

A LIVING FAITH Lesson on SELF DISCIPLINE

Theme: The Season of Lent;
Planting seeds of love in the hearts of others.

Object: An old shoe box, a broom, and a flower pot with small hand shovel. *(Use these as you teach the lesson.)*

Scripture: **Ephesians 1:3 (RSV or KJV)**
Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ.



Paree Looy's!

Today is the beginning of a very important season in our church year- the season of Lent. Do you remember how long Lent lasts? That's right, Lent is the 40 days before Palm Sunday, which leads right in to Holy Week and Easter Sunday. The word "Lent" comes from another word "Lencten" which means spring. That makes sense...since Lent and Easter always happen during springtime.

As I was thinking about Lent and springtime, I realized that many of the things I like to do in the springtime are similar to the kinds of things you and I can and should do during Lent as we prepare for Easter. Let me explain.

In the springtime, I like to OPEN UP. I open up my windows and let fresh spring air fill my home. **For Lent**, a great thing to do is OPEN UP our Bibles and read them more. When we read our Bibles, God speaks a fresh word to us and fills our hearts with His presence. Use **self discipline** to read your Bible by putting it someplace easy to access.

In the springtime, I like to CLEAR OUT- especially the clutter in my closets. I go through my closets and take out the things I don't really need: heavy coats, old shoes- things that will just be in the way. **For Lent**, it is good to CLEAR OUT the things in our lives that we don't really need—things that get in the way of following our Lord Jesus Christ. For example, maybe you watch TV or play video games a lot. Why not put them away for a while and use that extra time to pray. Use **self discipline** to know when you've had enough "screen" time and pray for what really matters.

In the springtime, I always need to SWEEP UP. I try to find and clean up all the dirt in my home that has been hiding all winter- like under my rugs, dirt that no one else sees, but dirt that I know is there. **For Lent**, it is good to ask ourselves, "Have I made any mistakes or messes that I need to clean up? Do I need to apologize to someone for something I said or did? Do I need to ask God to forgive me? Use **self discipline** to take action and challenge yourself in this area . . . taking the first step is hardest, but you'll feel so good once you've gone the full distance!

In the springtime, I love to PLANT. I plant seeds in my garden pots and water them as I wait and watch them grow into something beautiful. **For Lent**, it is good for us to PLANT- different kind of seeds. We can plant seeds of love in the hearts of others when we are kind, or helpful, or when we tell someone about Christ. For Lent, think of something you can do that will become something beautiful for someone else, and do it in the name of Jesus Christ, the one who did something really beautiful for you. Use **self discipline** to make this happen for someone who really needs Christ in his/her life .

Dear Lord and our Savior Jesus Christ, We love you. Help us to Open up our Bibles, Clear Out our clutter, Sweep up our messes, and Plant the seeds of your Love. Amen.

A LIVING FAITH Lesson on ACCOUNTABILITY



Theme: Temptation and Accountability in the Garden of Eden

Object: A cookie jar

Scripture: Genesis 3:8-13 (RSV or KJV)

Paree Loos! Do you have a cookie jar at your house? When I was a child, we always had a cookie jar. Sometimes I would come in from school to find my mother baking cookies. After they were cool, she would fill the cookie jar and say to me, "Don't eat any of these cookies before dinner or you will spoil your appetite. Oh my, that was quite a temptation to know that the jar was full of cookies, but I wasn't allowed to eat them.

That reminds me of game we used to play in school. "Who Stole the Cookies from the Cookie Jar?" We sat in a circle and said a rhyme that went something like this:

Accuser: Who stole the cookies from the cookie jar? (pick a friend's name) **Johnny** stole the cookies from the cookie jar.

Johnny: Who, me?

Accuser: Yes, you!

Johnny: Not me!

Accuser: Then who?

Johnny: (pick another friend's name) (**Mary**) stole the cookies from the cookie jar.

We repeated the rhyme again and again with everyone in the circle accusing someone else of stealing the cookies from the cookie jar.

You know, that must be the oldest game in the world – it started in the Garden of Eden. God made Adam and Eve and gave them a beautiful garden in which to live. He told them they could eat from any of the trees except for one tree in the middle of the garden.

One day Adam and Eve heard the sound of the Lord God as he walked in the garden. When they heard Him, they ran and hid. God called to Adam, "Where are you?"

Adam answered, "I heard you coming and I ran and hid because I was naked."

"Who told you that you were naked?" the Lord asked. "Have you eaten from the tree that I told you not to eat from?"

"It was that woman you gave me" Adam cried. "She gave me some fruit from the tree and I ate it."

Then God said to the woman, "What have you done?"

"It was the serpent! He deceived me and I ate," Eve protested.

Does that sound familiar? How many times have you heard someone that was caught doing something they shouldn't do not take **accountability** for themselves and instead say, "It wasn't my fault – he made me do it!"

When we do something wrong, we can't run and hide or blame someone else. We must be **accountable** for our choices and actions. God is loving and forgiving. If we confess what we have done wrong, God will forgive us.

Heavenly Father, there have been times that we have disobeyed you. We confess our sins and ask forgiveness in Jesus Christ's name. Amen

A LIVING FAITH Lesson on GOD'S LOVE AND FORGIVENESS

Theme: The Story of the Prodigal Son

Object: "Lost Dog" Flyer. You can create one on your computer or use the one on the last page

Scripture: But the father said to his slaves, 'Quickly, bring out a robe—the best one—and put it on him; put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. ²³And get the fatted calf and kill it, and let us eat and celebrate; ²⁴for this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found!' And they began to celebrate. Luke 15:22-24 (NRSV)

Paree Looyls

As I walk through our neighborhood, I often see signs like this one. (Hold up the flyer advertising a lost dog.) "Lost Dog. Our little dog, Rascal, has been missing since March 1st. We love Rascal very much and we want him back. If you find Rascal, please call us at 772-5512. \$25 Reward."

When I see signs like this, I feel a touch of sadness. I can just imagine a family watching and hoping that their dog will come home. I can imagine the excitement they must feel every time the phone rings -- hoping that the call will be from someone who has found their lost dog. I think of how they must worry and hope that their little dog is safe.

Have you ever lost something that was very precious to you? How did you feel? Have you ever found something that you had lost? If so, how did you feel when you found it?

In our Bible lesson today, Jesus told a story about a man who lost something that was very precious to him. The story also told of the man's joy when that which he had lost was found. This is the story that Jesus told.

A man had two sons. The younger son asked his father to give him his share of the inheritance that he had coming to him. The father gave it to him, and the boy left home to go out and see the world and have some fun. The father was broken-hearted. He had lost one of his sons.

It wasn't long before the boy had wasted all of his money on wild living. He had no money to buy anything to eat, so he got a job feeding pigs. Can you imagine sloshing around in the mud with a bunch of smelly pigs? It was the worst job you can imagine, but he was so hungry that even the food that he was feeding the pigs looked good to him.

The boy looked around at the situation he had gotten himself into and said to himself, "My father's servants live better than this! I will return home and beg for the forgiveness of my father and ask him to take me back as a hired servant." As the boy approached his father's house, his loving father, who had been watching and hoping for his son's return, saw him coming and ran to meet him. He threw his arms around him and hugged him and kissed him.

The father was so happy that his son had returned, that he gave him a robe and placed a ring on his finger. He ordered his servants to prepare a feast. "My son was dead and now he is alive. He was lost, but now he is found."

Jesus told this story to show the kind of love God has for his children. When one of God's children strays away, He always welcomes him with open arms when he returns home. Aren't you glad that you have a heavenly Father who loves you, even when you may not deserve it? I am!

Dear Father, we thank you for your unfailing love. We are thankful that even when we stray, you welcome us home with open arms. In Jesus name we pray. Amen.



LOST DOG



Our little dog, Rascal, has been missing since March 1st. We love Rascal very much and we want him back. If you find Rascal, please call us at 772-5512.

\$25 REWARD

A Lesson for STEWARD SUNDAY on HONESTY



Theme: A Story for Steward Sunday

Object: A money bag

Scripture: "He who is faithful in a very little is faithful also in much; and he who is dishonest in a very little is dishonest also in much." Luke 16:10

Paree Looy!

One day Susie's mother sent her to the store to buy a loaf of bread. She gave Susie five dollars and told her she could keep the change. When Susie paid for the bread, the cashier accidentally gave her too much money back. Susie knew right away that it was too much money. What should she do? Should she tell the cashier that she had made a mistake, or should she just keep quiet? What would you do?

Hagop was going through the cafeteria line at school and looked down to see a ten-dollar bill on the floor. There was no way of knowing who had lost the money, and no one would ever know if he just picked it up and put it in his pocket. What should he do? What would you do?

Aram found a moneybag like this one containing \$350 on the playground at his school. Wow! That is a lot of money. Just think of all of the things you could do with \$350! What should Aram do? What would you do?

Every day we are faced with decisions that test our honesty. It may be a small amount of incorrect change, a dollar found on the floor, or a large amount of money such as Aram found at school. The amount of money is not important; it is a question of doing what is right.

One day Jesus told a parable about a rich man who accused his manager of wasting his money. He called him in and told to give an account of the way he had been managing his money. Sure enough, he had been taking some of the money for himself and cheating his employer.

Since the manager knew he was going to be fired, he came up with a plan that would make a lot of friends. He called the people who owed his boss money and asked them how much they owed. When they told them how much they owed, he told them they only had to pay a much smaller amount. As you can imagine, the people were very pleased to only have to pay a fraction of what they owed. The manager now had plenty of friends to help him when he no longer had a job.

Jesus told this story to show that "He who is faithful in a very little is faithful also in much; and he who is dishonest in a very little is dishonest also in much." If you and I make sure that we are honest in small things, then we can be sure that we will be honest in the big things. If people know that they can trust us in small things, they will know that they can trust us in the big things too.

Dear Heavenly Father, help us to remember what Your Son and our Lord Jesus taught about honesty -- and help us to be honest in every situation -- big or small. Amen.

A LIVING FAITH Lesson on PERSEVERANCE

Theme: Persistence in Prayer

Object: Hammer, nail, and a thick piece of board OR

Scripture: Luke 18:1-8 and Jeremiah 9:23-24 (NRSV or NKJV)

Paree Looy's!

Sometimes when we try to do something that seems difficult, is it easy to become discouraged? I think we have all felt like that at times. Let's see if we can come up with some examples.



Have you ever tried to pound a nail through a thick, hard board? You can't just hit the nail once and call it quits. You must keep hammering until the nail goes through the board. You may get a blister on your hand or bend the nail and have to start over. You might feel as though you are making little progress, but if you give up the job won't get done. You must keep trying.

How about learning to ride a bike? Does anyone just get on the bike and start riding the first time they try? Again, you can't just try once and call it quits. You must keep getting on the bike and trying.

The same thing may happen when you try to write a poem or a story. You can't just write the first line and quit. If you want to say something beautiful or explain how you feel, you will need to work with the words, move them around and listen to how they sound until you capture a poem or a story. You must keep trying.

In these examples we are talking about **persistence**. **Persistence** is a word that means that even if you become discouraged you have to keep trying over and over again.

Jesus talks about persistence in the Bible. He told his disciples to "*always pray, and not give up*" (18:1). He told them a story to encourage them:

There was a woman who went to a judge and asked for assistance because she did not feel she was being treated fairly. The judge did not believe in God and he did not respect people so he refused to help her, but the woman kept coming back to him and asking for help. Finally, because the woman had been persistent and kept trying over and over again to receive assistance, the judge decided to help her.

This was a good story for the disciples to hear and it is a good story for us today. When we get discouraged Jesus tells us to "*pray always and not lose heart.*" Be persistent. Try over and over again and always keep praying.

Questions for discussion

1. If you really want something from your parents, what do you do?
2. What did the widow do?
3. What was she asking for?
4. Why did the judge grant her request?
5. Is it okay with God if we ask for the same thing over and over again?
6. Do you think God would answer any prayer just because you asked over and over?
7. What kind of prayers do you think God likes to answer?

A LIVING FAITH Lesson on ADVENT SUNDAY



Theme: Being Prepared for Christ's return - Advent

Object: Supplies – backpack, flashlight, compass, map, sunscreen, water bottle, thick socks, granola bar

Scripture: **Matthew 24:42 (NRSV or NKJV)**
Keep awake therefore, for you do not know on what day your Lord is coming.

Paree Looy's!

Do we have any Girl or Boy Scouts here today? The scouts have a great motto. Does anyone know what their motto is? That's right - "Be Prepared!" This means that a good scout must always be prepared and ready for whatever they may encounter. Part of scouting is doing outdoor activities like hiking. Have you ever gone hiking before? I love to go hiking. I just think there is nothing better than being outdoors and seeing everything God created. But a person must be prepared before going on a hike.

Each time I go on a hike it's a little bit different. Sometimes it's hot and sometimes it's cold. Sometimes it's raining, and sometimes it's dry as a desert. Sometimes the path is flat, and sometimes it's up and down.. And I hike them all, no matter how easy or how tough.

One thing all those hikes has taught me is how to prepare. If I want to make it through a hiking trip, there are certain things I need to bring. I even brought my backpack to show you. These are things I always bring with me, no matter what type of hike I'm going on.

I have a flashlight, for when it gets dark., a map and compass, so I don't get lost, food and water to keep me strong., and sunscreen and warm socks to protect me. If I forgot even one of those things, I would be in big trouble. That's why I try to always be prepared.

You know, if you think about it, we should always be prepared for other things too. It's not just about hiking. We should be prepared for a test, or for a soccer game, or even a party.

But there is one thing to be prepared for that is more important than anything else: Meeting Jesus. Just like when I go hiking, there are things that we need no matter what to be prepared for Jesus:

1. **Flashlight:** We might not need an actual flashlight, but we do need a light to follow. Thankfully, the Bible says that Jesus is the light of the world. So if we get stuck in a bad place, lost in the dark of sin, all we have to do is look for the light of Jesus.
2. **Compass/Map:** Prayer is just like our compass and map. When we pray, we are staying pointed in the right direction, directed right to Jesus.
3. **Water/Food:** Reading the Bible is nourishment to our souls, just like water and food is nourishment to our bodies. It helps to keep us strong as followers of Jesus, so when times get tough, we are ready.
4. **Sunscreen/Socks:** The Holy Spirit is our sunscreen and socks, keeping us protected. When we have the Holy Spirit living in us, we don't have to worry, because we are protected.

Jesus talks about being prepared a few times in the Bible. We never know when we will meet Jesus, but no matter when that is, if it's in two seconds from now, or 100 years from now, we need to be ready.

Just like you wouldn't want to go on a hike without all the proper equipment, we don't want to meet Jesus with our hearts all wrong. We want to be living the life He asked us to live. We want to obey our parents, help others, read our Bibles, and ask for forgiveness when we may not have followed His commandments.

A LIVING FAITH Lesson on ADVENT SUNDAY

Theme: Being Prepared for Christ's return - Advent

Object: Supplies – backpack, flashlight, compass, map, sunscreen, water bottle, thick socks, granola bar

Scripture: **Matthew 24:42 (NRSV or NKJV)**

Keep awake therefore, for you do not know on what day your Lord is coming.



Paree Looy's!

Do we have any Girl or Boy Scouts here today? The scouts have a great motto. Does anyone know what their motto is? That's right - "Be Prepared!" This means that a good scout must always be prepared and ready for whatever they may encounter. Part of scouting is doing outdoor activities like hiking. Have you ever gone hiking before? I love to go hiking. I just think there is nothing better than being outdoors and seeing everything God created. But a person must be prepared before going on a hike.

Each time I go on a hike it's a little bit different. Sometimes it's hot and sometimes it's cold. Sometimes it's raining, and sometimes it's dry as a desert. Sometimes the path is flat, and sometimes it's up and down.. And I hike them all, no matter how easy or how tough.

One thing all those hikes has taught me is how to prepare. If I want to make it through a hiking trip, there are certain things I need to bring. I even brought my backpack to show you. These are things I always bring with me, no matter what type of hike I'm going on.

I have a flashlight, for when it gets dark., a map and compass, so I don't get lost, food and water to keep me strong., and sunscreen and warm socks to protect me. If I forgot even one of those things, I would be in big trouble. That's why I try to always be prepared.

You know, if you think about it, we should always be prepared for other things too. It's not just about hiking. We should be prepared for a test, or for a soccer game, or even a party.

But there is one thing to be prepared for that is more important than anything else: Meeting Jesus. Just like when I go hiking, there are things that we need no matter what to be prepared for Jesus:

1. **Flashlight:** We might not need an actual flashlight, but we do need a light to follow. Thankfully, the Bible says that Jesus is the light of the world. So if we get stuck in a bad place, lost in the dark of sin, all we have to do is look for the light of Jesus.
2. **Compass/Map:** Prayer is just like our compass and map. When we pray, we are staying pointed in the right direction, directed right to Jesus.
3. **Water/Food:** Reading the Bible is nourishment to our souls, just like water and food is nourishment to our bodies. It helps to keep us strong as followers of Jesus, so when times get tough, we are ready.
4. **Sunscreen/Socks:** The Holy Spirit is our sunscreen and socks, keeping us protected. When we have the Holy Spirit living in us, we don't have to worry, because we are protected.

Jesus talks about being prepared a few times in the Bible. We never know when we will meet Jesus, but no matter when that is, if it's in two seconds from now, or 100 years from now, we need to be ready.

Just like you wouldn't want to go on a hike without all the proper equipment, we don't want to meet Jesus with our hearts all wrong. We want to be living the life He asked us to live. We want to obey our parents, help others, read our Bibles, and ask for forgiveness when we may not have followed His commandments.

A LIVING FAITH Lesson on ADVENT SUNDAY

Theme: Being Prepared for Christ's return - Advent

Object: Girl Scout and Boy Scout Emblems (to follow)

Scripture: **Matthew 24:42 (NRSV or NKJV)**
Keep awake therefore, for you do not know on what day your Lord is coming.



Paree Looy!

Who can tell me what these pictures represent? (Hold up the Girl and Boy Scout emblems, next page.) That's right! They are the emblems for the Girl Scouts and the Boy Scouts.. Do we have any Girl or Boy Scouts here today?

The Girl and Boy scouts have a great motto. Does anyone know what their motto is? That's right - "Be Prepared!" This means that a good scout must always "Be prepared." That is also the subject for our Bible lesson today.

Today is the 7th Sunday of Lent, "Advent Sunday." We have only 2 more Sundays until Easter. There are many things that people do to get ready for Easter, aren't there? Let's see, what are some of the things that we do to prepare for Easter? We have to get out our Easter baskets and other decorations. We have to get our Easter clothes ready for church on Sunday. We have to dye Easter eggs and bake our delicious Easter bread, choreg. Can you think of any things that I have forgotten?

While we are getting ready for Easter, there is something else that we must be prepared for as well. Jesus promised that He would come again and the Bible tells us that we must be watching and be prepared for His return. We all know when Easter is coming, but when will Jesus come again? The Bible says that no one knows the hour of His return. Not even the angels who announced his birth know when He will come again.

If we don't know when He is coming, how can we be prepared? If we want to be prepared for Jesus' coming, we must always be busy doing the things that He told us to do. We must be loving God and loving one another.

It is fun and exciting to prepare for Christmas, but we must also be prepared for that day when Jesus comes again.

Dear Father, we love this season of the year. We love the preparation for the celebration of the birth of our Savior, Jesus Christ. Help us also remember that he is coming again and that you have told us to be prepared. Amen.



A "ROCK CONCERT"

Theme: The Triumphal Entry - Palm Sunday

Object: A bucket full of rocks and stones

Scripture: **Luke 19:40 (NRSV or NKJV)**

He answered, "I tell you, if these were silent, the stones would shout out."

Paree Looy!



You are probably wondering why I have a bucket of rocks this morning. Well, I thought it would be a good idea for us to have a "rock concert" this morning. I see some of you are smiling. Don't you believe these rocks could sing? Do you think they could even talk? Do you think they could tell you stories about Jesus? Well, you might be surprised to hear what Jesus himself had to say about that.

Jesus was walking with his disciples toward Jerusalem. When they approached Bethphage and Bethany, near the Mount of Olives, he called two of his disciples to him and said, "Go into the next village where you will find a young donkey. Bring it to me. If anyone asks why you are taking the donkey, just tell them, 'The Lord needs it.'"

The disciples did as they were told and brought the young donkey to Jesus. They threw their garments over it so that Jesus could ride on him.

As he rode along, crowds were lining the streets and they began praising Jesus and shouting, "Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord! Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!" They were creating quite a stir and some of the religious leaders didn't like it. They asked Jesus to keep his followers quiet. Jesus answered them and said, "If they remain silent, the stones would immediately begin to cry out!"

If these rocks would cry out this morning, I wonder what they would say? One might tell how a little shepherd boy named David used a small stone to slay a giant to show that we can do anything when God is with us!

Another might tell how the prophet Elijah used stones to build an altar to God. The altar was used to offer a sacrifice to God to prove that He is the one, true God.

This rock might tell how Solomon had used stones to build a beautiful temple for people to worship God.

Still another rock might remind us that Jesus once told a story about a wise man who built his house upon a rock. When the storms came, the house on the rock stood firm.

Yes, these stones might have a lot of stories to tell, and a lot of words to cry out. But today there is one special phrase that we should cry out - the same words the crowds that were following Jesus and who lined the streets to praise their King. They called out to Him as He rode through the streets on a donkey:

*"Hosanna to the Son of David!
Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord!
Hosanna in the highest heaven!" (Matthew 21:9)*

Today, we can be the stones shouting out for Jesus! Let's say these words together: *(read Matthew 21:9 together.)*