

# SEEK HIS FACE

(Psalm 105:4: "Seek the Lord and His strength; seek His face always.")

## LEARNER'S GUIDE

FOR SMALL GROUP BIBLE STUDIES

These Small Group Bible studies are sponsored by Lutheran Hour Ministries and are based on the 2004 International Convention Theme: "*Seek His Face.*"



## An Introduction to Our Lessons

Face recognition, it's the latest technology. Ever since September 11, 2001, there has been an ever-increasing demand for enhanced security. This need for security is seen especially in our nation's airports, and it is encroaching into other areas of life itself. Face recognition technology is the next logical step.

Officials at airports across the country are clamoring to implement additional safety measures to protect travelers and employees against potential terrorist threats. Some security experts, who believe better high-tech surveillance systems could have prevented the September 11 attacks, have said they are optimistic about the use of face recognition technology and other so-called biometric security devices. But civil rights advocates worry that out-of-date photos and poor lighting could result in numerous misidentifications.

It is abundantly clear that the security benefits of face recognition surveillance would be minimal to nonexistent, for a very simple reason. According to the American Civil Liberties Union, the technology simply doesn't work. They cite a report from the Department of Defense that claims there is a high margin of error in pinpointing potential terrorists.

Iain Drummond, Chief Executive Officer of biometric company, Imagys, said that despite concerns, the public would eventually accept face-scanning devices as the norm in airports. Imagys is providing face recognition software to Oakland International Airport.

No doubt Drummond is correct. One needs to look back only twenty years or so, and one can recall a time when there were no X-ray machines at airports. Travelers have gotten used to them. While people grumble about the long lines and the time delays, people have accepted the increased security as a necessary step in protecting the flying public. It's only a matter of time before face recognition technology is perfected and operational in spite of the protests by civil rights groups.

—Stephanie Olsen and Robert Lemos, *Can Face Recognition Keep Airports Safe?* CNET News.com.

Face recognition technology points out how important identity of people is. We all have our individual identity, and because of that we are known by Jesus. He not only knows our face, He also knows what is in our hearts and minds. Therefore, it is important for the Christian to seek His face. To seek Jesus' face is not merely to identify Him as an historic individual. It is to know Jesus on a personal level as the Son of God and the Savior of the world. To seek the face of Jesus also means to lead other people to identify Him as their Lord and Savior so that they know their sins are forgiven and their salvation is assured. These lessons are intended to equip and empower Christians to seek Jesus in much the same way as He has sought them out and identified them as His own. The themes for the lessons are:

Lesson One .....	Hang a Face on It
Lesson Two .....	The Face of Mission
Lesson Three .....	The Face of the Hungry
Lesson Four .....	The Face of Life
Lesson Five .....	Facing the Music
Lesson Six .....	Facing the Facts
Lesson Seven .....	Facing Forward
Lesson Eight .....	The Face of Love
Lesson Nine .....	The Face of Grace
Lesson Ten .....	The Face of Evil
Lesson Eleven .....	The Face in the Mirror
Lesson Twelve .....	Let's Face It

As always, these lessons come to you in two packets. One is the Learner's Guide, and the other is the Leader's Guide. They are designed to be covered in approximately one hour. However, the degree of discussion in your small group may shorten or lengthen the time you spend on each lesson.

This study has been designed for use in small groups and led by someone from within the group. Spiritual growth and increased knowledge will take place through discussion and Bible study. The leader may be the same person throughout the study, or others may share the leadership role within the group. Whoever the leader is, it is important that the leader be an attentive listener to ensure that all participants have an opportunity to contribute.

Leaders are encouraged to consider the following before leading each session:

- DO pick the lesson most appropriate for your particular situation.
- DO NOT assume that you need to go through the lessons in any particular order.
- DO assign the lessons in advance. Participants will be better served if they are prepared.
- DO print out the Scriptural references. Doing so will save time.
- DO NOT force anyone to read out loud. Ask for volunteers.
- PLEASE DO NOT merely read the material word for word. These lessons are intended to *guide* your discussions.

If your group is pressed for time, PLEASE DO GIVE OUT the Leader's Guide. By doing this you will facilitate discussion more quickly.

Although each lesson has a different theme, they all share a common format. The format is: Opening and Introduction; Bible Base and Discussion; Challenge; Closing Thoughts and Prayer.

May God bless you through this study.



660 Mason Ridge Center Drive  
St. Louis, MO 63141-8557  
1-800-944-3450  
[www.lhm.org](http://www.lhm.org)

## LESSON ONE: HANG A FACE ON IT

Tex Sample has been described as a man with a baseball in one hand and a copy of the philosopher Wigenstein in the other. He was born in the South, academically trained in the Northeast, and has grown to maturity in the Midwest. He is a Pastor who is as at home with a group of tough urban Job Corps participants as he is with a group of white suburban Sunday School class or with a group of distressed heartland farmers. To say he is down to earth is an understatement. He has described people in the South as finding it difficult to understand a concept or a personality until they are able to hang a face on it. Hanging a face on something makes it tangible. Hanging a face on someone makes him or her identifiable and approachable.

**PRAY:** Dear Lord Jesus, help us to seek Your face always and in all ways. Send us Your Holy Spirit through our involvement in this study. Empower and equip us to be people who are driven by Your love. Help us to be people who let their light shine before others so they can see the good that we do and give glory to You and Your Father. In Your Name we pray. Amen.

**INTRODUCTION:** The popular Gospel group, *The Florida Boys*, has a hit whose title is, “If You’re Happy, Notify Your Face.” It goes like this, “If you’re happy, notify your face, Take that frown off and put a smile in its place; If you love Jesus, well, show it to the human race, If you’re happy, notify your face. I go to many meetings, see Christians everywhere, We sing and talk of Jesus and how it will be up there; We talk of all the burdens confronting the human race, And say our Jesus is the answer with a frown all over our face. We claim we’ve got the answer to everything that’s wrong, Then sit in church impatiently when services take too long; Then we go out into the world with faces sad and mean, No wonder folks won’t listen that Jesus is supreme.”  
—Words and Music by Gary S. Paxton, Beasley & Baker Publications.

**BIBLE BASE:** Read Genesis 33:1-17.

**DISCUSS:** (The following questions are for discussion. You may fill in the answers in the space provided.)

Why did Jacob arrange his family in the order in which he did?

---

---

---

Do you think Jacob was surprised at the way Esau greeted him?

---

---

---

Why did Esau run to meet Jacob?

---

---

---

Why did Esau ask Jacob who all the people were who accompanied him?

---

---

---

How did Jacob hang a different face on Esau?

---

---

---

How did Jacob demonstrate his absolute trust in God?

---

---

---

What further proof did Jacob give of his trust in God?

---

---

---

Do you think that Esau hung a different face on Jacob?

---

---

---

**CHALLENGE:** Have you ever had to re-hang a face on someone for whom you felt some animosity? Try to hang a different face on someone that you might currently misunderstand.

**CLOSING THOUGHTS:** “Are you ready to rip the face off this place?” screams the lead singer of Pillar. A hyped-up crowd of teens—6000 strong — goes nuts. The aggressive rap–rock band launches into a pummeling kickoff number, the surly singer pounding the stage with his steel-toed boot, sweating right through his baggy Army fatigues and black bandanna. He gestures like a member of some vicious street gang as he screams and roars into the mike, his arms swinging low as if on the way to the requisite crotch grab. This crude move, as integral to rap–rock as the blown kiss is to a lounge act, is usually accompanied by a testosterone explosion of expletives. The singer’s hand slaps down hard on his thigh—and stays there. Gripping his pants leg with conviction, he screams, “Jesus Christ!” Pause. “Is He in your heart?”

It’s time to wreak havoc and give praise at Festival Con Dios, the first Christian alternative-rock tour. This is the sanctified answer to hedonistic summer blowouts like Lollapalooza and Ozzfest, an extravaganza where amped-up rock ‘n’ roll meets tamped-down self-control.

—Lorraine Ali, “The glorious rise of Christian pop,” *Newsweek*, July 16, 2001, 40.

**CLOSING PRAYER:** Father in heaven, we thank You for Your love. You displayed that love to us in the face of Jesus who sustains us. Help us to display that love so others can see it in our faces. Help us also to hang the best face possible on those we encounter as well as those we have known for years. In Jesus’ Name we pray. Amen.

## LESSON TWO: THE FACE OF MISSION

People do a lot of complaining these days about the cost and size of government. It doesn't matter if it is local, state, or federal, the government seems like it is growing ever larger and sending its tentacles into more and more aspects of our lives. Most people, however, do not realize that an expanding government is a relatively recent phenomenon. Prior to World War II and the Great Depression of the 1930s, government was much smaller and leaner. People took care of each other. There was no welfare system at all. In fact, Aid to Families with Dependent Children was developed following World War II to take care of children who were half orphans, their fathers having been killed in the war. Things have changed a great deal in little more than fifty years.

**PRAY:** Lord Jesus, You have commissioned us to go into all the world and proclaim the Gospel to all people. We know that the fields are ripe for harvest. As we seek Your face of love and mercy help us to see the need to proclaim that love and mercy in our little corner of the world, for people are in need of Your saving grace right around the corner. We pray in Your most precious Name, Lord Jesus. Amen.

**INTRODUCTION:** In the beginning came the governor's challenge: If each of Mississippi's churches would help just one poor family back on its feet, welfare could end. God, not government, will be the savior of welfare recipients, Gov. Kirk Fordice likes to say. That's how Frances White, a jobless mother facing eviction from a crumbling house, suddenly found herself adopted by a suburban church. There were good deeds (church members paid White's bills), fellowship (they took her kids shopping) and finally redemption (through one congregant, White found a job as a hospital records clerk and now is partly off welfare).

Not long ago, no governor or politician could get away with asking churches to do the antipoverty work that is normally the responsibility of government. And it would have been the height of hokeyness to suggest that churches, synagogues and mosques could cure the drug addicted, feed the hungry, house the homeless, rehabilitate the criminal and lift the poor, better than government. Yet, there is talk of a second welfare revolution: let churches and charities, not government, provide more of the social safety net.

—Joseph Shapiro, *Can Churches Save America?* *U. S. News & World Report*, September 9, 1999.

**BIBLE BASE:** Read John 4:5-30.

**DISCUSS:** (The following questions are for discussion. You may fill in the answers in the space provided.)

Why was it unusual for the Samaritan woman to come to the community well to draw her supply of water at noon?

---

---

---

Why was the woman surprised when Jesus asked her for a drink of water?

---

---

---

Why was the woman eager for living water when Jesus offered it?

---

---

---

Why did Jesus tell her to go and call her husband to Him also?

---

---

---

Obviously, the woman was embarrassed. What did she do?

---

---

---

How was the woman similar to many people today?

---

---

---

Jesus continued to minister to the woman. What was the result?

---

---

---

What lessons can be learned from the way Jesus ministered to the Samaritan woman?

---

---

---

**CHALLENGE:** Look around the neighborhood in which your congregation is located. Are there people who literally live in the shadow of the steeple whom you can help? Try to find a family with needs and help them. Don't forget to tell them about Jesus as you help them.

**CLOSING THOUGHTS:** The greatest mission field we face is not some faraway land. The strange and foreign culture most American evangelicals fear is not across the ocean. It's barely across the street. The culture most lost to the Gospel is our own—our children and neighbors. It's a culture that can't say two sentences without referencing a TV show or a pop song, and that can't remember what it was like to have to GET UP and change channels. It's a culture more likely to have a body part pierced than it is to know why Sarah laughed (Genesis 18:9-14). It's a culture that we stopped evangelizing, and have instead declared a culture war upon.  
—Dwight Ozard in *Prism* (July/August 1996), quoted in *Christianity Today*, March 2, 1998, 62.

**CLOSING PRAYER:** Lord Jesus, You gave Your life so that all people could have life everlasting. Help us to seek Your face by proclaiming Your life, death, and resurrection to people in the entire world, but don't let us forget the little corner of the world in which we live. Open our eyes to see the opportunities You have placed before us. Then, open our hearts to avail ourselves of those opportunities to proclaim Your Gospel in word and deed. In Your Name we pray. Amen.

## LESSON THREE: THE FACE OF THE HUNGRY

The United States of America is a nation of vast prosperity. We have virtually eliminated poverty. “But,” you protest, “what about all the people who get food stamps and all the children the media talks about that live below the poverty level?” While it’s true, there are people living below the poverty level in the midst of all this vast prosperity, even the poorest of households have at least one car, a microwave, a television, and other amenities. Our nation’s poor live much better lives than the poor of less-developed countries. Indeed, Walter Williams, a PhD in economics from George Mason University in Fairfax, Virginia, has posited that if someone knew they would live in poverty before they were ever born, they would choose to be poor in the United States if they had a choice. So, what does the face of the hungry look like?

**PRAY:** Father in heaven, all that we have and all that we are comes to us as a gift from You. Help us to be truly thankful for all You give us. Give us a hunger for Your Word. Send us Your Holy Spirit to empower and equip us to seek Your face always through Your Word. In Jesus’ Name we pray. Amen.

**INTRODUCTION:** The impact of giving can be far greater than you’ll ever know. A few years ago, I was buying a newspaper at the airport in Bangladesh when a man tapped me on the shoulder. I recognized his face but couldn’t recall his name. He looked at the two men behind the newsstand and told them, “This man saved my life.” He went on to explain: “Several years ago, I had lost two children, because I couldn’t feed them. This man gave me a job. Today, all six of my children are in school, and we don’t go hungry.” He hugged me and began to cry.

During my six years in Bangladesh working with locals to develop sustainable micro-enterprises, I was reminded daily of the value of providing people with income. Jobs that pay fair wages enable people to live with dignity—and to arrive at a point where they, too, can contribute to their community and to society.  
—Paul Meyers, Be more intentional about where you buy, *Fast Company*, December, 2000, 126.

**BIBLE BASE:** Read John 6:1-15.

**DISCUSS:** (The following questions are for discussion. You may fill in the answers in the space provided.)

Why did the crowd follow Jesus as He sailed across the Sea of Galilee?

---

---

---

Why did Jesus withdraw up on the mountain?

---

---

---

Why did Jesus ask Philip where they were going to buy bread for the people to be fed?

---

---

---

How did both Philip and Andrew fail the test?

---

---

---

What would you have thought had you been one of the Apostles when Jesus began to distribute the bread and the fish?

---

---

---

What was the significance of the leftover food?

---

---

---

What was the reaction of the crowd?

---

---

---

**CHALLENGE:** Consider hosting a picnic or potluck dinner for the people that live in the neighborhood around your church. This could be an opportunity to find out what needs there are in the neighborhood. It is also an opportunity to share the Gospel with your neighbors and show them that you really care about them.

**CLOSING THOUGHTS:** One of the patients at the community hospital in Milford, Connecticut, where I regularly visited, was a tough-looking man with long hair and a shaggy beard, not a member of my church, whose face was screwed up in pain from an intense headache. He was hurting so badly he could barely talk, but he managed to communicate that the hospital didn't know what to do for him. I offered a very simple prayer for healing, asking that God ease his pain and make him well. His eyes stayed closed after, more from pain than piety, and he gave me a nod of thanks as I left.

The next day he looked like a different person, and he greeted me with a big smile. The headache was gone, he announced, and the doctors didn't know why or how. Our prayer had been answered. Frankly, I was amazed. A little of God's power had flowed into the life of one man. Never again would I be casual with prayer.

—Faith Healing Goes Mainstream, *Presbyterians Today*, September, 1995. Prayer changed the face of a man who hungered for healing.

**CLOSING PRAYER:** Dear God, move us to seek Your face always. Use us as Your instruments to feed the hungry both physically and spiritually. Help us to pray fervently for the things You want us to have and do. In Jesus' Name we pray. Amen.

## LESSON FOUR: THE FACE OF LIFE

October 21, 2003, was an interesting day in the life of people who live in the United States of America. On that day, two legislative actions were taken that directly affect life. The United States Senate passed a law that made partial birth abortion illegal. It was a victory of sorts, because it was the first major pro-life action taken in this country in thirty years. While that was happening, the Florida State Legislature took action that empowered the Governor to replace a feeding tube for Terri Schiavo so that intravenous feeding could be resumed. The woman, now 39, has been in a persistent vegetative state for years. Most doctors maintain that people in such a condition have no cognitive functions. Her husband had sought the removal of the feeding tube since 1998, because he claimed she didn't want to be kept alive artificially.

**PRAY:** Father in heaven, You created this world and all life in it. Human life is so precious to You that You sent Your Son, Jesus, into the world to suffer and die and rise again to save human life. Teach us, O Lord, to seek Your face always. Help us to be Your instruments to communicate Your Gospel that leads to life eternal. In Jesus' Name we pray. Amen.

**INTRODUCTION:** It's a jungle out there. Just ask Jay Rathman. He was hiking on one of the wilderness areas near his northern California home. Passing along a rocky ledge, he sensed movement beside his face. A timber rattlesnake struck, just missing his right ear. Its fangs got snagged in the wool of Rathman's turtleneck sweater, pulling the snake onto his shoulders. He grabbed it just behind the head with his left hand, as they both tumbled down the slope through the brush and rocks. In this eyeball-to-eyeball encounter, he discovered that snakes don't blink. In about 20 minutes, he was able to throttle the reptile.

Reading that hair-raising account reminds us how closely it resembles life on a daily basis. At the most unsuspecting moment, something strikes at us. We are knocked off balance by the assault. Who hasn't been tumbled head over heels by demands and deadlines? Who hasn't done battle with poisonous irritations on the slopes of over commitment, underachievement, and burnout? Who hasn't had to fend off surprise attacks from criticism that strikes at us like hungry predators and rip into us like needle-sharp claws? They are frequent and varied: physical pain, emotional trauma, relational stress, spiritual doubts, marital conflicts, occupational disappointments, financial reversal, or demonic assaults.

—J. Walter Cross, *Under No Delusions*, Bradenton, Florida.

**BIBLE BASE:** Read Luke 7:11-17.

**DISCUSS:** (The following questions are for discussion. You may fill in the answers in the space provided.)

Luke begins this account, "And it came about soon afterwards...." What happened earlier?

---

---

---

Why do you think Jesus made the journey to Nain in the first place?

---

---

---

Why was such a great crowd of people accompanying the young man's mother?

---

---

---

Why did Jesus feel such great compassion?

---

---

---

Jesus told the mother not to weep. Why?

---

---

---

Why did Jesus touch the coffin?

---

---

---

How did Jesus raise the man?

---

---

---

What did Jesus do next?

---

---

---

**CHALLENGE:** Discuss ways to enhance the quality of life for others. What can you do to visit the sick or aging? Is there a day-care program at your church where you can help with the children?

**CLOSING THOUGHTS:** A Turkish officer raided and looted an Armenian home. He killed the aged parents and gave the daughters to the soldiers, keeping the eldest daughter for himself. Some time later she escaped and trained as a nurse. As time passed, she found herself nursing in a ward of Turkish officers. One night, by the light of a lantern, she saw the face of this officer. He was so gravely ill that without exceptional nursing he would die. The days passed, and he recovered. One day, the doctor stood by the bed with her and said to him, “But for her devotion to you, you would be dead.” He looked at her and said, “We have met before, haven’t we?” “Yes,” she said, “We have met before.” “Why didn’t you kill me?” he asked. She replied, “I am a follower of Him who said ‘Love your enemies.’”

—L. Gregory Jones, *Embodying Forgiveness: A Theological Analysis* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1995), 265-266.

**CLOSING PRAYER:** Dear Jesus, help us to seek Your face and see life through Your eyes. Lead us to see the value of life in others and help them to appreciate the fact that their life is a gift from You. Give us safety, protection, and prosperity in our time. In Your Name we pray. Amen.

## LESSON FIVE: FACING THE MUSIC

Times have changed. People, even children are forgetting how to play. Some educators believe that play takes valuable time away from more important activities and allows children to hide in a fantasy world instead of facing the realities of life. As a result, playgrounds are empty. When children do get a chance to play, it is usually structured activity with adult supervision. Spontaneous play is disappearing. As spontaneous play disappears, the creativity of children and adults as well fades away. People need to be entertained constantly, or they don't know what to do. Forgetting how to play is a challenge that must be faced by current and future generations. It's time to face the music.

**PRAY:** Father in heaven, one of the gifts You have given us is the ability to find joy in our lives. Guide and direct us to seek Your face always. Teach us to enjoy life to the fullest, because it is a gift from You. In Jesus' Name we pray. Amen.

**INTRODUCTION:** Sometimes, no matter how ready we feel for the battle, our worst opponent turns out to be ourselves. Stanley Pinto was a professional wrestler who successfully faced a number of tough opponents, but during a match in Providence, Rhode Island, he lost to his most formidable opponent.

The bell rang. The opening minutes began ticking off, and Pinto found himself slightly entangled in the ropes. Eager to free himself, he began struggling wildly. Before he could stop himself, he had pinned his own shoulders to the mat. His shoulders stayed pinned despite his best efforts to free himself. While his opponent, who had not laid a hand on him, watched, the referee began the countdown. Pinto was counted out.

—Ross and Kathryn Petras, *The 176 Stupidest Things Ever Done* (New York: Doubleday, 1996), 190.

**BIBLE BASE:** Read Luke 7:24-35.

**DISCUSS:** (The following questions are for discussion. You may fill in the answers in the space provided.)

What did Jesus mean by a reed shaken by the wind?

---

---

---

Why did Jesus refer to people who are splendidly clothed, living in luxury?

---

---

---

Jesus said that John the Baptist was more than a prophet. What did He mean by that?

---

---

---

Jesus said that the one who is least in the Kingdom of God is greater than John. Why?

---

---

---

Why were the people, even the tax gatherers, baptized by John but not the Pharisees and the lawyers?

---

---

---

Why did Jesus characterize the generation of unbelievers to children at play?

---

---

---

Jesus noted that John was called demonic, and He Himself was called a glutton and a drunkard. What did He mean by that?

---

---

---

What did Jesus mean when He said that wisdom is vindicated by her children?

---

---

---

**CHALLENGE:** Discuss popular opinions that you are tempted to follow. Then, develop strategies that will be effective ways to counteract popular opinions.

**CLOSING THOUGHTS:** A generation which fails to transmit the light from one age to the next does not pass on anything. It transmits darkness.

Almost thirty years ago, when Nikita Khrushchev visited America, he gave a press conference at the Washington Press Club. The first question from the floor—handled through an interpreter—was: “Today you talked about the hideous rule of your predecessor, Stalin. You were one of his closest aides and colleagues during those years. What were you doing all that time?” Khrushchev’s face got red. “Who asked that?” he roared. All five hundred faces turned down. “Who asked that?” he insisted. “Nothing. That’s what I was doing,” he said.

—as told by Warren Bennis, *On Becoming a Leader* (Reading, Massachusetts: Addison-Wesley Publishing Company, Inc., 1989), 195.

**CLOSING PRAYER:** Lord Jesus, send us Your Holy Spirit so that we will be able to recognize Your face of love and forgiveness. Drive us to Your Word so that we will use it as our guide to govern all that we do and say. Help us to be models of human behavior who emulate You in thought, word, and deed. Hear us for Your own sake, O Lord. Amen.

## LESSON SIX: FACING THE FACTS

Pessimism and optimism are not fixed personality traits. Rather, behaviorists point out, they are acquired traits that people use to explain to themselves why things happen to them. Since they are acquired traits, pessimists can learn to be optimists. Looking at life optimistically may be more important than people realize. Pessimists have poorer resistance levels to disease, weaker immune systems, are more susceptible to depression, and age physically faster than optimists. Some psychologists even believe that pessimism causes depression. It's in the Christian's best interest to be optimistic. After all, Christians are forgiven. They are loved. They will inherit eternal life. It doesn't get any better than that. Face the facts.

**PRAY:** Lord God, You have demonstrated Your uncommonly great love to us by sending Your Son, Jesus, into this world. Help us to seek Your face always so that we may live our lives in ways that reflect that love. Teach us, through Your Word, to be optimistic, because we are Your redeemed, restored, and forgiven children. In Jesus' Name we pray. Amen.

**INTRODUCTION:** Sean took drugs and sold them to other kids. He befriended an elderly widow near his home, then stole her heirloom jewelry, pawned it and paid cash for a brand-new Porsche. As he'd done countless times before, Sean's dad intervened and fixed his son's problem.

One day at summer camp, Sean asked me if I'd go for a walk with him in the nearby woods. As we walked, he began to pour out his regret for his evil and perverse life. He asked if I'd pray with him. We found a large fallen tree and Sean climbed up, sitting cross-legged on the log. He prayed first, and I heard words of confession and remorse. This wayward and rebellious youngster cried out to God for grace and forgiveness.

I opened my eyes to see if this really was the same young man who hated everyone because they're all so stupid. Here's what I saw. Sean, the bad boy, was sitting in God's awesome presence with his hands and face turned upward. Tears were streaming down his cheeks. "I'm sorry, God, for the terrible things I've done," Sean prayed. "Please forgive me and help me to be new."

—Robert Wolgemuth, He cheated on everything, *Men of Integrity*, July-August, 2000.

**BIBLE BASE:** Read Luke 11:1-13.

**DISCUSS:** (The following questions are for discussion. You may fill in the answers in the space provided.)

Why did one of Jesus' disciples ask Him to teach them to pray?

---

---

---

Why did Jesus tell us to pray to the Father?

---

---

---

Why is the Third Petition, "Thy will be done" omitted here?

---

---

---

How is our relationship with God contrasted with the relationship between the friends in the parable?

---

---

---

Verses 9 & 10 are also repeated in Matthew 7:7-8. Why?

---

---

---

There is an obvious answer to the rhetorical question Jesus asks in verses 11 & 12. What is it?

---

---

---

How did Jesus conclude His instruction for praying?

---

---

---

**CHALLENGE:** Discuss ways to set goals to increase your prayer life during the coming weeks that are both qualitative and quantifiable.

**CLOSING THOUGHTS:** Jim Moore is senior minister at a church in Houston, Texas. A friend told him the following story. The friend, a sales manager, was driving his new boss around town when they happened to pass near the friend's home. The friend asked his boss if he would like to stop by his house and meet his family. His wife was baking an apple pie, and his children would be coming in from school. He asked his boss if he wanted to meet them.

"Let's get one thing straight right now," the manager replied. "I'm not interested in your family. I'm not interested in your wife or your children. I'm not interested in you personally at all or any of the circumstances of your life. All I'm interested in are results. All I'm interested in about you is your sales record!"

The friend told Moore: "That really hurt. I felt as though someone had slapped me across the face, but you know, I realized something. I realized that God is the opposite of that...He is interested in all of the circumstances of my life."

—James W. Moore, *Christmas Gifts That Always Fit* (Nashville: Dimensions for the Living, 1996), 64-65.

**CLOSING PRAYER:** Lord God, thank You for being our Father. You demonstrated Your love to us by sending Jesus into this world. Help us to seek Your face every day of our lives. Remind us to pray to You always, because You know most of all what we need. In Jesus' Name. Amen.

## LESSON SEVEN: FACING FORWARD

Have you heard about the Australian Aborigine who got a new boomerang and spent the rest of his life trying to throw the old one away? Besides being humorous, this man and his dilemma speak to a familiar problem. How many of us have spiritual boomerangs that keep returning, intruding, on our lives? We fail to terminate bad relationships, and so replay patterns of dependence or self-absorption. We return to bad habits, hurting ourselves and the ones we love. We rely on old reactions in the face of new circumstances, refusing to grow spiritually or emotionally. By ridding yourself of spiritual and emotional boomerangs you will finally be able to face forward.

**PRAY:** Dear Jesus, in Your Word You have told us that we can look forward to a life that will last forever with You in heaven. Teach us to seek Your face while we live. Send us Your Holy Spirit to empower and equip us to rid ourselves of bad patterns and habits in our lives, so we can live to Your glory. In Your Name we pray, O Lord. Amen.

**INTRODUCTION:** What's the future look like? I'll tell you: It's about tough choices. For example, this morning I noticed that my electric razor had spilled its entire collection of whiskers all over the inside of my fashionable leather toiletry bag. I had two choices. I could laboriously remove those whiskers individually cleaning each of the other contents of the bag, thus missing at least an hour of useful work, or I could say to myself, "If I didn't mind having those whiskers on my face, why should I mind them in my little traveling aspirin bottle?"

I chose the latter. After all, I already got used to the toothpaste all over everything in the bag. How bad could a few hairs be? That's what the future looks like—a bag filled with toothpaste, whiskers and unidentified containers. We're entering an age when the things we need to do and want to do are absorbed and overwhelmed by other things we need to do and want to do. We'll make random, often stupid choices because we don't have the brains or the time to do better.

—Scott Adams, *The Dilbert Future: Thriving on Business Stupidity in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* (New York: HarperBusiness, 1998), 89.

**BIBLE BASE:** Read Luke 21:5-19.

**DISCUSS:** (The following questions are for discussion. You may fill in the answers in the space provided.)  
What did Jesus mean when He said that not one stone of the Temple would be left as they saw it?

---

---

---

The disciples asked when these destructive events would take place. How did Jesus answer them?

---

---

---

Jesus' description of the world sounds like current events. Was He speaking about today?

---

---

---

How did Jesus continue His description of the future?

---

---

---

Why did Jesus speak of physical harm to the disciples?

---

---

---

Why wouldn't the disciples have to prepare for their testimony?

---

---

---

What protection and assurance did Jesus offer the disciples?

---

---

---

What was the final promise Jesus gave them?

---

---

---

**CHALLENGE:** Discuss what spiritual or emotional boomerangs are in the lives of people that they have been unable to throw away, and how recurring actions and attitudes affect their value system.

**CLOSING THOUGHTS:** Charles Lubin enjoyed both eating and making cheesecake. He was pretty good at both, so good that he decided to open a cheesecake store on the north side of Chicago. It flourished, so he opened a second store in South Chicago. That store did not do so well. Eventually, he lost them both.

Discouraged, he sat in his room one night and while eating his cheesecake, thought, "This is pretty good cheesecake!" He opened his original store again. Soon, he opened another store, but it failed and once again he lost both stores. Less than a year later he opened his original store again. After opening a second store, he went bankrupt. He tried and failed to open cheesecake stores a fourth time. Then he had another idea. He wanted to open another store, but this time he named it after his daughter, Sara Lee. It became the largest bakery in the world.

—Source unknown.

**CLOSING PRAYER:** Dear Lord, we know that we live in troubled times. Sometimes the future looks dark and scary. Help us to seek Your face so that we may look to the future with confidence that You will protect us and guard us no matter what we may encounter or endure. In Jesus' Name we pray. Amen.

## LESSON EIGHT: THE FACE OF LOVE

Some days are disasters, broken, dreary, failures. You walk out of your place of work feeling low and depressed. As you get into your car, you sink into the driver's seat with a sigh. You've tried so hard to be a success, to please your boss, to be respected. You want to feel important, to be respected. Then you arrive home or pick up your child at the day-care center. As soon as your child sees you, he or she gets excited and runs to you, jumps into your arms for a hug. You discover that all the love you think you need to earn is right there in your arms. Your performance at work is unimportant. You have love offered as a free gift without any conditions.

**PRAY:** Father in heaven, You demonstrated Your love to us by sending Your Son, Jesus, into this world to be our Savior. Send us Your Holy Spirit to remind us to seek Your face always. In Jesus' Name we pray. Amen.

**INTRODUCTION:** Carl Coleman was driving to work one morning when he bumped fenders with another motorist. Both cars stopped, and the woman driving the other car got out to survey the damage. She was distraught. It was her fault, she admitted, and hers was a new car, less than two days out of the showroom. Coleman was sympathetic, but he had to pursue the exchange of license and registration data.

She reached into her glove compartment to retrieve the documents which were in an envelope. On the first paper to tumble out, written in her husband's distinctive hand, were these words: "In case of accident, remember, Honey, it's you I love, not the car."

—Paul Harvey Jr., *Paul Harvey's for What It's Worth* (New York: Bantam Books, 1992), 31.

**BIBLE BASE:** Read Luke 7:36-50.

**DISCUSS:** (The following questions are for discussion. You may fill in the answers in the space provided.)

Why did the Pharisee invite Jesus to his house for a meal?

---

---

---

What does it mean that the woman was a sinner?

---

---

---

How did the woman gain access to the Pharisee's house?

---

---

---

Why did the Pharisee refer to Jesus as "this man"?

---

---

---

When Jesus referred to the two debtors, what point was He making?

---

---

---

The woman took care of what Simon had neglected. Why?

---

---

---

Why did Jesus say that her sins were many?

---

---

---

Why did the other guests express shock that Jesus forgave sins?

---

---

---

**CHALLENGE:** Make a private list of those people whom you find difficult to forgive. Develop a strategy by which you can develop ways to demonstrate God’s forgiveness and love to others.

**CLOSING THOUGHTS:** Many years ago, when a famine was bringing misery in Russia, the writer, Leo Tolstoy, passed by a bridge in Moscow where many beggars gathered. They were on the verge of starvation and were asking him for alms. Seeing a beggar, Tolstoy searched in his pocket for a coin, but discovered that he had nothing with him, not even a copper coin. Embarrassed, Tolstoy took the beggar’s hands in his own and said, “I’m sorry, brother. Don’t be angry with me. I have nothing with me today.” The thin face of the beggar became illuminated, and he said in reply, “But you called me brother—that was a great gift, sir.”

—Ronald E. Vallet, *Stepping Stones of the Steward* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1989), 129.

Jim Arends of Trinity Lutheran Church in Spring Grove, Minnesota, tells of an old cartoon that pictures a preacher at the pulpit and a deacon sitting behind him with a grumpy expression on his face. The preacher says, “So until next Sunday, remember that God loves you, I love you, and Brother Al here is working on it.”

**CLOSING PRAYER:** Teach us to love, O Lord. Empower and equip us to love not just those who love us, but also to love the unlovable. As we bask in the glow of Your love, help us to seek Your face always. Help us not only to tell others of Your love and our love for them, but also by showing them the face of love. In Jesus’ Name we pray. Amen.

## LESSON NINE: THE FACE OF GRACE

In his book titled, *What's So Amazing about Grace*, Philip Yancey writes: “*Grace means there is nothing we can do to make God love us more*—no amount of spiritual calisthenics and renunciations, no amount of knowledge gained from seminaries and divinity schools, no amount of crusading in behalf of righteous causes. *And grace means there is nothing we can do to make God love us less*—no amount of racism or pride or pornography or adultery or even murder. Grace means that God already loves us as much as an infinite God can possibly love (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan Publishing House, 1997), 70. God’s face is truly the face of grace.

**PRAY:** Gracious Father, look upon us with Your unflinching grace. You see all our evil, imperfections, and shortcomings. There is nothing we can do to gain Your favor. Help us to seek Your face as we cast ourselves upon Your throne of grace and beg for mercy. Hear us for Jesus’ sake. Amen.

**INTRODUCTION:** Bob Olmstead of Reno, Nevada, tells of the experience of colleague Bill Welsh, a pastor in Desert Hot Springs, California. Members of Welsh’s congregation had a child who was subject to sudden seizures. These seizures were violent and painful, not only for the child but also for the parents and those who witnessed the child’s suffering.

The father and the child would come to church regularly and the father’s practice was to hold the child. One Sunday morning in the midst of worship, the child was seized [and] writhed painfully...The father lifted him caringly, carried him ...to the back of the sanctuary, where he stood still rocking the child tenderly, speaking to him gently until finally the seizure relented...There was no sign of embarrassment or frustration on the father’s face, only love for the hurting child. And then Welsh said, “In that moment, while I was preaching, I was preached to. I heard God speak to my heart and say, ‘That’s the way I love you through your imperfections. I’m not embarrassed to have people know that you are My child.’”  
—Bob Olmstead, Reno, Nevada, 30 August, 1992.

**BIBLE BASE:** Read Luke 23:32-43.

**DISCUSS:** (The following questions are for discussion. You may fill in the answers in the space provided.)

Why was Jesus crucified with two criminals?

---

---

---

Were the criminals nailed to the cross as Jesus was?

---

---

---

How did Jesus display His face of grace to the Roman soldiers?

---

---

---

How did Jesus show grace while suffering?

---

---

---

Why did Pilate's inscription declare Jesus the King of the Jews?

---

---

---

Why did one of the criminals rebuke the other criminal?

---

---

---

What did the criminal mean when he asked Jesus to remember him when He comes in His Kingdom?

---

---

---

**CHALLENGE:** Develop a strategy for your group to invite people to come to your study whom you would not ordinarily invite.

**CLOSING THOUGHTS:** With our hand clenched in a fist we cannot so much as pick up an orange or a boiled egg from the breakfast table. With a fist we cannot open a water faucet to wash the dishes or our face. Cooking and laundering cannot be done with hands closed in a fist. In terms of everyday human operations our fists are singularly ineffective. We use our open active hands to do almost everything that we do. The fist, so unpractical and ineffective, is a symbol of power. The world lives under the shadow of two huge fists, but its healing is in the open, nail-pierced hands of Christ.

Jesus reaches out to us with hands painfully open; He could not have been crucified with a clenched fist. Thus God is 'open,' not ideologically fixed. This God is not afraid of 'losing face.' This God waits patiently, ready to respond to human response... God rules over history but does not monopolize history. Here is suggested the painful openness of God. Our history is touched by the hands of Christ painfully open.

—Kosuke Koyama, "The Hand Painfully Open," *Lexington Theological Quarterly*, 22 (1987), 33 & 36.

**CLOSING PRAYER:** Lord God, keep us in Your grace. You have opened Your hands to receive us just as we are. Empower us to seek Your face always and use us as Your instruments to communicate Your grace to others. In Jesus Name we pray. Amen.

## LESSON TEN: THE FACE OF EVIL

*Kill Bill* premiered in October, 2003. The movie is rated “R.” It features seven arm severings, five leg severings, two hatchet deaths, and a close-up scalping. 45 individuals are slain by swords, and a pregnant woman gets shot in the head. The film’s director, Quentin Tarantino had this to say about the film: “If you’re a 12-year-old girl or boy, you must go and see *Kill Bill*. You will have a d—n good time. Boys will have a great time, girls will have a dose of girl power. If you are a cool parent out there, go take your kids to the movie.” The bad news is that *Kill Bill* is an outstanding success, because people are lining up to see the movie. Thus, for evil to triumph, it takes only a few good people to do nothing,

**PRAY:** Father in heaven, when we pray to You as Jesus taught us to pray, we ask You to deliver us from evil. Help us to seek Your face, because we live in a world in which we are surrounded by evil. O Lord, deliver us from evil for Jesus’ sake. Amen.

**INTRODUCTION:** Bad news seems exempt from the laws of the universe. You can follow the rules, eat right, exercise daily, sleep well, love your neighbor, love yourself, go to church, be honest with the IRS, give blood, vote, attend PTA meetings, remember your mother’s birthday, tell no ethnic jokes, write thank-you notes, recycle, clean your refrigerator, read the Bible, serve dinner at the shelter, wear clean underwear, get your teeth cleaned—and still bad news happens to you. Like an obnoxious relative, bad news just keeps showing up again and again.

—Howard Hanger, “Chutzpah!” *Vision*, January 24, 1997, 3.

**BIBLE BASE:** Read John 8:31-47.

**DISCUSS:** (The following questions are for discussion. You may fill in the answers in the space provided.)

Who was Jesus addressing in this discussion?

---

---

---

Why did the Jews mention that they were the Seed of Abraham?

---

---

---

What does it mean to be a slave of sin?

---

---

---

How did the hostile Jews betray their spiritual heritage?

---

---

---

Why did the hostile Jews make the claim that they were not born of fornication?

---

---

---

Why did Jesus tell them that they were children of the devil?

---

---

---

How did Jesus describe the devil?

---

---

---

Jesus and the devil are opposites. How?

---

---

---

**CHALLENGE:** Talk about what your group can do to help your congregation find ways to combat evil like that which is seen on movies and on television.

**CLOSING THOUGHTS:** Rape, murder, homophobia, misogyny, wanton drug abuse—in the course of the 70-minute disc, 26-year-old Eminem (a.k.a. Slim Shady, nZ Marshall Mathers) raps about it all in graphic detail. And the youth of America are listening—avidly, in great numbers. Already, The Marshall Mathers LP has become the fastest-selling hip-hop album in history, with more than 5 million copies bought since its release. The disc is red hot in every sense, drawing the ire of gay-rights groups, feminists, parents and pundits outraged by its content.

Of course, lyrically scandalous rap and rock albums are nothing new. What distinguishes the Marshall Mathers LP—and what has a growing cross section of shocked adults asking the rhetorical question, Eminem: Clown Prince or Menace?—is the sudden ease and enthusiasm with which a mainstream of teens and preteens is absorbing its corrosive vision.

**CLOSING PRAYER:** Almighty God, Your Son has revealed to us that He is the Way and the Truth and the Life. Send us Your Holy Spirit to empower us and equip us to resist evil. Help us to seek the face of Jesus, and use us to reflect the light of Christ to shine the truth in this world filled with evil. Envelop us in Your grace and keep us safe from all evil attempts against us. In Jesus' Name we pray. Amen.

## LESSON ELEVEN: THE FACE IN THE MIRROR

The letter that St. James sent to the Jewish Christians scattered throughout the Roman Empire is a study in practical Christianity. In the first chapter, verses 22-24 he writes: “But prove to be doers of the word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves. For if any one is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks at his natural face in a mirror; for once he has looked at himself and gone away, he has immediately forgotten what kind of a person he was.” St. James is describing what might be called spiritual Alzheimer’s disease. Alzheimer’s is a terrible disease that affects a person’s short term memory. Spiritual Alzheimer’s disease causes people to forget they are Christians.

**PRAY:** Lord Jesus, we confess we have sinned and come far short of the expectations You have for us. Help us to use Your law as a mirror to show us our sin. Then send us Your Holy Spirit to renew us with forgiveness so that we will be empowered to seek Your face always. In Your Name we pray. Amen.

**INTRODUCTION:** Michael Jackson’s 1987 *Man in the Mirror* is one of his best. As the video begins, Jackson sings, “Gonna make a change for once in my life,” while newsreel footage flashes images of riots in South Africa and doe-eyed, bloated-bellied African children with flies crawling across their faces. Jackson responds to these images by singing that he sees, “the kids in the street/with not enough to eat. /Who am I, to be blind, pretending not to see their needs?”

The tempo of the song picks up as the viewer sees shorter clips of a crying Lech Walesa and Desmond Tutu. Jackson then sings the chorus of the song, “I’m starting with the man in the mirror/I’m asking him to change his ways...”

**BIBLE BASE:** Read Luke 18:9-14.

**DISCUSS:** (The following questions are for discussion. You may fill in the answers in the space provided.)

Why did Jesus use a Pharisee as an example in this parable?

---

---

---

Why did Jesus use a tax-gatherer as an example in this parable?

---

---

---

Why did they go to the Temple to pray?

---

---

---

What was the problem with the Pharisee’s prayer?

---

---

---

Why did the Pharisee fast twice a week?

---

---

---

How was the prayer of the tax-gatherer different?

---

---

---

How did Jesus view these two men?

---

---

---

**CHALLENGE:** Discuss ways that modern day Christians see Pharisees when they look in the mirror. Then find ways to change the face in the mirror to look more like the tax-gatherer.

**CLOSING THOUGHTS:** I heard a silversmith talk about refining silver. He said, “I must sit with my eyes steadily fixed on the furnace; for if the time necessary for refining be exceeded in the slightest degree, the silver will be injured. I never take my eyes off the silver in the furnace. If I take it out too early, it won’t be purified. If I leave it in too late, it will be injured. When the silver is in the fire, I focus. I don’t let anything distract me. I watch that silver carefully waiting for the right moment to take it out.” “When is the right moment?” I asked. He said, “I know the silver is pure when I can see my face reflected there.”

When I’m in a storm, as soon as the storm comes, I’m saying, “Okay God, bail me out. Find me. Rescue me.” Sometimes he doesn’t rescue me. He doesn’t come. But He is the great silversmith. When I’m in the furnace, He focuses and watches. His job isn’t a quick rescue mission. His job is to purify. He holds me until the right moment, and then He comes—never too early, never too late—right on time.

—John Maxwell, quoted in *Men of Integrity*, March-April 2000, [www.christianitytoday.com](http://www.christianitytoday.com)

**CLOSING PRAYER:** Almighty Father, You created us to reflect Your image, because in Your image we see the face of Jesus. Yet we sin against You daily. This we confess with shame and without excuse. Have mercy on us sinners. Send us away from this study justified. In Jesus’ Name we pray. Amen.

## LESSON TWELVE: LET'S FACE IT

Let's face it. We all have a terminal disease. It's called sin. The prognosis is death. We may not know the method death will come or the time, but rest assured, we will all die. That is why life is so precious to us. We have been advised to live every day as if it were our last. Fortunately, death is not the end for us. Even though we rebel against God with our continued sinning, God is not willing to leave us alone. He sent Jesus into the world to be our Savior and Lord. Jesus sends His Holy Spirit who calls, gathers, enlightens, sanctifies, and keeps us in faith in God. That is how we have been prepared by God for a life that will last forever. That is another fact that we must face.

**PRAY:** Father in Heaven, You have made us and we are Yours. Thank You for directing Your love toward us through Jesus. Do not let the light of faith in our hearts ever go out. Rather, use that light to shed the truth of Your love in our sin-darkened world. Empower and equip us to seek Your face always. In Jesus' Name we pray. Amen.

**INTRODUCTION:** "The only essential difference that I can tell between Christians and non-Christians is not necessarily morality, it's that Christians have acknowledged that we're sinners and we can't make it on our own. We're failures and will continue to fail. And the church in the year 3000 will be just as full of problems as the church in the year 2000, as it was in the year 1000. No other institutions that I know of recognize that. Governments don't, a lot of other religions don't. But that's the baseline of Christianity. If we deny that, and try to put on a good face, then we fall into the trap of the original Pharisees of just trying to make ourselves look good and even make God look good. But God didn't seem all that concerned with it. He became sin for us, as Paul said."

—Philip Yancey, quoted by Doug Duncan, Thoughtful Evangelical: Philip Yancey Interview, *The Door*, May-June, 11.

**BIBLE BASE:** Read John 20:1-18.

**DISCUSS:** (The following questions are for discussion. You may fill in the answers in the space provided.)

Why doesn't John tell us only about Mary Magdalene and not the other women?

---

---

---

Why did Mary report that the stone was already taken away from the mouth of the tomb?

---

---

---

What did Mary think had happened to Jesus' body?

---

---

---

Why did Peter and John run to the tomb?

---

---

---

When Peter and John got to the tomb, what did they see?

---

---

---

Why did Mary not recognize Jesus when He appeared to her?

---

---

---

After the encounter with Jesus, how had Mary changed?

---

---

---

**CHALLENGE:** Talk about what your group can do to communicate the objective truth of the resurrection in this post-modern age that denies there is any objective truth.

**CLOSING THOUGHTS:** Two millennia [after the birth of Christ], two billion people call themselves Christians. It is the world's largest religion, and in more than 20,000 sects and denominations, it offers an astonishing variety of ways to worship. Since the beginning, Christianity has been outlawed, persecuted, split, split again, warred against and—in the face of scientific advance—declared obsolete. But it has reshaped itself and mended itself, and even at the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, a century that has threatened Christianity in new and unpredictable ways, it lives. “What is Christianity’s greatest accomplishment in our century?” asks Peter Gomes, preacher to Harvard University. “It has survived.”

—Robert Sullivan, 2000 years of Christianity, *Life*, December, 1999, 53.

Yes, Christianity has survived because of the objective truth of the resurrection of Jesus. Face the facts. Because Jesus lives, all those who believe in Him will also live, now and forever. Times may change, but neither God nor His plan of salvation will ever change.

**CLOSING PRAYER:** Dear Jesus, we cannot begin to thank You enough for our forgiveness and salvation. You felt the pain of Your Father’s wrath over the evil we are and have done. You died for us. Now You live so that we might have life also. Only because of Your forgiveness are we able to seek Your face. Preserve, O Lord, our faith in You so that we can live with You. In Your Name we pray, O Lord. Amen.