouraged to form relationships with seasoned, stable Christians who can help guide and encourage properly in their faith walk. To what extent do you see this happening in your church?

#### **Group two respond to the last three:**

4. As Christians, we understand that our fallibility or human weaknesses do not exclude us from being counted as righteous. When we fail in our efforts to measure up to God's requirements, on whom can we count for restoration? Explain.

5. Do we trust in the promises of God as God's greatest promise is that of salvation, which has been sealed by the Holy Spirit? Does this mean we cannot lose our salvation or fall from grace?
6. To what extent does seeking a relationship with God through prayer and worship serve us in living the Christian life?

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**iTHINK:** (5-7 min.)

1. Review the story of God's call of Abraham (Genesis 12:1-3), and the promises God made (Genesis 12:7; 13:14-17; 22:15-18), and subsequent covenants made between God and Abraham (Genesis 14:22-23; 15:1-21; 17:1-27). What do you learn about Abraham's relationship with God?
2. Ask participants to find and share a verse of scripture that serves as a reminder to them of God's promises.
3. Give each participant an index card and ask them to write the name of a Christian they admire and then four to six traits about that person that make him or her a righteous (but not perfect) Christian.
4. Ask participants to write down six things that others would say about them as part of their legacy of faith. Then, ask participants to write about one another's faith legacy. Ask members to compare what others said about them to what they wrote about themselves.
5. Encourage participants to consider whether someone in their families has left a legacy of faith. How has that legacy left an impression on their progeny? If no one has left a legacy in that family, challenge members to be the model of faith for their families that future generations can look up to.
6. Distribute sheets of paper and pencils. Participants should use two columns to observe how their faith leads to works, and then how their works encourage them to greater faith. In the left column, they should write down some of the manifestations of their faith. In the right column, they should list the works of service in which they are engaged. Then, members should draw an arrow from the faith components that have led them to certain acts of service. From the works column, they should draw arrows to the deeds that inspire them to greater faith. Engage the class in a discussion on how faith and works are separate, but then how they work in cooperation to greater discipleship. Share a quote from William Booth, founder of the Salvation Army: "Faith and works should travel side by side, step answering to step, like the legs of men walking. First faith, and then works; and then faith again, and then works again—until they can scarcely distinguish which is the one and which is the other."

**KEY VERSE: For what does the Scripture say? "Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness." Romans 4:3b**

**ADULT UNIT II: FAITH AND SALVATION**  
**ADULT GENERAL LESSON TITLE: Justification through Faith**  
**ADULT TOPIC: Seeking Reconciliation**

**LESSON 8**  
**DATE: July 25, 2021**

**DEVOTIONAL READING: Isaiah 53:1-12**  
**BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE: Romans 5:1-11**  
**PRINT PASSAGE: Same**

**Home Daily Bible Readings**

Jul. 19	M	Matthew 5:9-12	<i>Blessed Are Persecuted Believers</i>
Jul. 20	T	Philippians 1:12-20	<i>Jesus, Not Suffering, Matters</i>
Jul. 21	W	2 Corin 11:21b-30	<i>Suffering for Christ and the Church</i>
Jul. 22	Th	Romans 8:18-25	<i>In Hope Our Salvation Is Secure</i>
Jul. 23	F	Romans 5:12-17	<i>Free Gift of Jesus Brings Justification</i>
Jul. 24	Sa	Romans 5:18-21	<i>Grace Leads to Eternal Life</i>
Jul. 25	Su	Romans 5:1-11	<i>Justified through Faith in Jesus Christ</i>

**EXALT!**

**Invocation** – Teacher or Learner

**Celebration** – “I Am Thine, O Lord” - #433 A.M.E. Zion Bicentennial Hymn

**Declaration** – Romans 5:1-11 (*Read together by the class, by a volunteer or responsively.*)

**Peace with God Through Faith**

**<sup>1</sup> Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. <sup>2</sup> Through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice[d] in hope of the glory of God. <sup>3</sup> Not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, <sup>4</sup> and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, <sup>5</sup> and hope does not put us to shame, because God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.**

**<sup>6</sup> For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. <sup>7</sup> For one will scarcely die for a righteous person—though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die— <sup>8</sup> but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. <sup>9</sup> Since, therefore, we have now been justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God. <sup>10</sup> For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life. <sup>11</sup> More than that, we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.**

**Affirmation:** We repent of personal failures to obtain the peace that God gives. (*Spoken together by class and teacher*).

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**ENGAGE:** (5-10 min.)

People often struggle with fractured relationships that they may or may not have caused. How can these relationships be reconciled? Only justification by faith in Jesus Christ reconciles the ultimate ruptured relationship between God and humanity.

**Break into groups of threes:** Let each group discuss the following questions and issues and then share your central conclusions and findings with the whole body.

Share with those any experiences you have had with a broken relationship, which affected you deeply and which all attempts made to repair that relationship failed. How hard was this to face? Did the situation help you to grow? How important or helpful is it to you to have supportive relationships with people who genuinely care for you? Are there various resources available to help gain the tools to live peacefully, whether life's circumstances are good or bad? Have you had someone step-in to help you rebuild broken relations that you could never have accomplished on your own? If so, how did it affect you? Have you ever experienced the amazement of having someone do for you what you neither deserved nor earned? If so, share the impact it had on you.

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**EDUCATE:** (10-15 min.)

**Romans 5:1-5:** Here, Paul introduces and expounds upon his essential theological principle of justification which stems from his interpretation of the means of Christian salvation. He states specifically that we as Christians cannot in any way achieve our salvation through our own works, labors, efforts, gifts etc. But we have been *saved by grace through faith*. Because of Christ's sacrifice, we have been justified before God, or pronounced "guiltless." Because we are justified, as believers we have peace with God. There is, however, a growth process going on in the Christian life in which suffering takes place. This suffering is necessary as it produces good results. Enduring suffering with hope creates

good character. Paul reflects the teaching of Christ who directed his followers to rejoice in persecution (see Matthew 5:11-12; compare James 1:2, 12). Romans 5:3-4 speaks to how adversity can lead to the Christian's increasing sanctification and strengthening of the Christian's relationship with God.

**Romans 5:6-8:** Through Christ, believers have been adopted into the family of God, which also extends to us the right to eternal life. God reached down to humanity to become our Friend and heavenly Parent. "The fact that Christ died for the ungodly is at the very center of the Christian faith. That was a monstrous crime, the murder of the innocent Son of God. Paul's insight, though, is that while the enemies of Jesus had nothing but malice in their hearts, God had planned all along for his Son's death to be the means of salvation for humanity" (*Standard Lesson Commentary, Large Print Edition*, p.405). God's timing was perfect, as Galatians 4:4-5 states, "But when the fullness of time had come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, in order to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as children." "In spite of our rebellion and ungodliness, God continues to love us. This has nothing to do with our merit and everything to do with God's character (John 3:16-18; I John 4:16). God continues to love all sinners and desire their restoration to relationship with him (2 Peter 3:9). The willing and intentional sacrifice of God's beloved Son is the supreme way that God *demonstrates his own love for us*. The death of *Christ* was the final and ultimate sacrifice for sins (Hebrews 7:27)" (*Ibid.*, p.406).



**Romans 5:9-11:** We are no longer enemies to God (Romans 5:10) and have no need to fear God's judgment (Romans 5:9). Through Christ's sacrifice, we have peace, hope, love, and power over sin. Sin separated us from God, who hates sin. As long as sin had the power over us, we were in constant rebellion against God, repeatedly at war with God, resisting God's will in our lives. "The ungodly, the unrepentant sinners, are still *God's enemies*.... But God

has provided the way by which those who are separated from Him can come back. The new relationship is one of being *reconciled*. Salvation involves being returned to an ongoing relationship with God. Reconciliation comes only and always by *the death of his Son*.... We have been reconciled (reunited) with *God*. We have been saved from sin and death by means of his grace. As a result, we can *boast*.... The hostilities have ceased. We are no longer enemies of God or slaves to the fear of death. Through our faith in Jesus Christ, our hope is secure, and our joy is complete" (*Ibid.*, p. 407).

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**ELEVATE:** (10 min.)

Understanding the overwhelming gift of salvation given to us by Jesus' sacrifice on the cross, we rest in the peace of God as we are ceaselessly bombarded with media stories of violence and destruction. Greater is He that is in us than he that is in the world. Knowing that we are subject to sin and fall far short of our true relationship with God, we rejoice in the restoring grace of Jesus Christ.

**If able, break into small groups:** Share with those in your group your responses to the following issues and questions: Do you know God as both Friend and heavenly Parent? If so, how does this knowledge play out in your life and interactions with God? What about when you are facing difficulties and opposition, temptations and persecutions? Do you rejoice during such difficulties, knowing that you will be made stronger in your endurance? Elaborate on your response. Do you *know* that nothing you do can separate you from the love of God (Romans 8:39)? If you have affirmation of such knowledge, how does it affect your attitudes and actions?

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**iTHINK:** (5-7 min.)

1. Discuss how faith in Christ results in justification in the sight of God.
2. Discuss some recent crime stories that have made headlines nationally or in your community. Then ask, "What would repentance on the part of the perpetrators look like? What part does repentance play in reconciliation in these cases?"
3. Show participants a series of photos or a video of the process by which steel is refined and made useful. Ask them to compare and contrast this with the Christian life. Remind them that this is what we become on the inside through our endurance of troubles, when we have Christ in our lives.
4. Ask learners to finish the sentence with the first words that come to mind: "God loves me so much that \_\_\_\_\_." Close with a prayer thanking God for the depth of love that moved God to send Jesus to earth.
5. Have participants write a prayer of repentance for personal failures to obtain the peace that God gives.
6. Have participants identify a time when they struggled with receiving God's forgiveness. Discuss their responses about when they accepted God's forgiveness.

**KEY VERSE:** **Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Romans 5:1**

**ADULT UNIT II: FAITH AND SALVATION**  
**ADULT GENERAL LESSON TITLE: Salvation for All Who Believe**  
**ADULT TOPIC: Seeking Confidence**

**LESSON 9**  
**DATE: August 1, 2021**

**DEVOTIONAL READING: Psalm 19:1-14**  
**BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE: Romans 10:5-17**  
**PRINT PASSAGE: Same**

**Home Daily Bible Readings**

<i>Jul. 26</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>Deut. 30:6-14</i>	<i>Obey God with Heart and Voice</i>
<i>Jul. 27</i>	<i>T</i>	<i>Isaiah 52:1-10</i>	<i>God's Salvation Announced</i>
<i>Jul. 28</i>	<i>W</i>	<i>Joel 2:28-32</i>	<i>Call on the Name of the Lord</i>
<i>Jul. 29</i>	<i>Th</i>	<i>Galatians 3:6-14</i>	<i>Gentiles Believe by Faith</i>
<i>Jul. 30</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>Romans 10:1-4</i>	<i>For the Salvation of the Gentiles</i>
<i>Jul. 31</i>	<i>Sa</i>	<i>Romans 10:18-21</i>	<i>Regret for Not Hearing Christ's Word</i>
<i>Aug. 1</i>	<i>Su</i>	<i>Romans 10:5-17</i>	<i>Salvation Is for All People</i>

**EXALT!**

**Invocation** – Teacher or learner

**Celebration** – “We Have Heard the Joyful Sound” #273 A.M.E. *Zion Bicentennial Hymnal*

**Declaration** – Romans 10:5-17 (*Read together by class, by a volunteer or responsively*)

**The Message of Salvation to All**

<sup>5</sup> For Moses writes about the righteousness that is based on the law, that the person who does the commandments shall live by them. <sup>6</sup> But the righteousness based on faith says, “Do not say in your heart, ‘Who will ascend into heaven?’” (that is, to bring Christ down) <sup>7</sup> “or ‘Who will descend into the abyss?’” (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead). <sup>8</sup> But what does it say? “The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart” (that is, the word of faith that we proclaim); <sup>9</sup> because, if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. <sup>10</sup> For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth

**one confesses and is saved.** <sup>11</sup> For the Scripture says, “Everyone who believes in him will not be put to shame.” <sup>12</sup> For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; for the same Lord is Lord of all, bestowing his riches on all who call on him. <sup>13</sup> For “everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.”

<sup>14</sup> How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching? <sup>15</sup> And how are they to preach unless they are sent? As it is written, “How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!” <sup>16</sup> But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Isaiah says, “Lord, who has believed what he has heard from us?” <sup>17</sup> So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ.

**Affirmation** – We embrace with joy the possibility of salvation for all. (*Spoken together by class and teacher*).

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**ENGAGE:** (5-10 min.)

Many people lack confidence in addressing life’s circumstances. How can we gain trust? Salvation comes to all who confess Jesus Christ as Lord and believe in their hearts. Religion is one of the most controversial subjects in society. Many steer clear of discussing religion because, for one reason, people are quite sensitive and sometimes uncertain about their beliefs and practices. There are also many differences and dissenting opinions about religion in society, even among family members and friends.

**If able, break into small groups:** Discuss whether participants think of religion as a private, personal matter between a person and her/his God. Consider whether your family think of their religious faith in this way. Would you say this is the way people in your/their country feel about religion? Do most people you know believe that religious matters should not be discussed with one another? Should we question one another’s religious beliefs and practices? Do you believe we can achieve better understanding and more wholesome relations with one another if we understood one another’s religion and culture?

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**EDUCATE:** (10-15 min.)

**Romans 10:5-10:** Paul had a heartfelt concern that Jews were ignorant of the righteousness of God and the method God had established for the justification of a sinner. Instead, they sought to establish their own method of acceptance with God. Paul worried that the Jews had rejected Christ, humanity’s only hope of salvation, choosing instead to seek justification through the Law. Moses, by showing that the Law requires exact and perfect obedience for righteousness (an impossible feat for fallible human beings), gives us a convincing argument that righteousness is not to be attained by our works. It is obtained only by

faith in Christ. Paul offered convincing evidence of this, especially in the three previous chapters of Romans (7,8 and 9). The grip that sin has on the flesh makes it impossible for humans to adhere to the righteousness expressed by and required, in the law. It is only through yielding to the Holy Spirit that the righteousness of God is accomplished in us through faith in Jesus Christ (see Romans 8). “The *law* is what defines sin and righteousness.... The principle of righteousness by lawkeeping places the responsibility squarely on our shoulders. If a person obeyed every aspect of the law perfectly, then he or she would earn a right standing before God. But that *if* is huge—it never happens!.... We do not need to travel to Heaven or the deep because *the word* we need *is near*. It is as close as our mouth and our hearts (Deuteronomy 30:14).... To mouth the words, ‘Jesus is Lord,’ appears to be easy, but to say this with a heart of faith will result in a life-changing experience and a new direction. To believe that Jesus is risen from the dead seems straightforward enough, but it requires faith in an event that defies personal experience. This is the pathway of faith (compare John 20:25-29)” (*Ibid.*, pp. 411 and 412).

**Romans 10:11-13:** The purpose of the Law is to bring persons to believe in Christ so they may receive justification and salvation. Only Christ can grant this; the Law cannot. This gift of salvation is available to both Jew and Gentile. “Jews and Gentiles enter into God’s promise on the same basis—through faith in Christ. This included everyone, for a person was either a Jew or a non-Jew (Gentile). Jews did not have exclusive rights to God, for he *is the same Lord* to all people (compare Acts 17:24-28). Jews did not have the privilege of having faith in God, even though the promise came through one of their prophets. The one God *richly blesses* (is generous and gracious) to anyone who calls *on him*.... Paul quotes Joel 2:32 to reinforce the promise of grace to *everyone who calls on the name of the Lord* (also see Acts 2:21).... Being *saved* is another way to talk about being declared righteous, being justified, or being forgiven. It includes being reconciled to God (Romans 5:10). Here Paul’s inclusion of the idea of calling brings together the act of faith in the heart and confession with the lips, the verbal expression of faith leading to salvation” (*Ibid.*, p. 413).

**Romans 10:14-17:** Through a chain of reasoning, beginning with the Old Testament, Paul infers that the apostles were sent by God to preach to the Gentiles also (Isaiah 52:7). Paul regarded preaching the gospel to everyone as his duty. He comments on Isaiah to show the universality of its application to Jews and Gentiles alike. The one God is the same to all who call upon him, as Joel also testified (Joel 2:32). “For Paul, *preaching* the gospel was primary. It was good news, the greatest message in history! But how could ‘everyone’ *believe* in Christ if his message was unknown to them? God has chosen to use human instruments to convey his message. This seems to have been his preferred method of operation even back into Old Testament times (examples: Isaiah 6:8; Jeremiah 1:5; Ezekiel 22:30). And so it still is. The good news has to be proclaimed, and that requires a preacher to take the message to those who *have not heard*” (*Ibid.*, p. 414).

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**ELEVATE:** (10 min.)

As Christians, we understand the futility of trying to perfectly adhere to the Law as a means of maintaining a right relationship with God. We rest in the joy of the relationship established through Christ. The joy of the Lord is indeed our strength. Eagerly receiving the word of God as dispensed from the voice of pastors and other messengers, we believe the Gospel is available to and applies to all who will hear, and we are concerned about and pray for family members or friends who are nonbelievers or who refuse to hear the Gospel. However, do we consistently support mission causes to spread the Gospel or volunteer for missionary service? Do we strive to live righteously and rejoice in the possibility of salvation for all?

Discuss among yourselves, how we, as the church, may spread the good news and carry out the Great Commission (Matthew 28:18-20) other than through our songs, sermons, confession of faith, celebrations of the Lord's Supper, and submission to baptism? In other words, how might we carry the message to the world as Jesus requests us to do as His disciples?

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**iTHINK:** (5-7 min.)

1. Find out if the participants in your class are aware of the missionary efforts being supported by your church or denomination. Discuss why it is necessary for the church to support people who minister across the street and around the world to share the Gospel in both word and deed.
2. Ask participants to consider whether they extend themselves beyond their personal comfort zones to share the gospel with others. Discuss the effectiveness of your church's outreach and evangelism ministries.
3. Ask participants to brainstorm ways that churches and believers can reach nonbelievers with the Gospel in a culture that has so many means of distraction and diversion.
4. **If able form two debate teams:** One team should defend righteousness through strict adherence to the Law. The other team should argue in favor of righteousness obtained through Christ alone.
5. Ask participants if they are concerned about a friend or loved one who has rejected salvation through Jesus Christ. Ask them to write down their name(s) and place them in a container you provide. Say a prayer for the names in the container. Ask God to show each participant how he or she may be a messenger of the good news that will lead loved one(s) to accept Christ as Lord and Savior.
6. Talk about the importance of maintaining a connection with unbelieving family and friends. Discuss ways to keep relationship with the nonbeliever active while being a positive example of Christ's love and acceptance of all people.

**KEY VERSE:** **Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Romans 5:1**

**ADULT UNIT III: FAITH GIVES US HOPE**  
**ADULT GENERAL LESSON TITLE: Confident Hope**  
**ADULT TOPIC: The Example of Heroes/ Meaning of Faith**

**LESSON 10**  
**DATE: August 8, 2021**

**DEVOTIONAL READING: Hebrews 11:32-40**  
**BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE: Hebrews 11; 13:1-19**  
**PRINT PASSAGE: Hebrews 11:1-8, 13-16**

**Home Daily Bible Readings**

Aug. 2	M	1 Timothy 6:6-10	Love of Money, Root of Evil
Aug. 3	T	1 Thes. 4:1-7	Control Your Own Body
Aug. 4	W	Acts 7:2-7	Abraham, Father of the Faithful
Aug. 5	Th	Heb 11:4-7, 17-27	Worthy Examples of the Faithful
Aug. 6	F	Heb 13:1-9, 17-19	Actions of Faith in Daily Life
Aug. 7	Sa	Hebrews 13:10-16	Like Jesus, Offer Sacrifices to God
Aug. 8	Su	Hebrews 11:1-3, 8-16	The Living Actions of Faith

**EXALT!**

**Invocation** – Teacher or Leaner

**Celebration** – “My Hope Is Built on Nothing Less”- #286 A.M.E.Z. Bicentennial Hymnal

**Declaration** – Hebrews 11:1-8, 13-16 (*Read together by class, by a volunteer or responsively.*)

**By Faith**

**1** Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. **2** For by it the people of old received their commendation. **3** By faith we understand that the universe was created by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things that are visible.

**4** By faith Abel offered to God a more acceptable sacrifice than Cain, through which he was commended as righteous, God commending him by accepting his gifts. And through his faith, though he died, he still speaks. **5** By faith Enoch was taken up so that he should not see death, and he was not found, because God had taken him. Now be-

fore he was taken he was commended as having pleased God. <sup>6</sup> And without faith it is impossible to please him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him. <sup>7</sup> By faith Noah, being warned by God concerning events as yet unseen, in reverent fear constructed an ark for the saving of his household. By this he condemned the world and became an heir of the righteousness that comes by faith.

<sup>8</sup> By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to a place that he was to receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going.

<sup>13</sup> These all died in faith, not having received the things promised, but having seen them and greeted them from afar, and having acknowledged that they were strangers and exiles on the earth. <sup>14</sup> For people who speak thus make it clear that they are seeking a homeland. <sup>15</sup> If they had been thinking of that land from which they had gone out, they would have had opportunity to return. <sup>16</sup> But as it is, they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared for them a city.

**Affirmation** – We value the people in our lives who act heroically through faith. (*Spoken together by class and teacher*).

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**ENGAGE:** (5-10 min.)

**Unit III, “Faith Gives Us Hope,”** has four sessions that focus on faith as essential for the hope of eternal life. Hebrews defines faith in Christ as a basis for hope and tells how faith in Christ gives hope that helps people persevere in all circumstances. First, John promises that faith conquers the world. Second, Corinthians teaches about hope in God’s gift of eternal life.

People enduring life’s miseries hopelessly plod along the way of life. What can enliven this emptiness of existence? Hebrews strongly indicates that faith in God provides the assurance of hope and conviction of certainty.

**If able break into small groups:** Share with those in your group persons, both living and historic, who you admire greatly and the reasons for your admiration. Discuss whether the persons have inspired you to seek to live in a way that can be upheld by others or admired. Also, share your possible awareness of your own cultural, social, or religious heritage and its source and impact. Finally, share with the group your possible experience of striving to achieve something you believe in, even when there was no visible evidence to substantiate belief. How strongly might we hold on to such a belief?

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**EDUCATE:** (10-15 min.)

**Hebrews 11:1-4:** The authorship of Hebrews is unknown. Some have speculated that Paul wrote Hebrews, but modern theologians and scholars reject this

assertion. Some scholars have postulated that the author is Barnabas, which would explain certain theological similarities to Paul's letters. It could very well have been written by one of Paul's women followers, as some have speculated. Nevertheless, regardless of who wrote the Epistle, it is a unique and profoundly impressive Christian witness. This section on faith is one of the many reasons for the Epistle's impact. It is not the only definition of faith, but this definition is certainly realistic and convincing. Verses 1-2 serve as an introduction to the author's doctrinal discourse on faith that perseveres throughout one's divine service. This twofold definition of faith in the first verse is typical of the Hebrew (or Jewish) way of thinking. Its parallelism is a form of Hebrew poetry in which two statements reflect the same or similar ideas. Faith based on the unseen, the invisible, proceeds from God and what God has done and what God requires of humans and all God's creation. The impressive examples, right out of the Hebrew scripture, that follow are proof positive of the author's statement and definition of faith, based on the very beginning of God's creation and proceeding through time and history down to Jesus Christ Himself and beyond.

**Hebrews 1:5-8:** The author's objective here is to show that no matter how excellent the works of the saints, it was by faith that they derived their value, their worthiness, and all their excellences, thus giving concrete example to what has already been intimated: the forebears of the faith pleased God by faith alone. In reference to Enoch, we have only a sentence or two, but it is highly significant that in his faithful "walk" with God, he was translated. God took him. Why? The writer says, he *pleased* God. "The fact that Enoch pleased *God* has brought the writer to this general principle: *without faith it is impossible to please God...* Belief in God must go further than merely acknowledging his existence. One is called to believe also that he is ready, willing, and able to reward those who search for him. That, in turn, implies that one must believe in the power and goodness of God" (*ibid.*, p. 421). Another more extended example is Abraham. While in Ur of the Chaldees, Abraham was commanded to go where he would be led, to a place where he had never been before. In obedience to this call, he uprooted himself and complied with the call through faith, a striking example of faith in action (see Genesis 11:31; 12:1-4).

**Hebrews 11:13-16:** This section on faith concludes with the declaration that all of these witnesses died in faith. They left this life without having received all that was promised, but the promises became very real to them, and they claimed them. And because of these promises, they confessed themselves to be strangers and pilgrims on the earth. "This world was not their final home (compare Genesis 23:4). They did not wander without a goal, though. They were on a pilgrimage to God.... Faith pointed these heroes forward as they sought a *country* not yet visible to them. Homesickness for *the country they had left* would have become an obstacle to their focus on the better land should they have yearned to go back (compare Numbers 4:4; Luke 9:62). It would have been easy for any of the fathers of Israel, given the risks and challenges they faced, to have turned back to the relative comforts of 'home.' The writer of Hebrews was mindful of

this and saw it as relevant for his audience in a spiritual sense. In the first century AD, Jewish-Christians who were on the edge of abandoning their new faith were mindful of their 'old' country. They saw there the promise of earthly relief from the various forms of social and economic pressures that they had faced in their decision to follow Christ.... Even though these heroes of the faith could not yet see it, they acknowledged their destination's superiority by their actions.... If they oriented their desires toward a *heavenly* country, they would find there the true and living God—the one who *is not ashamed to be called their God, who has prepared a city for them, a permanent place of rest (see Hebrews 4)*" (*Ibid.*, pp. 422 and 423).

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### **ELEVATE:** (10 min.)

As Christians, we often find inspiration to persevere through our many trials and hardships, based on the faith testimonies of those who have gone before. As they succeeded in overcoming their difficulties, we believe we can do the same.

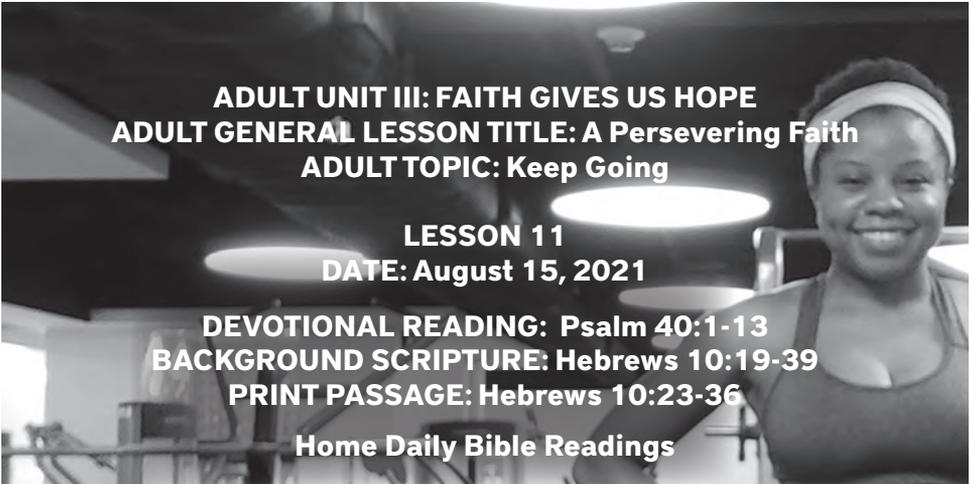
**If able, break into small groups:** Share stories with one another about faith and perseverance, if possible, that may be encouraging to others during times of difficulty. Also, discuss with one another your understanding of faith that encompasses the knowledge and assurance that things will work out according to God's plan and timetable, not according to our own. Is God an on-time God or what? What is the importance of patience and waiting? What keeps us from throwing in the towel?

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### **iTHINK:** (5–7 min.)

1. Ask participants to share a time when they were challenged to continue in faith when all evidence seemed to the contrary. Ask them to share how they met this challenge. What enabled them, gave them the strength to overcome?
2. Ask participants to choose the person within the "Hall of Faith" (Hebrews 11: 4-38) with whom they resonate. Then allow each person one minute to share facts with the group about the biblical person they identify with and why.
3. If able, form two teams. Give each team five minutes to develop a report on one of the two components of faith, as defined in Hebrews 11. Group 1: "The assurance of things hoped for." Group 2: "The conviction of things not seen."
4. Do you think believers must follow Christ in faith, even when the thing we desire and pray for does not appear? Explain your answer.
5. Invite a guest who is currently in the midst of a faith struggle to come and share the journey with the group.

**KEY VERSE: Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. Hebrews 11:1**



**ADULT UNIT III: FAITH GIVES US HOPE**  
**ADULT GENERAL LESSON TITLE: A Persevering Faith**  
**ADULT TOPIC: Keep Going**

**LESSON 11**  
**DATE: August 15, 2021**

**DEVOTIONAL READING: Psalm 40:1-13**  
**BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE: Hebrews 10:19-39**  
**PRINT PASSAGE: Hebrews 10:23-36**

**Home Daily Bible Readings**

Aug. 9	M	Mark 8:31-37	Save Your Life by Losing It
Aug. 10	T	1 Peter 3:9-19	Respond to Abusers with Blessings
Aug. 11	W	Revelation 2:8-11	Be Faithful Until Death
Aug. 12	Th	Hebrews 10:1-10	Sanctified by Christ's Sacrifice
Aug. 13	F	Hebrews 10:11-18	The Inner Life of New Believers
Aug. 14	Sa	Hebrews 10:19-22	Approach God with a Pure Heart
Aug. 15	Su	Hebrews 10:23-36	Act in Ways That Preserve the Faith

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**EXALT!**

**Invocation** – Teacher or Learner

**Celebration** – “O for a Faith That Will Not Shrink” - #486 A. M. E. Zion Bicentennial Hymnal

**Declaration** – Hebrews 10:23-36 (Read together by the class, by a volunteer or responsively.)

**<sup>23</sup> Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful. <sup>24</sup> And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, <sup>25</sup> not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.**

**<sup>26</sup> For if we go on sinning deliberately after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, <sup>27</sup> but a fearful expectation of judgment, and a fury of fire that will consume the adversaries. <sup>28</sup> Anyone who has set aside the law of Moses dies without mercy on the evidence of two or three witnesses. <sup>29</sup> How much**

worse punishment, do you think, will be deserved by the one who has trampled underfoot the Son of God, and has profaned the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and has outraged the Spirit of grace? <sup>30</sup> For we know him who said, "Vengeance is mine; I will repay." And again, "The Lord will judge his people." <sup>31</sup> It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

<sup>32</sup> But recall the former days when, after you were enlightened, you endured a hard struggle with sufferings, <sup>33</sup> sometimes being publicly exposed to reproach and affliction, and sometimes being partners with those so treated. <sup>34</sup> For you had compassion on those in prison, and you joyfully accepted the plundering of your property, since you knew that you yourselves had a better possession and an abiding one. <sup>35</sup> Therefore do not throw away your confidence, which has a great reward. <sup>36</sup> For you have need of endurance, so that when you have done the will of God you may receive what is promised.

**Affirmation** – We can appreciate ways in which Christians suffer for their faith today. (*Spoken together by class and teacher*).

### **ENGAGE:** (5-10 min.)

People lacking self-assurance feel overwhelmed by life's challenges. What can enable us to face life confidently? Believers in Jesus Christ, who persevere in hope and encourage others in love and good works, develop in faith. Have you ever been ostracized or persecuted for your opinions, or beliefs, or known others who have had such experiences? How did you feel under such pressures, or how do you imagine others felt? **If able, break into small groups:** Discuss your responses among those in your group. How do you think feelings of fear of exposure, punishment, or retribution figured in such experiences? You might consider the experiences of Martin Luther King, Jr., and others in the Civil Rights Movement in America. Do you think the suffering participants thought much of giving up and ending their suffering? What do you think kept them going?

### **EDUCATE:** (10-15 min.)

**Hebrews 10:23-25:** The first 22 verses of Hebrews 10 present the writer's unique perspective of the faith to which he appeals to the audience to remain committed in spite of the dangers and hardships. The earlier verses of Hebrews 10 explain that the Law that had governed the Jewish faith was merely a shadow of the good things to come. The sacrifices made under the Law could not make those who offered them perfect. This unknown author of Hebrews compares the superiority of Christ's sacrifice to any animal blood offering and his priesthood to that of any human being. He asserts that the Jewish system of sacrifices to make atonement for sin is inferior to Christ's atoning sacrifice to reconcile humanity to God. The high priest lifted the curtain (veil) that separated the Holy of Holies from the Most Holy Place in order to have access to the

divine majesty. The curtain (veil) of the temple was torn from top to bottom at the crucifixion of Christ, to demonstrate that access to the holiest is now open to all and believers may enter with boldness. In verse 22, the author alludes to the practice of the high priest washing his body in water before putting on his holy garments to enter the inner tabernacle ([Leviticus 16:4](#)). The Levites were to be cleansed the same way ([Numbers 8:7](#)).

**Hebrews 10:26-31:** Many of the Jewish Christians to whom this letter of Hebrews was addressed were considering “turning away from the faith because of the social pressures coming at them from their families. The cost of living the faith, in other words, was becoming too great to bear” (*Ibid.*, pp.428-29). In this writer’s thinking, such turning away would be terribly sinful, and he warns that, “To sin *deliberately* after having come to Christ carries the grave consequences of being cut off from the positive benefits of Christ’s sacrifices for sins.... Having been in Christ, they had come to know that animal sacrifices did not purify. So how could any sacrifice for sins remain for them?” (*Ibid.*, p. 429). For those under the law of Moses, rejection of the law had its dire consequences, but under grace in Christ, turning back had much more harsh consequences. In both cases, the sin was apostasy. But under the new faith in Christ, “Apostasy is a rejection of the *Spirit of grace*.... Grace is sometimes understood as the free gift of God that comes, no-strings attached. But grace is more than that. Grace empowers us to take up our crosses and follow Christ, giving us the strength to undertake the path of discipleship and service to others in his name. Think of all that is being given up when one rejects the Spirit of grace!” (*Ibid.*, pp. 429-30).

**Hebrews 10:32-36:** When we recall the hardships and trouble we have undergone to achieve certain goals, it is not easy to abandon the course we have taken. If we have had the strength to bear the suffering and the struggles, we must have considered it all worthwhile. What will we think of ourselves and what will others think of us if we give up after all that? The writer appeals to the natural instinct besides the spiritual nature of his audience in their inclination to turn back. He “got specific about the former days.... Members of his audience had suffered directly, and they had also suffered by being *side by side* with those who suffered persecution. The Greek word behind publicly exposed only occurs in this verse and includes the idea of being made a spectacle as one is put on public display. They became the targets of insults and other ways of being persecuted.... [Finally], the author turned to the importance of perseverance. Those who are tempted to reject the Christ they once accepted should have *confidence* because they know who God is and what he has done for them. That confidence is the basis of the ability to *persevere* that will result in retaining the promise of resurrection and eternal life with Jesus” (*Ibid.*, p. 431).

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### **ELEVATE:** (5-10 min.)

What would you say is the most precious aspect about faith in Jesus Christ that would inhibit those who really believe and have experienced Him from giving up-no matter the circumstances? If able, break into small groups and explore

this question: among those in your groups. Also, address the following issues or questions:

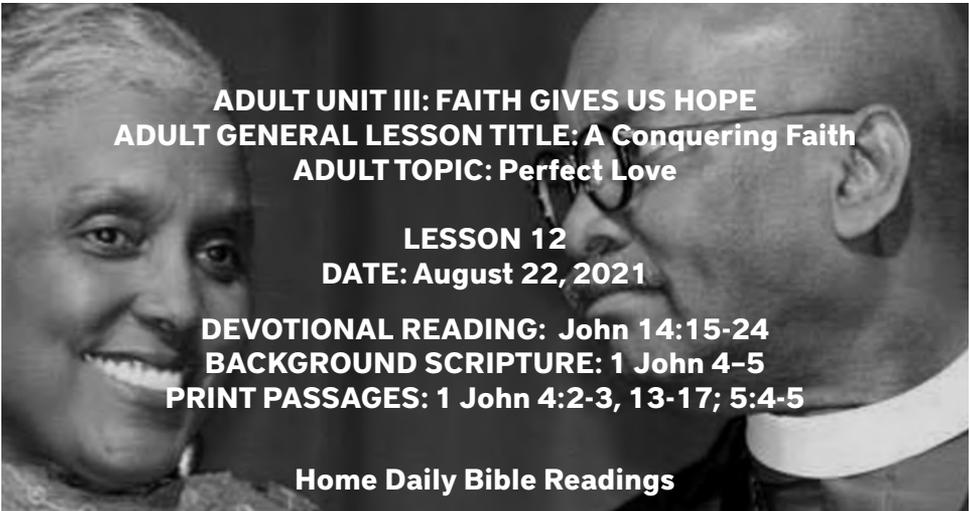
1. Should believers search for ways to develop a deeper and more intimate, personal relationship with God through Christ? Why or why not? Do believers grow closer to God because they know they can approach God directly and personally, without the permission or intervention of another human being?
2. How do the following affect one's faith in Christ?
  - a) We accept through faith the great sacrifice Christ made on the cross and the benefits received because of God's loving gift.
  - b) We know we can seek God's forgiveness for our sins and be confident that we are forgiven.
  - c) We understand that judgment awaits those who reject the salvation offered through Christ.

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**iTHINK:** (5-7 min.)

1. Let participants share their Top Ten reasons why believers should attend church regularly, especially in light of Hebrews 10:25.
2. Ask participants to form groups and create newspaper ads or television commercial scripts that detail the "new and improved sacrifices of Christ," which replace the old sacrifices under the Law. If time permits, participants can share some products they've used that were really "new and improved" and some that were all hype with no real difference.
3. Engage participants in a discussion about religious freedom, particularly the freedom to assemble in worship. Talk about countries where the freedom of assembly is not possible. Discuss what Christians can do to ensure the freedom of assembly. Invite opinions about why it is important for all faiths to have the freedom to assemble.
4. Invite a guest or ask a participant to share how church members and the regular assembly for worship helped to sustain them during a difficult life transition.
5. How would you respond to someone who says, "I believe in Jesus, but I don't see a need for me to go to church regularly"?
6. Invite participants to share what it means to them to have "all access" to God, without the need for a human intermediary.

**KEY VERSE:** Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful. Hebrews 10:23



**ADULT UNIT III: FAITH GIVES US HOPE**  
**ADULT GENERAL LESSON TITLE: A Conquering Faith**  
**ADULT TOPIC: Perfect Love**

**LESSON 12**  
**DATE: August 22, 2021**

**DEVOTIONAL READING: John 14:15-24**  
**BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE: 1 John 4-5**  
**PRINT PASSAGES: 1 John 4:2-3, 13-17; 5:4-5**

**Home Daily Bible Readings**

Aug. 16	M	Deuteronomy 13:1-4	Testing Our Love for God
Aug. 17	T	John 14:15-24	Love God by Keeping His Commandments
Aug. 18	W	1 John 4:1, 4-6	Discerning the Spirit of Truth and Error
Aug. 19	Th	1 John 4:7-12	Knowing God, We Can Love Others
Aug. 20	F	1 John 5:1-3	Faith Is the Victory
Aug. 21	Sa	1 John 5:6-12	Believers in Jesus Have Life
Aug. 22	Su	1 John 4:2-3, 13-17; 5:4-5	Faith That Loves Overcomes Obstacles

**EXALT!**

**Invocation** – Teacher or Learner

**Celebration** – “Love Divine, All Loves Excelling” - #274 A.M.E. Zion Bicentennial Hymn

**Declaration** – 1 John 4:2-3, 13-17; 5:4-5 (Read together by the class, by a volunteer or responsively)

**<sup>2</sup> By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, <sup>3</sup> and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the anti-christ, which you heard was coming and now is in the world already.**

**<sup>13</sup> By this we know that we abide in him and he in us, because he has given us of his Spirit. <sup>14</sup> And we have seen and testify that the Father**

has sent his Son to be the Savior of the world. <sup>15</sup> Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God. <sup>16</sup> So we have come to know and to believe the love that God has for us. God is love, and whoever abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him. <sup>17</sup> By this is love perfected with us, so that we may have confidence for the day of judgment, because as he is so also are we in this world.

**4 For everyone who has been born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith. <sup>5</sup> Who is it that overcomes the world except the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?**

**Affirmation** – We give thanks for the various expressions of God’s love in our lives and live accordingly. (*Spoken together by class and teacher*).

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**ENGAGE:** (5-10 min.)

Faced with the world’s allure, people contend with the many enticements. How can we resist the world’s unhealthy attractions? And, yes, we love those things to which we are attracted. Yet love, especially love of the world, is tricky and often deceitful, leading us to our own ruin. Believers, through faith in Jesus Christ, overcome the world and its seductions.

We are prone to recognize that there are different kinds of love and respond appropriately in our relationships. **If able, break into small groups:** Share your understanding and experience of different types of love, such as brotherly/sisterly love (*philia*), romantic love (*eros*), and divine love (*agape*). How does the experience of trust and betrayal spring from some forms of love? Have you ever found yourself compromising your sense of values in search of love and been disillusioned about the true meaning of love? Did you learn at some point that love is demonstrated through action, not merely words?

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**EDUCATE:** (10-15 min.)

**1 John 4:2-3:** The Epistles of John were written in a time when the early church was encountering heresies or false teachings; and one can easily see that the writer is apparently arguing against these false teachings, one of which taught that Christ did not come in the flesh. We are well aware that this was true of the Gnostics, who claimed, among other things, that the flesh was evil. John gave precautionary advice about avoiding false teachers, as many were claiming to be sent by God (1 John 4:1-3). He asserted that only those who were truly inspired by the Spirit of God would openly confess the crucified, resurrected Christ. John and the other apostles had witnessed and could verify that Jesus Christ was the incarnate Word, the Messiah sent from heaven who sacrificed His life through death on the cross. This was doctrine which was of the Spirit of God. Those who were believers were members of the family of God who had embraced God’s truth and were immersed in God’s Spirit. Therefore,

they held the power to triumph over the deceptions and trickery of false teachers (see Matthew 7:22).

**1 John 4:13-17:** First John 4:13 provides significant connection between 1 John and the Gospel of John. It is primarily in the Gospel of John that Jesus spoke of the Spirit (or Advocate) as one who would come to maintain a continuity and intimacy of relationship between the disciples and their Master (see John 14:15-31; 15:26-27; 16:5-15). Verses 13-14 are one of the rare places in Scripture where the Father, Son, and Spirit are each mentioned as distinct persons of the Godhead, who are all in relationship with us and with one another. This is scriptural support for the Holy Trinity, the core concept of Christian theology vital to the Church, which argued and debated over the issue for several hundred years before finally establishing it as sound doctrine for the faith. But the persons of the Trinity are not simply held in static doctrine, but are vitally active in the life of believers and in the Church of Christ. The Spirit, for instance, dwells in every believer as power, guide, and teacher. "Jesus revealed the Father to sinful humanity as a loving God who has never given up on his lost children.... There was nothing incidental about Jesus' mission; He was *sent* to save. Nothing was more important or central than that for John...." One who confesses Jesus Christ is to "follow him exclusively in a trusting relationship of faith and service. Such a person lives in the presence of God and allows God's Spirit to live in his or her life at the deepest level (compare John 20:31)" (*Ibid.*, pp. 436 and 437). The "day of judgment" (1 John 4:17) is a New Testament-era expression comparable to "the day of the Lord," a phrase found throughout the Hebrew Scriptures.

**1 John 5:4-5:** Our faith in Jesus Christ is a powerful force in our lives which stems from a new birth in which we receive a new personhood that is of God, one that enables us to overcome the world. "Greater is he that is in you than he that is in the world" (1 John 4:4). "No weapon formed against you shall prosper" (Isaiah 54:17). "Both this physical world and its unholy value systems will pass away. But the person who obeys God will live forever (1 John 2:17). John further describes the victory to come in Revelation 3:5, 12, 21. Those who believe the truth about Jesus and act on that truth share in that victory" (*Ibid.*, p. 439).



**ELEVATE:** (10 min.)

**If able, break into two groups:** Discuss the following questions or issues with one another in your group.

**Group 1:**

1. If we strive to live wisely, we will not be deceived by false teachers. Do you find this to be true? Explain.

2. We recognize that those who have faith can conquer the world. Can you think of evidence to support this?

3. We have been motivated by love to extend ourselves greatly to help others, even strangers. Are we capable of doing this?

### **Group 2:**

4. Christians can grow in their capacity to love others as Christ has loved us. Give evidence that you have witness of this in the lives of Christians you know.

5. We as Christians are inspired by love to act (to share the gospel, help the needy, care for the uncaring, etc.) Do your church members display this inspiration? Explain.

6. Christians who are knowledgeable about God's Word will recognize false teaching and doctrines. Do you see this happening?

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### **iTHINK:** (5-7 min.)

1. Ask participants to write a love letter to God, explaining how God's love dwells within and moves within them and how that love impacts them positively.

2. Ask participants to search the Bible to find verses that reflect every believer's duty to love others, and then to demonstrate that love through serving God.

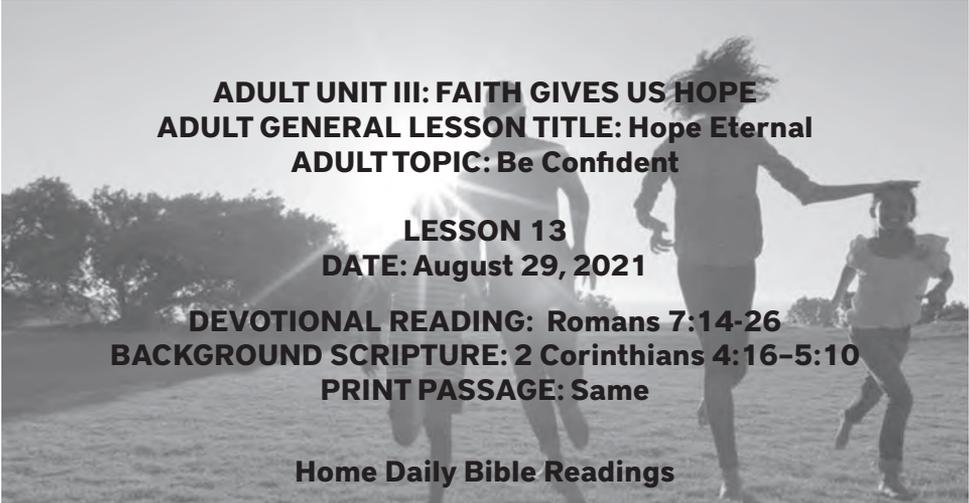
3. Ask participants to think of good deeds others have done out of godly love for humanity (ex., Salvation Army, Habitat for Humanity, etc.) and share them with one another.

4. Discuss a situation (local or national) where a person or congregation was misled by a false teacher/preacher. How did the experience impact the person/church?

5. Consider how love demonstrated tends to expand and infect others. Hate can do the same thing, however. Share ideas that may help Christians live in constant awareness of the need to share love with an unloved and unloving world.

6. Discuss the confidence we have as Christians because of God's love, and how we ensure that our confidence does not become arrogance that turns away rather than attracts others to Christ.

**KEY VERSE: So we have come to know and to believe the love that God has for us. God is love, and whoever abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him. 1 John 4:16**



**ADULT UNIT III: FAITH GIVES US HOPE**  
**ADULT GENERAL LESSON TITLE: Hope Eternal**  
**ADULT TOPIC: Be Confident**

**LESSON 13**

**DATE: August 29, 2021**

**DEVOTIONAL READING: Romans 7:14-26**

**BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE: 2 Corinthians 4:16-5:10**

**PRINT PASSAGE: Same**

**Home Daily Bible Readings**

<i>Aug. 23</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>1 Cor 15:16-23</i>	<i>From Death to Life in Christ</i>
<i>Aug. 24</i>	<i>T</i>	<i>Ephs 3:14-21</i>	<i>Strengthening the Inner Being</i>
<i>Aug. 25</i>	<i>W</i>	<i>Ecc 12:9-14</i>	<i>Every Deed, Good or Evil, Judges</i>
<i>Aug. 26</i>	<i>Th</i>	<i>Romans 2:4b-11</i>	<i>God's Judgment of Human Behavior Impartial</i>
<i>Aug. 27</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>2 Corinthians 4:1-6</i>	<i>Paul, Confident in the Ministry</i>
<i>Aug. 28</i>	<i>Sa</i>	<i>2 Cor 4:7-15</i>	<i>Entering the Presence of Jesus</i>
<i>Aug. 29</i>	<i>Su</i>	<i>2 Cor 4:16-5:10</i>	<i>Live the Faith with Confidence</i>

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**EXALT!**

**Invocation** – Teacher or learner

**Celebration** – “Beams of Heaven”- #632 A.M.E. Zion Bicentennial Hymnal

**Declaration** – 2 Corinthians 4:16-5:10 (*Read together by class, by a volunteer or responsively*)

**<sup>16</sup> So we do not lose heart. Though our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day. <sup>17</sup> For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, <sup>18</sup> as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal.**

**Our Heavenly Dwelling**

**<sup>1</sup> For we know that if the tent that is our earthly home is destroyed,**

we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.<sup>2</sup> For in this tent we groan, longing to put on our heavenly dwelling,<sup>3</sup> if indeed by putting it on we may not be found naked.<sup>4</sup> For while we are still in this tent, we groan, being burdened—not that we would be unclothed, but that we would be further clothed, so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life.<sup>5</sup> He who has prepared us for this very thing is God, who has given us the Spirit as a guarantee.

<sup>6</sup> So we are always of good courage. We know that while we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord,<sup>7</sup> for we walk by faith, not by sight.<sup>8</sup> Yes, we are of good courage, and we would rather be away from the body and at home with the Lord.<sup>9</sup> So whether we are at home or away, we make it our aim to please him.<sup>10</sup> For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil.

**Affirmation** – We will develop a growing trust in God’s promise of eternal life through faith. (*Spoken together by class and teacher*).

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**ENGAGE:** (5-10 min.)

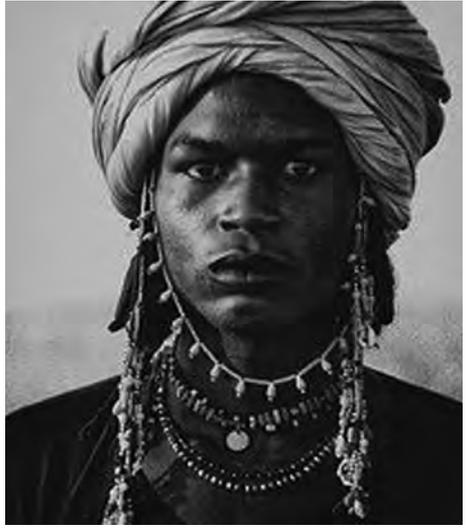
People fear the fragility of life, uncertainty about death, and afterlife. In weakness and doubts about such things, where can any assurance be found? God gives believers in Jesus Christ an eternal, unseen place in him that is guaranteed by the Spirit.



**If able, break into small groups:**

Share with those in your group thoughts about the meaning of life in the face of the certainty of death. Although death can come at any age, we may not give as much thought to the reality of death and the life beyond as we do when growing older. What is the most helpful attitude one should have about death at any time in life? What do most of us think about loved ones and close friends who pass away and the possibility of seeing them again? Does the fact that this life is full of imperfections and hardships help us to believe that there must surely be a better or more perfect life after this present one where good behavior, endurance etc. are rewarded and negative behavior is punished?

**II Corinthians 4:16-18:** Paul cautioned the Corinthians to remain vigilant because the things they had to endure presently were only temporary. Instead of dwelling on the temporary, they should keep focused on their true and eternal destiny with Christ in glory. He was speaking out of his direct experience in the service of Christ. He had a strong unswerving faith in Christ and knew what he was talking about because he had a close walk with God in Christ. In following the example of Christ and the guidance of the Holy Spirit, Paul had increased his knowledge and understanding of the Gospel of Christ and undegirded his faith with spiritual assurance.



He “knew his life was temporary—and that earthly life was relatively less important than eternal life.... [He] said he had found great peace even in (or especially in) dangerous and discouraging circumstances. Even were his life not to end soon, the effects of aging and stress are only seen *outwardly*, perishing little by little. [He] was growing stronger *inwardly*—his heart and spirit—as a result of his relationship with the Lord. Daily, constantly, he found inner renewal (compare Ephesians 3:16). That was what kept him going” (*Ibid.*, p. 443). This is what is so remarkable about Paul’s message: his speaking directly out of his own knowledge and experience, teaching from the very example of his own life, which, by the way, he sought to pattern after the life of Jesus Himself, the unfailing Lord of his life.

**II Corinthians 5:1-5:** Paul was absolutely certain about the future life of all believers in Christ who surrendered themselves in the service of Christ. When we as believers rise again, we leave all that is earthly behind. Our bodies are renewed as a spiritual body fashioned by God—permanent, indestructible, and celestial. We are guaranteed a glorious future because God has created us for this very purpose (Philippians 3:21), working in us to will and to do God’s good pleasure in ways beyond our understanding (Philippians 2:13). As stated above, Paul lived in direct communion with the Holy Spirit, denying the flesh any domination over him. His life is an illustration that the Holy Spirit serves as our guarantee of a future promise, a foretaste of the glory that believers shall one day know. Notice that he makes it clear that “we should not expect a future existence without a body. Unlike some Greek philosophers of his time, Paul, a Pharisee, would never expect a permanent, eternal existence as some sort of free-floating spirit (compare Acts 17:32; 23:6-8; 24:15....). What he longed for was the new body at the time when *what is mortal*, with all its limitations and frailties, would be *swallowed up by life*” (*Ibid.*, p. 445).



**II Corinthians 5:6-10:** “During the time we exist in our current bodies, we cannot experience the full presence of God. To be *at home* in our present bodies means to be *away from* the closest presence of *the Lord*. This was the result of the sins of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden; the resulting separation and banishment included the loss of direct fellowship with the Lord (Genesis 3:23). God’s holy nature does not tolerate sin in his presence (compare I Peter 1:15-16), and his glory is too great for sinful humans to endure” (*Ibid.*, p. 446). Yet, living *by faith and not by sight*, we have that hope that through the purification of Christ, we shall be made worthy

of entering into the full presence of God. For when Christ appears, we shall be like Him. Confidently and constantly living to please Christ, we have that faith of receiving His perfect purification. The judgment seat might be compared to the reward position at the Olympic Games. Those who belong to the family of God shall receive the reward for good things done in the body and experience the sadness at reward lost because of the useless things, because of their failure at times to be fit enough. (Compare 1 Corinthians 3:10-15; 4:4; Romans 14:10-12.)

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### **ELEVATE:** (10 min.)

**If able, break into two groups:** Allow the first group discuss the following issues or concerns:

1. As we grow in faith, our focus shifts from the physical and material to things that are spiritual and eternal. Is this really the case?
2. As we grow and mature in the faith, we become more willing to relinquish the cares of this world and prepare to embrace a heavenly home. Is this really the case?
3. We grow to understand that God is a God of love, grace, and mercy, but also a God of judgment. We learn to trust God’s sovereign authority regarding the distribution of both eternal reward and punishment.

### **Second group discuss the following:**

4. We experience spiritual growth that leads us to regularly examine ourselves to determine if we are living in a manner that pleases God. Is this true? What is your view?

5. Christians know that some matters of faith shall remain a mystery until we meet God face-to-face. Do you live with this expectation?

6. As we experience the effects of aging, we begin to take comfort in the knowledge that our eternal bodies will be perfect and whole. Do you agree with this?

**iTHINK:** (5-7 min.)

1. Consider: If you had a choice, would you want to live forever? You should know that most people answer no. Conduct an Internet search for direct responses to this question and share with the group. Consider this: People don't want to live forever because they get tired of continually dealing with problems and changes and issues. Paul encouraged the Corinthians to not give up. Christians have something to hope for at the end of life.



2. Let volunteers read the following passages silently: Isaiah 25:8-12; Ezekiel 28:24-26; Luke 13:29-33; John 14:2-4; Colossians 3:1-7; Revelation 7:13-17; 21:4-8; 22:3-9. After everyone has completed reading, ask participants to share a brief description of what heaven will be like, according to Scripture.

3. Engage in a discussion about our Western obsession with looks and appearance. Why are some people so vicious in their attacks on the Internet? Why do most people relinquish excessive concerns about appearance as they grow older? Discuss how meaningless and irrelevant this obsession is as it relates to our existence in eternity. Let older participants share what the thought of having renewed bodies means to them as they get older.

4. Let participants share about the faith of family and friends who are facing their mortality.

5. Give participants paper or postcards and pencils. Ask them to write down at least six ways that they intentionally make efforts to please God. Invite each to share their responses. Then ask: Why do you believe God will be pleased? In what ways could you be doing more?

6. Discuss how people can develop a growing trust in God's promise of eternal life through faith.

**KEY VERSE: For we know that if the tent that is our earthly home is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. 2 Corinthians 5:1**

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