

Leader Guide



Questions Jesus Asked

An exploration of Luke

Bible Study Lessons
for Christians involved with
God's redemptive efforts
in the world

Acacia Resources - a division of Baptist Center for Ethics
4219 Hillsboro Road, Suite 210
Nashville, Tennessee 37215
Phone: 615-383-3192 Fax: 615-383-0915
Web site: www.ethicsdaily.com

© Baptist Center for Ethics 2001

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced in any form without written permission from Baptist Center for Ethics, 4219 Hillsboro Road, Suite 210, Nashville, Tennessee 37215.

All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise indicated, are from the *New Revised Standard Version* (NRSV) of the Bible copyright 1989 by the Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the USA. Those marked NIV are from *The Holy Bible*, New International Version copyright 1978 by International Bible Society, Zondervan Bible Publishers. Those marked KJV are from *The Holy Bible, King James Version*. Those marked *Cotton Patch Version* are from Clarence Jordan, *The Cotton Patch Version*, Association Press, New York, copyright 1968, 1969.

The Baptist Center for Ethics is a free-standing network of trained ethicists, ministers and educators, providing resources and services to congregations, clergy and educational institutions.

BCE is a pro-ethics voice for thoughtful moral reflection and practical solutions to real problems.

For more information about Acacia Resources, call 800-469-4223 or visit our Web site at www.ethicsdaily.com.

Questions Jesus Asked student guides are also available.

Acacia Resources

The biblical witness singles out acacia wood for its uniqueness. The only wood mentioned in the building of the ark of the covenant, the tabernacle and the altar is acacia. Acacia wood is listed with other precious objects—gold, silver, fragrant incense, onyx stones—given to honor God.

The name *acacia* symbolically ties BCE's curriculum initiative to our biblical heritage. The acacia tree represents the wise value attached to the family, the diversity within families and the durability demanded for growing healthy Christians, whether they are singles, couples with children or senior adults.

Today's acacia tree is known for its ...



Value

Some acacia trees have fragrant flowers used in making perfume. The seeds are edible. The bark is rich in tannin, a substance used in tanning, dyes, inks and pharmaceuticals. Furniture, oars, tools and gunstocks are made of the hard lumber from the acacia tree.

Diversity

Some 1,200 species of acacia trees and shrubs exist throughout much of the world, including Africa, Australia and North America.

Durability

The acacia species is tough enough to survive the semiarid regions of Africa where its roots sink deep to capture the rare water which runs quickly into the soil.

Acacia Resources will guide Christians and draw them godward, as the ark of acacia wood guided the people of Israel in their journey and represented the presence of God in their midst.

Table of Contents

- 3 Teaching Tips
- 5 Why Were You Searching for Me?
 - 7 Is It Lawful to Do Good on the Sabbath?
- 9 What Credit Is It to You to Love Those Who Love You?
 - 11 Why Do You See the Speck in Your Neighbor's Eye?
 - 12 Why Don't You Do What I Tell You?
 - 14 Where Is Your Faith?
 - 16 Who Do You Say I Am?
 - 18 Who Is Your Neighbor?
 - 20 Didn't God Make Both the Inside and the Outside?
 - 22 What Is the Kingdom of God Like?
 - 24 What Is Faithful Stewardship?
 - 26 Does Obedience Demand Praise?
 - 28 What Do You Owe the Government?

Teaching Tips

Leadership Call

Few positions influence others as that of teacher. You are a special person, chosen to teach God's word to God's people. The role of teacher is a powerful one. James even warned that "not many . . . should become teachers" (Jas 3:1). But teaching is the only way God's word will be communicated to people who are struggling to find a star by which to guide their lives.

You have been chosen for that special task. It is difficult, but it is so rewarding. Most of all, you are exercising the gift God has given you to teach. That means that you do not teach on your own. You teach with God blessing you through the Holy Spirit.

Your purpose as a teacher is not to impart information; it is to introduce people to God so the Spirit can work in their lives.

We believe in you, and we welcome you as a significant part of the teaching team. We will give you ideas on how to communicate the truths of the lessons. However, you must take these ideas and shape them for your class.

Leadership Overview

Questions Jesus Asked examines the earthly ministry of Jesus Christ. We hope our suggestions will stimulate new ideas in your own mind.

Links to relevant Web sites appear at the end of many lessons. Visit these sites and decide how you will use them. You may use these sites as:

- ◆ an enrichment study for the teacher;
- ◆ a discussion starter;
- ◆ an attention-getter to begin class.

Leadership Weekly Checklist

- ◆ Start early in the week—some teachers start on Sunday afternoon.
- ◆ As you read and meditate on the lesson, think about the members of your class and how the lesson will apply to their lives.
- ◆ Read the Scripture references in several different translations.
- ◆ Look for articles in the paper and on the Web. Listen for current ideas on television or radio. And don't forget your own experiences which may apply to the lesson.
- ◆ Write out your own teaching plan.
- ◆ On Saturday or Sunday morning, pray for each member of the class as you make your final preparation.
- ◆ Ask God for help in making an impact on people you teach.

Leadership Teaching

Begin each class with prayer. Specifically pray for:

- ◆ wisdom;
- ◆ the courage to face biblical truths;
- ◆ commitment to make appropriate changes; and
- ◆ endurance to stay the course of change.

Keep in mind these tips for better group discussion:

- ◆ Enlist members in advance to read Scripture and portions of the lesson.
- ◆ Allow for silence, even though it might be uncomfortable, when you ask questions.
- ◆ Ask open questions that will allow members to share their feelings rather than closed questions that can be answered by short answers such as yes or no. A good way to generate discussion is to ask: "How do you feel about ...?"

Share the Take-home Line at the end of each lesson.

Begin and end on time.

Take-home Line

The Take-home Line is a summary of the lesson and a challenge for class members to consider throughout the week. Write it on a notecard and distribute it to each class member or ask members to write it at the top of their notes. Encourage them to memorize and recite the Take-home Line.

Order
The Practice of Living Faithfully

This adult curriculum explores
13 practices of living faithfully,
such as pursuing discernment,
fasting and speaking kindly.

Call
1-800-469-4BCE
or visit
www.ethicsdaily.com

Why Were You Searching for Me?

Luke 2:41-51

Take-home Line

When we look for Jesus in the right place, we will always find him.

Teaching Aim

To list ways we can find Jesus when we lose him.

Introduce the Lesson

Share the illustration in the student guide about losing Jesus from the nativity scene. Ask: How did you react to the pastor's explanation that Jesus had gone to Bosnia? How do you feel about the whole topic of "losing Jesus?" Have you ever lost him? Is that possible? Why?

Examine the Biblical Witness

On a chalkboard write the following:

How Mary and Joseph Lost Jesus

How Mary and Joseph Found Jesus

How We Lose Jesus

How We Can Find Jesus

In advance, enlist someone (or you may want to do this yourself) to share the information in "Explore the Biblical Witness" in the student guide. Ask a third of the class to listen to the information from Jesus' standpoint, a third to listen from Mary's standpoint, and a third to listen from Joseph's standpoint. When the enlisted person has finished sharing the information, use the following questions to lead a group discussion, asking each of the three groups to respond first and then let others make additional comments:

Mary: What attitude did Mary exhibit toward Jesus' actions? What responsibility did she share? What impression do you think this experience left? How do you think she felt about Jesus' actions?

Joseph: What attitude did Joseph exhibit? What responsibility did he share in the experience? How do you think Joseph felt about Jesus' remark regarding his *Father's* house (v. 49)?

Jesus: What attitude did Jesus exhibit? Why was Jesus surprised that they did not know where to find him? Did he share any blame for the experience? Why?

As members share, fill in the chart on how Mary and Joseph lost and found Jesus.

Summarize the biblical experience by sharing the following: Mary and Joseph lost Jesus because they became preoccupied with their own priorities. Yet, they found him by devoting all their energies and retracing their steps.

Offer Practical Handles

Ask: Why do we lose Jesus today? Ask members to look at the reasons Mary and Joseph lost Jesus and to suggest how many of the ways are similar to our experience today. Ask members to add ways we lose Jesus today.

Ask: How can we find Jesus? Again, ask members to look at the ways Mary and Joseph found Jesus and to suggest how many of the ways are similar to our experience today.

Prepare a brief lecture based on the two ways the student guide suggests we can find Jesus:

1. Loving God's Word

- ◆ The first way to find Jesus is by looking in the Scriptures.
- ◆ Share the illustration about the Chinese student who had returned to China.
- ◆ Describe the experience of the two disciples on the road to Emmaus and read Luke 24:32.

2. Living God's Way

- ◆ A second way to find Jesus is by a radical willingness to live God's way. We too, must be about our "Father's interests."
- ◆ Ask a volunteer to read Luke 4:16-21 to find out what some of Jesus' "Father's interests" are.
- ◆ We can find Jesus among people who care not just for themselves but others.
- ◆ Tell the story of the teenager who sang "She's Got Her Father's Eyes."

Share the supplemental story by Robert J. Hastings, "The Day Jesus Came to Washington." [See facing page.]

Ask members to bow their heads for a time of silent reflection. After a brief time, read the following from the student guide:

"Has Jesus disappeared on you? He's not hard to find. Just look for him where Mary and Joseph found him and many others after them: 'Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?'

Like the north star, pointing a lost traveler unerringly home, Jesus is the One who leads us ever deeper into the Word and ways of God."

Close with the Take-home Line

Jim Taulman is BCE's curriculum coordinator and lives in Franklin, Tennessee.

The Day Jesus Came to Washington

Robert J. Hastings tells of a dream about the day Jesus came to Washington.

When the news spread that Jesus was to visit the city, the government made elaborate plans for the occasion. All motel and hotel space was sold out for weeks in advance. A tent city was set up to handle the overflow. The president called out the army to handle the giant crowd. Two hours before his plane was to land, the city was so tightly jammed that authorities declared the situation was out of hand.

Tension continued to mount until at precisely 12 o'clock the plane touched down at Reagan Airport. Immediately, the Marine Band struck up: "All Hail the Power of Jesus' Name." As the last notes of the grand hymn faded, a quiet hush fell over the gigantic throng. Everyone was straining to see him.

But then, something unusual happened. The hushed silence was shattered when an argument broke out between some of the waiting officials. They could not determine who would ride with Jesus in the waiting limousine. There was some pushing and shoving and loud arguing.

By the time the struggle ended, Jesus was nowhere to be seen. Some said he just seemed to vanish into thin air. Others said he slipped through the cordon of police officers. Still others declared he had never come at all.

Pandemonium broke loose. "Fraud!" cried the angry crowd. "We knew Jesus would never come to Washington. It was all a cheap promotional stunt."

After some minor looting, the crowds began to drift away. Many tore up their souvenir pictures of Jesus they had bought from the hawkers. Concessionaires took down their stands. But it was well past midnight before traffic was back to normal. Meanwhile, police continued to search for the missing Jesus.

About 2 a.m. a plainclothesman found him sitting on the curb of a deserted street in the inner city. He had his arm around a runaway, and was telling him the story of the Prodigal Son (*Adapted from Pulpit Digest, September 1974, 61*).

Is It Lawful to Do Good on the Sabbath?

Luke 6:6-11

Take-home Line

Jesus taught that people are more important than doctrine.

Teaching Aim

To identify standards to determine when human need should take precedent over religious legalism.

Introduce the Lesson

Write on a chalkboard and/or ask aloud: *Is it ever right to break the law?* If members answer yes, ask them to specify under what circumstances. If they answer no, ask them why.

In advance, write the following from the student guide on pieces of paper and distribute to four members to read aloud:

- ◆ Suppose you are white-skinned, and the law says that only people like you can be served in your restaurant. A dark-skinned person takes a seat and asks for a menu. Should you serve this person?
- ◆ The speed limit is 60. A passenger in your car—perhaps your child—is suddenly and violently ill. Should you break the speed limit to rush to the nearest medical facility?
- ◆ It's Sunday morning. You're almost always in church. But today your elderly neighbor is being moved out of her house. She and her siblings could really use your help loading the moving truck. Should you skip church and offer one last kind act to this person to whom you have tried for years to show God's love?
- ◆ Your denomination or Christian group opposes "liberal" or "fundamentalist" interpretations of the Bible, ostracizing those who choose that path. A Christian acquaintance is far more liberal or fundamentalist than you are in reading and applying the Bible. Should you remain open to friendship and fellowship with that person?

Point out that each of these examples illustrates a different type of law-

breaking. The first example illustrates civil obedience; the second illustrates mitigating circumstances; the last two examples illustrate putting people above religious convention.

Ask: How can we know when a person is more important than a law? Suggest that in the passage to be studied from Luke today that Jesus will help us provide a basis for prioritizing human needs over religious legalism.

Examine the Biblical Witness

Present a brief lecture on the material in the student guide under "The Bible Speaks." Cover these points:

- ◆ The Jews had 613 specific laws that governed their lives.
- ◆ Rigid inflexibility characterized the interpretation of all the laws—particularly the Sabbath requirements.
- ◆ Jewish law specified 39 categories of prohibited Sabbath labor.
- ◆ Intentional breaking of Sabbath laws was punishable by death.
- ◆ The law prohibited even touching an implement you could use to perform forbidden work—lest the person forget and perform the work.

Ask: What are the dangers of laws like these? (Many things, but consider: people will find all manner of ways to get around the laws.)

Ask: What was God's original purpose for the Sabbath? Was it rest? Worship? Point out that by Jesus' day this purpose had been neglected in the mass of rules and regulations.

Ask a volunteer to read Luke 6:6–11. Ask members in one sentence to describe Jesus' attitude toward the Sabbath. (People are more important than the Sabbath.) Ask: How did Jesus' attitude differ from the Jewish authorities' attitudes? Did it differ from God's original purpose for the Sabbath? Was Jesus resting?

On a chalkboard write: Principles Jesus Taught About the Sabbath. Ask: What principles can we draw from Jesus' example to help us relate to doctrinal/religious laws today? As members suggest these, list them under the above heading on the chalkboard.

Offer Practical Handles

Read the following life situations:

Mary had been attending Fourth Baptist Church for several months. She had become involved in several of the local mission projects such as feeding and housing the homeless, working with abused children and in the church's pregnancy counseling center. One day she made an appointment to talk with the pastor about church membership. She told the pastor that about a year earlier she had a personal experience with Jesus but had never joined a church or been baptized. She felt she was ready to do that. However, she wanted the pastor to know that she did not believe in biblical inerrancy and wanted to know if she could still be a member of the church. The pastor replied ...

Ask several members to respond.

Bill came to Fourth Baptist Church the first Sunday morning he was in town after his company had transferred him. On Monday, he called the pastor and offered to take him to lunch. Over lunch, Bill quizzed the pastor about the church's doctrinal stand. On several occasions, he expressed the need to be a member of a church that believed in correct biblical doctrine. The pastor tried to assure him that they did, indeed, believe in correct biblical doctrine. Then he asked Bill what areas of ministry he felt God had gifted him to perform. Bill replied that his wife took care of the ministry for the family and he worked and made the money. The pastor replied ...

Ask several members to respond.

Ask: Which is more important, correct behavior or correct doctrine? Ministry to people or proper belief? (Both are important; we cannot have true ministry apart from a theological basis. Yet a proper theological basis must result in true ministry.) What standards can we use to determine when human need should take precedent over religious legalism? As members suggest ways to do this, list their responses on a chalkboard. Ask members to pick out two or three standards to help them prioritize human need over religious legalism.

Close with the Take-home Line

Jim Taulman is BCE's curriculum coordinator and lives in Franklin, Tennessee.

What Credit Is It to You to Love Those Who Love You?

Luke 6:27–36

Take-home Line

By loving our enemies, we also love ourselves.

Teaching Aim

To identify what Jesus meant by loving people and to explain how we can love people we dislike and do not know.

Introduce the Lesson

To begin the class, write on a chalkboard: “If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you?” Without commenting on Jesus’ question, offer the illustration in the student guide about Jim Brazzil, a Baptist chaplain serving in the Texas death chamber. Ask: Would you want Brazzil’s job? Why? Do you think that Brazzil is fulfilling Jesus’ command? Why do you think Jesus asked this question? Why do you think it is important to answer this question?

Examine the Biblical Witness

Ask members to turn in their Bibles to Luke 6:27–36. Ask members to listen as a volunteer reads aloud these verses. Ask: Which of these hard sayings of Jesus is the most difficult for you? Why?

On a chalkboard, write:

Action Required

Love
Do good
Bless
Pray
Give
Give
Give

Person Identified

Enemies
To those who hate you
Those who curse you
For those who abuse you
To those who strike you
To those who beg
To those who steal

Ask members to identify the various actions Jesus mentioned in these verses and the person who was to be the recipient of the action. The above are for your use. Members’ listings may differ slightly.

Write the chart printed below in bold on a chalkboard. Ask members to look at verses 32–34 and identify the three statements, the three questions and the three reasons Jesus gave for believers operating on a higher plane:

Statement: If you love those who love you ...

Question: What credit is that?

Reason: Even sinners love those who love them.

Statement: If you do good to those who do good ...

Question: What credit is that?

Reason: Even sinners do the same.

Statement: If you lend to those from whom you receive ...

Question: What credit is that?

Reason: Even sinners lend to sinners.

Ask: Do you know anyone who has operated at this level of behavior? What was the result?

Offer Practical Handles

How can we move to this higher level of Christ-like behavior? The student guide offers three suggestions:

1. Consider the measure of grace with which Christ has regarded us.
2. See the change that can result in ourselves.
3. Realize the reward Jesus offers.

Assign each of these suggestions to a third of the class and ask each group to suggest:

1. At least one area where they can apply this suggestion.
2. A way they can apply it.
3. What a possible outcome might be if they carried this out.

Study Notes

Close with prayer that members would be able this coming week to be victorious in at least one area in which they have been defeated previously.

Close with the Take-home line

Jim Taulman is BCE's curriculum coordinator and lives in Franklin, Tennessee.

Why Do You See the Speck in Your Neighbor's Eye?

Luke 6:37-42

Take-home Line

We need to engage in honest self-evaluation, not in self-righteous judging.

Teaching Aim

To examine the differences between judgmentalism and self-evaluation.

Introduce the Lesson

Share the opening illustration about the man with the broken finger.

On a large piece of paper or chalkboard, write "Naggers Anonymous." Call attention to this poster and ask: Do you know anyone who needs to join? How about yourself?

Point out that today's lesson will help us examine the differences between being judgmental and engaging in self-evaluation. The first can be destructive; the second is essential.

Examine the Biblical Witness

Ask members to open their Bibles to Luke 6:36–45 and to read these verses silently. Distribute paper and pencils and ask members to write their own paraphrase of verse 37. Ask several volunteers to read what they have written. Read the paraphrase from the student guide: "Don't nag." "Don't point fingers." "Don't be judgmental."

If you can draw or have someone who can, draw the cartoon described in the student guide of the man with a 2-by-4 in his eye trying to take a speck of sawdust out of a friend's eye. If you cannot draw this cartoon, describe the ludicrousness of the situation as Jesus told the story. Point out that Jesus was trying to be humorous.

Ask: What does the psychological term "projection" mean, or what do we mean when we project feelings on someone else? Why is projection dangerous and non-Christian? Can you cite some examples when this was done? What was Jesus' attitude toward people who did this kind of thing" (v. 42)?

Share the story in the student guide about D. L. Moody visiting Charles Spurgeon.

In advance, enlist two people to role-play the following situation: Two friends are having lunch and the topic of politics comes up. One takes a conservative approach and the other takes a liberal approach. At the end, the conservative says, "I don't see how you can call yourself a Christian and support those liberal views." The liberal says, "I don't see how you can call yourself a Christian and support those conservative views."

Ask: What have you said or heard people say that would reflect a similar attitude? For example, "How could you be a Christian and vote for ... ?" "How can you call yourself a Christian and believe that ... ?"

After members have shared several of their comments, ask: Which is more un-Christlike: false beliefs or a judgmental attitude?

Offer Practical Handles

Ask members to turn their sheets of paper over and write an answer to Jesus' question: "Why do you see the speck in your neighbor's eye, but do not notice the log in your own eye?" Ask volunteers to share their responses.

From the student guide, share the illustration of Anne Lamott and her AA group.

Close with the Take-home Line

Jim Taulman is BCE's curriculum coordinator and lives in Franklin, Tennessee.

Why Don't You Do What I Tell You?

Luke 6:46–49

Take-home Line

Jesus calls us to build our lives on the solid rock of Christian faith.

Teaching Aim

To examine the obedience Jesus demands of those who claim to be his followers.

Introduce the Lesson

Secure several copies of Saturday's newspaper. Be sure that it contains the headlines and church ads. Distribute these to class members and allow them a couple of minutes to look at the church ads. Ask volunteers to share anything they find unusual. [If you do not have access to newspapers with church ads in them, you can still use the following questions.]

Ask: Based on the number of churches and the number of people in our city who go to church, would you consider our city a Christian city? Now ask members to look at the rest of the paper and find evidence that a lot of unchristian activities go on in your city. [Or, members can suggest events they have heard about on the television or radio this week.] Ask: Why do you think there are so many examples of unchristian activities in a city that has so many churches and church activities?

Share this illustration from the student guide:

An older sister, greatly annoyed by her younger brother's inattentiveness and cluelessness about life in general, declared to her brother with a major sigh, "You just don't get it!" Suggest that we Christians often participate in worship and study times, prayer meetings and fellowship suppers. We hear the message of Christ. But when it comes to obedient action, it seems that we just don't get it.

On a large strip of paper write: Do we really believe in Jesus if we do not obey him? Place this poster on the focal wall and read it aloud. Allow

members to respond. Point out that today's lesson will examine the obedience Jesus demands of those who claim to be his followers.

Examine the Biblical Witness

Ask a volunteer to read aloud Luke 6:46–49. On a chalkboard, write: What does Jesus tell us to do? Ask members to look back over Jesus' Sermon on the Plain in Luke 6 and pick out some things that Jesus commanded his followers to do. List these on the chalkboard. (The following is a partial list from the student guide. Members may find other commands.)

- ◆ Love your enemies (vv. 27, 35)
- ◆ Do to others as you would have them do to you (v. 31)
- ◆ Lend, expecting nothing in return (v. 35)
- ◆ Be merciful (v. 36)
- ◆ Do not judge (v. 37)
- ◆ Forgive (v. 37)
- ◆ Give (v. 38)
- ◆ Take the log out of your own eye (v. 42)

Ask: Why do people call on Jesus and then ignore his response? What is the relationship between a salvation that demands obedience to Christ's commands and a salvation that sees obedience as a way of earning salvation? How can we tell the difference between the two?

In advance, make three small posters (8½- by-11 inches) with these words: Come, Hear and Act. Give these to three different class members.

Ask the first person to hold up the poster Come. Ask: What does it mean to come to Jesus? Do we come to him differently today than people did in the first century? Why?

Ask the second person to hold up the poster Hear. Ask: How can we be sure we hear the words of Jesus? How can we distinguish between Jesus' words and words of religious people who seek to speak for Jesus?

Ask the third person to hold up the poster Act. Ask: If we do not act on what Jesus says, have we heard? If we haven't heard, can we be saved? What is the relationship between salvation and action?

Offer Practical Handles

Ask: What keeps us from acting on Jesus' words? The student guide lists three possible answers:

- ◆ Our leaders are not presenting us with Jesus' words.
- ◆ We hear but we do not "get it."
- ◆ We hear and understand but choose not to obey.

Use the following question for each of the above three points: If this is the reason you are not obeying Jesus' words, what can you do?

Distribute paper and pencils to each member. Ask members to think about this question without answering aloud: In what areas of your life do you not obey Jesus? Allow a few moments of silence for members to consider their response. Read the following question and ask members to answer by writing one paragraph which will be for their eyes only: "Why do you call me 'Lord, Lord,' and do not do what I tell you?"

Close with a prayer of encouragement that members will hear and act on Jesus' words.

Close with the Take-home Line

Jim Taulman is BCE's curriculum coordinator and lives in Franklin, Tennessee.

Where Is Your Faith?

Luke 8:22–25; 24:36–43

Take-home Line

Knowing Jesus may not eliminate the storms of life, but it will provide us companionship as we go through them.

Teaching Aim

To identify ways trusting Jesus helps us live courageously in difficult times.

Introduce the Lesson

Ask members to close their eyes. Allow about 30 seconds of silence and then say: Think of the time you were most afraid. Whether the fear was real or imagined, how did it make you feel? Even if later you found that you had nothing to fear, the fear you felt at the moment was real. Now ask members to open their eyes. Allow volunteers to share their feelings.

Ask: What general areas cause us to be the most fearful? List these on a chalkboard or a large sheet of paper that has the following headings:

Fears

Solution

Point out that today's lesson identifies ways trusting Jesus helps us live courageously in difficult times—both real and imagined—and gives us some guidelines for dealing with fear. In advance, make a poster with these words on it:

- ◆ Fear knocked at the door.
- ◆ Faith answered.
- ◆ No one was there.

Display this poster on a focal wall. Ask members to read it silently. Then in large letters under *Solution* on the chalkboard write faith.

Examine the Biblical Witness

Ask half the class to open their Bibles to Luke 8:19–21 and the other half to open theirs to 8:26–39. Ask each group to identify the faith displayed or described in each example. (Jesus described the kind of faith he wanted his disciples to have in the words “hear the word of God and do it” and in the example of the Gerasene demoniac who “proclaimed throughout the city how much Jesus had done for him.” With this kind of trust, one will not be afraid.)

Ask a volunteer to read aloud 8:22–25. Explain that we don't know exactly where Gerasa (Gadara) is. We only know that it was on the eastern side of Lake Galilee. If you have a map of the area, locate the general area and suggest that the disciples and Jesus may have left from Capernaum.

Ask members to examine 8:22–25. Ask: At which point in the narrative does it mention that the disciples were afraid? (v. 25—after the storm!) Do you think there is any significance in the fact that the Scripture did not specifically mention the disciples' fear until Jesus questioned the strength of their faith? (See the student guide for comments and share these with the class.)

Ask members to open their Bibles to Luke 24:36–43 and read these verses silently. Ask a volunteer to read aloud verse 38. Ask: On what other occasions do the Gospels tell us to “Fear not” or not to be afraid? (Mt 1:10; 10:28; 28:5; Lk 1:13, 30; 5:10; 8:50; 12:7 are some possibilities).

Share the following information from the student guide about the relationship of fear and the weakness of faith:

“Jesus specifically connected the issue of fear with weakness of faith. In both of these passages (Lk 8:22–25; 24:36–43), Jesus addressed the strength of the disciples' faith in a question. Jesus was not questioning the presence of faith in the disciples. He was questioning why their faith was not strong enough to overcome their fear. Jesus was pointing out the source of their fear—their weak faith. The message is clear: for those who have faith in Christ, fear should not be an issue.”

Offer Practical Handles

Share the example of Bill Wallace and how the strength of his faith enabled him to face torture and death by the Communists in China.

On a chalkboard write: What lessons can we learn from this study? Then briefly summarize the three statements given in the student guide:

- ◆ Being a Christian does not ensure that we will not face physical or emotional storms.
- ◆ In Jesus' presence we have the power to overcome our fears.
- ◆ Faith in Jesus is what releases the power to overcome fear.

Ask members to add to the list.

Point out that the key to eliminating fear in our lives is to develop a deep, trusting relationship with Jesus. The more we love and trust Jesus, the less fear we will have. "There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear" (1 Jn 4:18).

Close with the Take-home line

Jim Taulman is BCE's curriculum coordinator and lives in Franklin, Tennessee.

Order *Real Baptists*

Thirteen undated lessons
explore changes to the
Baptist Faith & Message.

Call
1-800-469-4BCE
or visit
www.ethicsdaily.com

Who Do You Say I Am?

Luke 9:18–20

Take-home Line

The Jesus of the Christian faith is a much greater Savior than one who fosters a civil religion.

Teaching Aim

To compare and contrast the Jesus of civil religion with the Jesus of Christian faith.

Introduce the Lesson

Early in the week, make some cards or notes similar to the following and send to each member:

Who do you think Jesus is? This is our topic for discussion in Bible study Sunday morning at _____ a.m. at _____ Church, on (date) in room _____. Please give this question some thought and join us for this study.

In advance, make several posters on 8½-by-11-inch sheets of colored paper with the following questions and place these on the wall at random around the room: What color was Jesus hair? Did he look like the other Jews of his day? What color were Jesus' eyes? How dark was Jesus' skin? Is it correct to picture Jesus as an Anglo? Is it correct to picture Jesus as an African? Is it correct to picture Jesus as an Asian?

As you begin the class, ask members these questions and allow three to four minutes for response. (Do not let this introduction take too much time.) Point out that most cultures try to shape Jesus in their image. We have no right to do this. We must let Jesus be Jesus—not our personal conception of who we want him to be.

Share the opening illustration from the student guide about choosing a Jesus for The Living Last Supper. Ask: What decision would you make if you were on the selection committee? Why?

Examine the Biblical Witness

Ask: What do we mean by the term “civil religion”? Why is civil religion dangerous? (See student guide for partial answers.)

On a chalkboard or large sheet of paper write:

- ◆ The Context (Lk 9:18a)
- ◆ The Questions (Lk 9:18b–20)
- ◆ The Responses (Lk 9:18b–20)

Ask a volunteer to read aloud Luke 9:18–20.

Point to the first point on the outline. Indicate that the context of this exchange is while Jesus was praying. Use the information in the student guide to explain the significance of Jesus praying before he asked the question.

Indicate the second point on the outline. Ask: Why do you think Jesus asked who the crowds thought he was? Why do you think the crowds thought Jesus might be John the Baptist or Elijah? (See student guide.)

Ask: What do you think lay behind Jesus asking the disciples who they thought he was? (There may be many answers to this, but see student guide.)

Offer Practical Handles

Ask: What are some areas where we are likely to view Jesus from a civil religionist's position instead of a New Testament understanding?

List these suggestions on a chalkboard. Let members suggest but consider the following: race, politics, patriotism, religious celebrations/activities in a secular society, wanting the state to support the church with tax money. (Do not get sidetracked by whether a certain view is a civil religion or a New Testament view.)

Share the illustration of Clarence Jordan [pronounced Jurdan] from the student guide. Ask the following questions:

- ◆ What specific steps can we take to keep our views of Jesus from being those of civil religionists and to be an authentic New Testament view?
- ◆ What criteria can we establish to determine if our views are New Testament?
- ◆ What are some examples of people or groups who have held a civil religionist view of Jesus?
- ◆ What dangers does the civil religionist view of Jesus pose for the Christian faith?

Distribute paper and pencils to all present and ask them to write a brief answer to the following question: If you had been one of the disciples the day Jesus asked them the question, based on your past actions and understanding, what would you have responded and why? Allow volunteers to read their responses.

Close in prayer that we would be willing to let Jesus be who he wants to be and not try to force him into our mold.

Close with the Take-Home Line

Jim Taulman is BCE's curriculum coordinator and lives in Franklin, Tennessee.

Who Is Your Neighbor?

Luke 10:25-37

Take-home Line

Anyone who needs mercy is our neighbor.

Teaching Aim

To show how we can practice hospitality today.

Introduce the Lesson

Share this life situation:

One morning at 6:15, Charlotte, a senior adult, was preparing to go to work. Her husband had already left, and she was by herself. Suddenly, the doorbell rang again and again. She looked through the window and saw an old man all stooped over who was vigorously ringing the bell. She did not know the man, and she did not know what to do. Just the previous Sunday, her Sunday School lesson had been on the Good Samaritan. She stood there for a while trying to decide what to do, and then she ... Allow several members to suggest what Charlotte could do.

Point out that the parable of the Good Samaritan is a lesson by Jesus about discovering who our neighbors are. Or maybe the story is more about finding out to whom we should be neighbors. In the long run, maybe it's a story that describes how our helping others is one of the steps on our path to eternal life.

Examine the Biblical Witness

In advance, list the following on a chalkboard or large sheet of paper (omit the italicized words):

<i>Characters</i>	<i>Description</i>
Lawyer	Possibly a Pharisee; spent life studying Mosaic and oral law; came into existence in Babylonian captivity

Priest	Led worship in temple; offered sacrifices; so many priests that they served in groups possibly once a year
Levite	Privileged group in Jewish society though not as important as priests; responsible for liturgy in temple and for policing it
Samaritan	Samaritans came into being during the Babylonian captivity when foreigners were moved into the Northern Kingdom of Samaria and intermarried; despised by Jews because they rejected the temple worship

Read articles in several Bible dictionaries about these four groups. Ask a volunteer to read aloud Luke 10:25–37. Ask members to list the four characters in the parable. Using the material above and that in the student guide, give a brief lecture describing each of these four persons. Write the description on the chalkboard. Ask members to share additional information about each group.

Organize the class in four small groups. (Groups need not move; if you prefer, you can do this as a class although it will take longer.) Assign each group to one of the characters. Ask them to answer the following questions about their character:

- ◆ What contemporary person would be similar to your character?
- ◆ Why do you think your character did what he did?
- ◆ Why do you think Jesus chose your character?
- ◆ Based on the actions of your character, write a definition of who one's neighbor is. (Provide paper and pencils.)

Allow each group time to study and report.

Offer Practical Handles

Point out that Jesus made loving neighbors an active part of our Christian life that is tied to our love for God. The real question that Christians must ask themselves is, "How can we say we love God if we don't love those

whom God created?" (see 1 Jn 4:20).

Ask: How are we like the lawyer in the way we justify our responses to people in need? After discussion, read the list of suggestions in the student guide as to how we can be neighbors.

Share this life situation:

Bob and Sue were out visiting for their church on Thursday evening. They had an appointment at 7:30 with a prospective family who had just moved to town. The visitors had attended First Church for the last three Sundays. Bob and Sue were certain they would join in spite of the fact that they had to pass First Suburban Church on the way. Bob glanced at his watch. They were running late. If they went around by the regular route, they would be late. Bob could cut through the old part of town and make it. As they drove through the dark streets, Bob unconsciously locked the doors of the car. As they rounded a curve, the headlights picked up two men bending over a third man who was lying on the sidewalk. When they saw his lights, the two men broke and ran, leaving the third man on the sidewalk. Bob hesitated for a moment, trying to decide what he should do, then he ...¹ Allow several volunteers to suggest Bob's actions.

Close with the Take-home Line

Jim Taulman is BCE's curriculum coordinator and lives in Franklin, Tennessee.

1. Adapted from James E. Taulman, *Help! I Need an Idea* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1987), 117–18.

Didn't God Make Both the Inside and the Outside?

Luke 11:37-44

Take-home Line

What's inside must come out.

Teaching Aim

To evaluate how our attitudes influence our outward behavior.

Introduce the Lesson

Share these two illustrations: I have a book which was given me years ago by my secretary. It was part of a four-volume set on Kentucky history. But the first volume is different. When her son was about 9 years old, he decided he would be a detective. He took the book, cut out a section about 4-by-5 inches and about an inch and a half deep. He then inserted a recorder and carried the book around and recorded people's conversations.

What appeared on the outside to be a history book, upon closer examination, proved not to be. You truly cannot tell a book by its cover!

Say: Jesus expressed the same idea in an exchange he had with a Pharisee. The Pharisee was concerned about the outside. Jesus said that what was on the inside was what really counted.

Examine the Biblical Witness

In advance, write the following outline on a chalkboard or a large sheet of paper. Cover all the points with strips of paper.

- ◆ The Pharisee's Invitation (Lk 11:37a)
- ◆ Jesus' Action (Lk 11:37b)
- ◆ The Pharisee's Criticism (Lk 11:38)
- ◆ Jesus' Condemnation (Lk 11:39-41)

Ask members to open their Bibles to Luke 11:37-44. Ask a volunteer to read aloud these verses.

Uncover the first point: The Pharisee's Invitation (Lk 11:37a). Briefly set the stage for this encounter by sharing the following information:

- ◆ The Pharisees were keepers of the Mosaic Law.
- ◆ They were the fundamentalists of their day.
- ◆ The Pharisee may have invited Jesus to see if he could find some infraction of the Law.

Remove the strip covering the second point: Jesus' Action (Lk 11:37b). Explain that Jesus accepted the Pharisee's invitation. Jesus never refused to associate with anyone who needed him—ultrareligious or irreligious. However, he accepted the invitation on his own terms. He refused to do what he knew the Pharisee expected him to do: observe a ceremonial hand washing.

Uncover the third point on the outline: The Pharisee's Criticism (Lk 11:38). Use the following to explain the process of hand washing: Although the Old Testament nowhere required this process, the Pharisees kept large pots of water for family members and guests to practice ceremonial hand washing. In Jesus' first miracle recorded in John's Gospel, Jesus turned the water in these pots into wine (Jn 2:1-11).

The Pharisees were not concerned with germs (which in the first century they knew nothing about). They were concerned with a ceremonial washing to rid themselves from any contact with Gentiles.

William Barclay described the process: "The amount of water used must be at least a quarter of a log, that is enough to fill one and a half eggshells. First the water must be poured over the hands beginning at the tips of the fingers and running right up to the wrist. Then the palm of each hand must be cleansed by rubbing the fist of the other into it. Finally, water must again be poured over the hand, this time beginning at the wrist and running down to the finger tips."¹

Ask: Can you think of practices we have in our churches for which we have no biblical mandate? Have we established rigid rules and ostracize those who refuse to follow our practice? Why do we do this? Why don't

we change? How does that make us different from the Pharisees of Jesus' day?

Uncover the fourth point on the outline: Jesus' Condemnation (Lk 11:39–41).

On a chalkboard, write the following —omitting the italicized statements (they are for your use only). Allow members to fill in:

- ◆ The everyday image Jesus used to make his point: *Cup and dish.*
- ◆ The Pharisees' action: *They cleaned the outside of the cup and dish.*
- ◆ The spiritual meaning: *The Pharisees' inner lives were filled with greed and wickedness.*
- ◆ The name Jesus called them: *"You fools!"*
- ◆ The reason why the inside was just as important as the outside: *God made both the inside and outside.*
- ◆ The required solution: *Clean the inside and the outside becomes clean as a result.*

Offer Practical Handles

Ask: What religious actions do we perform for show? (Any action could be done for show; it depends on the attitude of the heart.) How can we ensure that we do not do these for show and have a right attitude? How often do people do things for the right motives but do not care how others perceive their actions? Which is worse: concern for the outside and not the inside or concern for the inside and not the outside?

Share this material from the student guide: Jesus taught that our emphasis must be on the heart's desire from within ourselves to engage in acts of mercy toward others. Mercy gifts are hypocritical when they come from someone who begrudges the loss of that money. Jesus accused his "clean-hands" host of having a dirty heart, one smudged in greed and stained with robbery.

Ask: Can we ever be certain that the inside of our lives is clean? If inner cleansing makes outward cleansing unnecessary, what steps do we need to take today? What do we need to do to cleanse our spiritual motives? If the inside will come out, would you be content to let people know what is inside your life right now?

Share this story. A young Chinese bride was so upset by her mother-in-law that she went to an herbalist and asked him for some poison to kill her mother-in-law. The herbalist listened to her story of her hatred for her husband's mother, and then he left the room and came back with a bag of herbs. He gave the young woman the herbs but said, "Each week you are to sprinkle some of these herbs over her food. However, these herbs are very slow working. You must not give your mother-in-law any reason to suspect that you are poisoning her. You must go out of your way to be nice to her so she does not know what you are doing."

The young woman went home and did exactly as the herbalist said. She sprinkled some of the herbs over her mother-in-law's food. And she started being as nice to her as she could be so the mother-in-law would not suspect anything. The mother-in-law was surprised by the change in her daughter-in-law's behavior and began to wonder what had prompted the change. But she gradually began to like the new daughter-in-law, and her attitude began to change. Still the daughter-in-law kept sprinkling the herbs.

After a couple of months, the daughter-in-law returned to the herbalist in tears. "I have done just what you said, but in the process I have discovered that I really do like the woman. But I have been poisoning her all along! Now, I don't want her to die."

Gently the herbalist said, "No, my child, you have not been poisoning your mother-in-law. The herbs I gave you are perfectly harmless. The change that has come about is because you have changed your attitude toward your mother-in-law. Go home and live in peace."

What is inside will come out—whether it is good or bad.

Close with the Take-home Line

Jim Taulman is BCE's curriculum editor and lives in Franklin, Tennessee.

1. William Barclay, *The Gospel of Luke* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1956), 158.

What Is the Kingdom of God Like?

Luke 13:18–21

Take-home Line

God's kingdom at work makes a radical difference.

Teaching Aim

To describe the radical change brought about when believers experience the kingdom of God.

Introduce the Lesson

Ask members to play a brief word game with you. Ask them to describe kudzu in one word.

After they have finished, share relevant parts of the student guide about kudzu.

If you have a sample of sourdough starter, bring a small amount of it in a jar and display it on the table. Pass the open jar around to see if anyone can identify it. Point out that sourdough bread like this was the only yeast the people of the first century had. They could not go to the store and buy yeast. They simply kept a small piece of the previous day's bread and used it as yeast for their next loaf of bread. Share the illustration from the student guide about the author's experience with sourdough starter.

Explain that kudzu and sourdough starter are both seemingly small things until they begin to grow. Then they become very radical elements. Point out that Jesus used sourdough starter and mustard seed (not the kind of mustard grown in the south as greens) as examples of God's kingdom.

Examine the Biblical Witness

Compare and contrast these two short parables by using the following suggestions.

Call for a volunteer to read Luke 13:18–19.

Ask: How is God's kingdom like mustard seed? Why do you think Jesus chose mustard seed to use as an example?

Call for a volunteer to read Luke 13:20–21.

Ask: How is God's kingdom like yeast? Why do you think Jesus chose yeast to use as an example?

How are the two parables alike? How are they different? Both parables suggest that those who are a part of the kingdom of God will experience a radical change in the way they relate to God and to each other.

Distribute paper and pencils and ask members to write their own brief parable describing the kingdom of God by completing the following: The kingdom of God is like . . .

Allow volunteers to read what they have written.

Offer Practical Handles

Ask: If this is true about the kingdom of God, can we claim to be a part of it if we have not experienced a radical change in the way we live and relate to Christ and to others? On a chalkboard write: *Materialism, Relationships, Forgiveness, Fruit of the Spirit, Hope*. Using the material in the student guide, lead a discussion on how the radicalness of following Jesus should affect these five areas. Point out that we must influence our culture instead of letting our culture influence us.

Early in the week, enlist two people to read the following to summarize the lesson. If you choose not to enlist the two people, you can read this as a poem.

The Kingdom of God Is Like . . .

1: Mustard seed.

2: Kudzu

1: Leaven

2: Sourdough starter.

1: Such small things.

2: Such powerful things.

1: God's kingdom is like these.

2: Without fanfare,

1: Without trumpets,

2: God's kingdom broke through into our world in the birth of a baby in a manger.

1: It was a small beginning, but it produced radical results.

2: Angels sang!

1: A king killed all the babies in Bethlehem trying to get rid of him.

2: The kingdom grew.

1: Like yeast working in a loaf of bread.

2: Like sourdough starter spreading its leavening powers to a whole loaf.

1: And the kingdom still grows today.

2: In countries where to accept God's kingdom can mean ostracism and even death.

1: In countries where social pressures discourage people from accepting it.

2: But it still grows.

1: Nothing can stand in its way.

2: It overcomes all barriers.

1: What is the kingdom of God like?

2: It is like yeast. It is like sourdough starter.

1: What is the kingdom of God like?

2: It is like mustard seed. It is like kudzu.

Close with the Take-home Line

Jim Taulman is BCE's curriculum coordinator and lives in Franklin, Tennessee.

Subscribe to *bcE*byte*

A weekly e-newsletter
for congregational leaders,
expressing opinions,
digesting surveys and
creating a proactive network

E-mail info@ethicsdaily.com
with the message
"Subscribe bcE*byte"

It's free!

What Is Faithful Stewardship?

Luke 16:1–13

Take-home Line

True spiritual growth will occur only when we have gained a proper understanding of material wealth.

Teaching Aim

To identify how believers should properly use their wealth.

Introduce the Lesson

In advance, search newspapers and newsmagazines for articles about those who have lost great amounts of money in the recent economic downturn. Say: Some of you may have lost large amounts in your retirement programs or other investments. How does this make you feel?

Share the illustration about the article written by Molly Ivins in the student guide, particularly this sentence: “The thrust of her commentary was that the real problem is not losing their money, but losing their faith.”

Ask: Why would some people who lost their money lose their faith? Why would others who lost their money not lose their faith? What makes the difference?

Point out that the session deals with the relationship between developing a proper understanding about wealth and growth in our spiritual lives.

Examine the Biblical Witness

Ask members to open their Bibles and read silently Luke 16:1–9. Using the material in the student guide, give a brief lecture covering these points:

- ◆ The main character in the parable is often called the dishonest manager or prudent steward.

- ◆ The manager determined his circumstances and used money to better them.
- ◆ In verse 9, Jesus interpreted the parable.
- ◆ A better translation than “dishonest wealth” is “worldly wealth” (NEB).

Ask members who have various translations to read aloud verse 9 in as many different translations as possible. Add these translations:

- ◆ “So I say to you, use your worldly wealth to win friends for yourselves, so that when money is a thing of the past you may be received into an eternal home” (NEB).
- ◆ “I’m telling you that although wealth is often used in dishonest ways, you should use it to make friends for yourselves. When life is over, you will be welcomed into an eternal home” (*God’s Word: Today’s Bible Translation That Says What It Means*).

Point out the emphasis in this parable is not to commend a dishonest action but to show how someone used money to help others as well as himself. We can use money for dishonest purposes—and many do! But we can also use money to help others and to establish friendships with it. That is the point Jesus is making.

Ask a volunteer to read 16:10–13 as all members follow in their translations. Ask members to share any significant differences in translations.

Distribute paper and pencils to all members. Say: Keeping in mind the parable in 16:1–9, write paraphrase of 16:10–13. Read it to the class. Allow time for members to write and then let volunteers read their paraphrases.

On a chalkboard, write:

Worldly Wealth

True Riches

Ask members to suggest examples of worldly wealth. List these on the chalkboard.

Now ask members to suggest examples of true riches. Write these under *True Riches*. Suggest that in the final analysis the ultimate purpose of

worldly wealth is to accumulate true riches. If we fail to do that, we fail, because worldly wealth will ultimately vanish.

Share this illustration: A wealthy man was sick and knew he was going to die. He had worked so hard to amass a fortune that he hated to leave all his wealth behind, so he began to bargain with God. At last, God relented and told him he could bring one suitcase of wealth with him. So the man converted his assets to gold and filled one suitcase with gold bars. When he died, Peter met him at heaven's gates and asked him what was in the suitcase. The man reached down and opened the case and showed Peter the gold bars. A puzzled look came on Peter's face, and he replied, "Why did you bring road-building material up here? We already have enough!"

Offer Practical Handles

Refer back to the list under *Worldly Wealth*. Ask: What does being "faithful" in these areas mean? How can we use our worldly wealth to help others and ourselves? Why should God be concerned about the 90 percent if we have given him the 10 percent? What is the relationship between learning to use worldly wealth and spiritual growth?

Using the material in the student guide, suggest that three specific areas can help us determine whether we are using our worldly wealth to gain true riches:

- ◆ Tithing our worldly wealth.
- ◆ Using our worldly wealth for ministry.
- ◆ Praying that God will help us to affirm his ownership and our stewardship of everything in the world.

Ask members to share their own experiences in these three areas.

Close with the Take-home Line

Jim Taulman is BCE's curriculum coordinator and lives in Franklin, Tennessee.

Does Obedience Demand Praise?

Luke 17:7-10

Take-home Line

We should serve Christ out of gratitude rather than with the expectation of a reward.

Teaching Aim

To explain why performing our duty does not entitle one to a reward.

Introduce the Lesson

Write the following on a chalkboard or a large sheet of paper. Place the question on the focal wall of the classroom: If you go to church every week, read your Bible daily, tithe and do the best you can to live like Christ, shouldn't you receive some special reward over those who do not do these things? Cover this quote. Then, begin the class without comment by uncovering the quotation.

Let members think about it for at least a minute. Ask: Why would you agree or disagree with this statement? After a brief discussion, read this quotation from the student guide:

“Some church members think that their service to God through the church entitles them to a reward. Yet, that model does not hold true in the God-believer relationship, despite all the preaching to the contrary. For all that God has done for us, our attitude should be heartfelt thanks and a willingness to serve selflessly and without expectation of recognition or reward. We have no right to expect anything else. Jesus did not teach righteousness by works.”

Ask members if they agree or disagree with this statement and why.

Examine the Biblical Witness

On a chalkboard write:

Master

Slave

Ask members to open their Bibles to Luke 17:7–10. Ask a volunteer to read aloud these verses. Use the material in the student guide to give a brief lecture about the slave-master relationship. Be careful not to let the discussion get sidetracked to one about slavery.

Point out that Jesus is using a cultural practice to tell us something about God's kingdom without passing judgment on the practice. Ask members to identify the characters in the parable: Master=God; Slave=disciples. Write these on the chalkboard opposite the above names.

Ask: Is Jesus' statement a concept you have often heard preached and taught? Ask a member to read aloud Deuteronomy 11:13–15. Ask: Does this passage seem to contradict Jesus' statement in Luke? How can we reconcile the two?

Read aloud the following from the student guide:

“Jesus clarified that Old Testament theology—he ‘fulfilled’ it. He didn't abolish the law, but he clarified what God intended by the law. God does not owe anything to us—not even a ‘thank you’ when we do what God commands us to do.”

Comment: If we are really honest, don't we like Deuteronomy much better than we like Jesus' statement in Luke? There seems to be something a little unfair about Jesus' approach. Shouldn't we get something out of serving God? We do. It's called grace.

Ask members to listen carefully as you read this statement from the student guide:

“As odd as it may sound, this is part of God's grace. God does not have to save us; God certainly did not have to send a redeemer to purchase our freedom—to pay our debt. Yet, because God is gracious and not willing that any should perish, he provided redemption for every human being through Jesus Christ. If we replace God's grace with an idea of what God owes us, we in effect reject God's grace in favor of our own merit or worth.”

Offer Practical Handles

Ask: What should be our response to this lesson? If we take seriously the

slave-master relationship with ourselves being the slaves and God being the Master, what changes will it bring about in the way we serve God?

Write the following on small pieces of paper and give a copy to each member. (If you do not have a way to make individual copies, make one large copy and place it on the focal wall and give each member a blank sheet of paper and a pencil.)

My Response

- ◆ I confess the following:
- ◆ God in his grace gave me salvation.
- ◆ I cannot repay God for my salvation.
- ◆ God owes me nothing for my service.
- ◆ God expects good behavior and good deeds from me as a minimum of service.
- ◆ Therefore, I will: _____

Let members suggest what their response will be. However, they should have something like the following:

- ◆ I will serve God out of an overflowing love for what he has done for me.
- ◆ I will serve without expecting God to give me material blessings.
- ◆ I will delight in the knowledge that God is my master and will care for me now and through all eternity.

Ask members to keep their pieces of paper as a reminder of their commitment.

Share the illustration about Mother Theresa. Close with a prayer of commitment that members will be able to accept God's marvelous grace and live in that grace.

Close with the Take-home Line

Jim Taulman is BCE's curriculum coordinator and lives in Franklin, Tennessee.

What Do You Owe the Government?

Luke 20:20–26

Take-home Line

God’s claims are paramount; the state has a rightful albeit limited sphere of authority.

Teaching Aim

To describe the kind of citizenship Jesus demands of his people.

Introduce the Lesson

Well in advance, enlist two people who would be good at drama to present the illustration recorded in the student guide between the two pastors on pacifism. Place a table at the front of the room with coffee cups on it. Briefly set the stage by saying that two pastors, one a pacifist, are talking in a coffee shop. Then let the two develop their conversation as they wish; just be sure they end with the words spoken by the two pastors at the end of the argument. Encourage the presenters to practice during the week. Also, ask them to avoid trying to be cute with their remarks, but also not to be afraid of showing real anger.

If you choose not to have this illustration presented as a skit, begin the class by reading or sharing it with the class yourself.

Ask: If the gospel of Jesus has everything to do with real life, how do we know which areas belong to God and which areas belong to Caesar? Point out that the lesson will help answer that question.

Examine the Biblical Witness

If you used two members to present the introductory skit, ask them (or two others) to present a role-play of two Jewish religious leaders who are trying to construct a foolproof argument to trap Jesus. After several suggestions, one of them comes up with the idea of asking Jesus if Jews should pay taxes. Ask them to explore all the reasons why this idea is so good and seems to be foolproof.

If you choose not to use the above skit, this encounter between Jesus and the religious authorities is probably familiar enough to your members that they can identify the two horns of the dilemma on which the Jewish religious authorities were trying to place Jesus. If not, share the information yourself, based on the material in the student guide.

Horn 1—If Jesus supported paying taxes, he would alienate the Jews.
Horn 2—If Jesus opposed paying taxes, the Romans would accuse him of insurrection.

If you can find a photo of a Roman coin with Tiberius Caesar’s image on it, show the photo to the class. There is one pictured at:
<http://www.ancient-coin-forum.com/Roman/Tiberius.html>.

Offer Practical Handles

In advance, make four strip posters of the four italicized phrases in “Apply the Biblical Witness” in the student guide. Make a fifth poster that says: A constructive Christian citizenship means: Place this poster on the focal wall and place the first strip poster under it: An end to blind patriotism. Present the information in the student guide about this topic .

Place the second poster under the first: A healthy respect for the separation of church and state. Present the information in the student guide about this topic .

Place the third poster under the second: A responsible participation in the political process. Present the information in the student guide about this topic .

Place the fourth poster under the third: Maintaining a vital, alternative community called the church. Present the information in the student guide about this topic .

After presenting these four statements, organize the class in four groups and assign each group one of the four statements. Let them suggest ways this statement would work out in our daily lives. (If you choose not to organize groups, you can do this as a class activity; it will just take a little longer.)

For a closing statement, read the material found in the student guide about Kaj Munk. Or, in advance, enlist a member to present a brief monolog of Kaj Munk using the material.

Introduce him by saying something like: To close our session this morning, we will hear from Kaj Munk, a pastor of a church in Denmark during World War II. The Nazis for his opposition to their regime executed Pastor Munk. Before he was executed, surveying the evil and tragedy looming large on every side, he asked, “What is therefore the task of the preacher today? Shall I answer: faith, hope, and love? That sounds beautiful. But I would rather say: courage. ... For what we as [a church] lack is most assuredly not psychology or literature. We lack a holy rage.”¹

Close with the Take-home Line

Jim Taulman is BCE's curriculum coordinator and lives in Franklin, Tennessee.

1. Allan Boesak, “The Reuben Option” in *A Chorus of Witnesses*, ed. Thomas G. Long and Cornelius Plantinga Jr. (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1994), 137–38.

Order *7 Virtues & 7 Vices*

**This Sunday School resource
from BCE examines the classical
seven virtues and seven vices
in the context of family life.**

**Call
1-800-469-4BCE
or visit
www.ethicsdaily.com**