

TEACHER NOTECARDS LEVEL 2, QUARTER D—
THE BIBLE GUIDES MY LIFE

Use these Teacher Notecards as a reference when teaching *Explore Scripture*. Choose the outline form or narrative form based on your teaching style and preference.*

Print on paper or cardstock. Fold in half, then fold again along the gray line. This will create a two-sided, notecard-sized piece for you to hold in your hand.

*The narrative form has been edited to fit on these cards. Please see the full *Explore Scripture* sections of each lesson for more interactivity, application, and content.

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Big Idea: **The sin barrier separates all people from being friends with God.**

1 John 1 [outline form]

Intro: *John wrote a letter to testify about Jesus and to encourage Christians.*

Ask: *Why does God want us to walk in His light?*

1. John introduced his letter with some important facts.

- *John saw, touched, and lived with Jesus (picture 2D.1) 1 John 1:1*
- *Jesus is the Word of Life 1:2-3*
- *A sin barrier separates people from God, but knowing Jesus allows people to fellowship with God 1:3*

2. God is light. In Him there is no darkness (picture 2D.2).

- *People who fellowship with God do not walk in darkness 1:6*
- *Jesus purifies those who walk in the light 1:7*
- *No one is without sin 1:8*
- *When we confess our sins, Jesus forgives us 1:9*

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Conclusion: *God wants all people to know Jesus and have their sins forgiven. Those who believe in Jesus must walk in His light!*

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Big Idea: **The sin barrier separates all people from being friends with God.**

1 John 1 [narrative form]

Intro: *John wrote a letter to testify about Jesus and to encourage Christians.*

Ask: *Why does God want us to walk in His light?*

The Apostle John wrote several New Testament books. He wanted to write about the time he spent with Jesus while Jesus was on earth (picture 2D.1). Read 1 John 1:1-5. In these verses, John explained about hearing, seeing, touching, and telling about Jesus. He wanted to show people how they could become friends with God and have fellowship with Him (picture 2D.2).

People are born with a need to know God and to be friends with God, but a huge barrier stands in the way. This barrier is so big, so wide, so tall, and so thick that there is no way any person in his or her own human power could ever get around it or break through it. *What do you think this barrier is?* Sin. So, though all people need God, there is no way they can remove the barrier of sin on their own.

Light chases away the darkness. Darkness and light can't exist in the same place at

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the same time. Read 1 John 1:5. *What does God's light do?* Encourage responses. When we ask God to remove the barrier of sin, we let His light into our lives. We do this by confessing our sins and asking for His forgiveness. God takes away our sins and helps us live clean and pure lives. God will then walk and talk with us, just like a good friend. God's light also provides fellowship with other Christians.

Read 1 John 1:6-10. Anyone who says he or she is a believer but continually lives in sin is lying. If we say that we are not sinners who need to confess to God, then we are lying to ourselves. If we say that we haven't sinned, then we are calling God a liar.

The good news is, if we walk in God's light by loving others and living like Jesus did, then we have fellowship with other Christians. If we confess our sins, then God will forgive our sins. Jesus' blood cleans away our sins. Jesus is the bridge that lets us cross the great barrier!

God is holy and perfect. Our sins separate us from Him, like a barrier that we cannot cross by ourselves. The good news is that we don't have to stay separated from God! Jesus was also holy and perfect. When we believe in Jesus as Lord and Savior, He forgives our sins. Later, when we stumble, if we confess our sins, God forgives us. The barrier is behind us!

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Big Idea: **Jesus bridged the sin barrier and calls His children to walk in the light.**

1 John 2:1-14 [outline form]

Intro: *Jesus died for the sins of the whole world.*

Ask: *Why do some people refuse to believe in Jesus?*

1. John encourages believers not to sin.

- *When we do sin, Jesus intercedes with God for us* 1 John 2:1
- *Jesus was the atoning sacrifice for everyone who believes* (picture 2D.3) . . . 2:2
- *People who love Jesus obey His commands* 2:3
- *God's love is made complete by obedience* 2:5

2. One of God's commands is to love fellow believers.

- *The command to love has existed since the beginning* 2:7
- *Whoever loves others walks in God's light* (picture 2D.4) 2:10
- *Whoever hates others stumbles in darkness* 2:11

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3. John writes to encourage Christians.

- *Our sins are forgiven and we know God* 2:12-13
- *We have overcome the evil one* 2:13
- *We are strong and God's Word lives in us* 2:14

Conclusion: *God opened the way to Himself with the death and resurrection of His Son, Jesus. We respond in love by obeying His commandments.*

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1 John 2:1-14 [narrative form]

Intro: *Jesus died for the sins of the whole world.*

Ask: *Why do some people refuse to believe in Jesus?*

A huge barrier separates people and God. This barrier of darkness is sin, and it separates us from God's light. Today we are going to learn about God's bridge, the way to cross the barrier of sin and to walk into the light of God's love and friendship. There is only one way to reach God, and that is through Jesus. His death on the cross as the sacrifice for our sin is the only bridge from God to people (picture 2D.3).

What if you were in a real-life situation where you desperately needed to get from one place to another? Imagine that you have been visiting a friend who lives in the country. The two of you are exploring a wooded area and have waded across a creek in which the water is only about a foot deep. The other side of the creek has no trees. Suddenly it starts to rain—and it rains and rains!

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When the rain begins to let up, you see that the creek that was once shallow and easy to wade through is now a deep, rushing stream. You are stuck! A couple of hours later, you hear someone calling your names. Yes! Someone is coming to look for you. Soon your friend's dad arrives on the other side of the creek. You are happy to see him, but he is on one side and you are on the other. How will you get across? Dad has a plan. He spots a fallen log lying beside the creek, and he works to maneuver it into position across the creek. You and your friend carefully make your way across the log to safety on the other side.

God wants to rescue us from sin. He has provided the bridge through Jesus, and He is the only way that we can be saved. People who have crossed the bridge live differently from people who have not. The Bible tells us of several ways we can know for sure that we have crossed the bridge: 1) We obey His commands (1 John 2:3); 2) we walk as Jesus did (verse 6); 3) we love each other (verse 10). (picture 2D.4)

People who say they have crossed the bridge, but who really have not, are lying: 1) They do not do what God commands (verse 4); 2) the truth is not in them (verse 4); 3) they hate other people (verse 9, 11).

Jesus died to make a bridge between God and us. After you cross the bridge, you will want to obey God and walk in His light, by loving others and by living like Jesus did.

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Big Idea: **God teaches His children to love Him rather than the world.**

1 John 2:15-29 [outline form]

Intro: *It is impossible to love God and love the world at the same time.*

Ask: *What does God mean by "the world"?*

1. God has a test that shows if people truly love Him (picture 2D.5).
 - *God commands us to not love the world.* 1 John 2:15
 - *The things of the world do not come from God* (picture 2D.6) 2:16
 - *The world is temporary, but God's love is eternal* 2:17
2. God has given us a special helper to avoid loving the world.
 - *The Holy Spirit has anointed us to know the truth.* 2:20
 - *Anyone who denies Jesus opposes God* 2:22
 - *The Holy Spirit continues to teach us* 2:27

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3. Christians should remain in Jesus, remain in God.
 - *If we continue in Him we will be prepared when He comes again.* 2:28
 - *People who believe in Jesus are His children.* 2:29

Conclusion: *God and the world oppose each other. God wants His people to choose Him every time!*

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Intro: *It is impossible to love God and love the world at the same time.*

Ask: *What does God mean by "the world"?*

Do you enjoy taking tests at school? Encourage responses. There is one most important test that we take throughout our entire lifetime. It is God's test—and it has only one question on it. Do you love God or do you love the world? In today's Bible lesson, John tells us what he learned from Jesus—that it is impossible to love both God and the world (picture 2D.5).

What things are very important to people? List the children's responses on the board. Talk about these pleasures and what they represent. Loving things of the world conflicts with loving God (picture 2D.6). Something must be most important in our lives. If things are most important, then we cannot really love God. If we truly love God, then we have no room in our hearts to love the world.

When John talks about "things," he is not merely talking about physical things.

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He is also talking about spiritual things—evil desires—things that control us and keep us from loving God above all.

Satan, the antichrist, controls the world. That's another reason why it is wrong to love the world. Because we live in the world—Satan's domain—he is always going to try to lure us away from loving God. He will tempt us with wrong things by making them look very attractive. It is not easy to resist temptation, but Jesus gives us the power to say "No!" to ungodliness.

God sent His Holy Spirit into the world to help Christians love God and stay true to Him. The Holy Spirit will help us know the difference between what is true and what is false. When we are tempted or puzzled about one of the world's lies, the Holy Spirit will help us stay on the path of truth. When the temptations of the world are strong, the Holy Spirit will show us how to remain true to God.

As we live day after day, we continually face God's test. God gives the test—and without Him we would fail! Anyone who believes in Jesus as Lord and Savior also has the Holy Spirit. And the Holy Spirit helps us know God's will and gives us strength to do what is right.

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Big Idea: **God calls His children to walk with Him all their lives.**

1 John 3 [outline form]

Intro: *People who believe in Jesus become God's children.*

Ask: *What do we inherit as God's children?*

1. God, in His great love, calls us His children (picture 2D.7).

- *We will become more like Jesus* 1 John 3:2
- *Jesus died to take away our sins* 3:5
- *God's children do not go on sinning* 3:9

2. God's children love each other.

- *We have passed from death into new life* (picture 2D.8) 3:14
- *We should lay down our lives for each other* 3:16
- *We should give to those in need* 3:17
- *We love in truth and in our actions* 3:18

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3. God's children obey His commands.

- *When we obey God and follow Him, He gives us what we ask* 3:22
- *God commands us to believe in Jesus and love others* 3:23
- *God's Spirit confirms when we are obeying and living in Him* 3:24

Conclusion: *The world needs to see that we are God's children! Obey His commands and love each other just as Jesus has loved us!*

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1 John 3 [narrative form]

Intro: *People who believe in Jesus become God's children.*

Ask: *What do we inherit as God's children?*

What if you were a butterfly who decided to stay a caterpillar? The world would look okay, but you'd always see it from the ground level. Now think about how it would feel to become a butterfly and burst from that dark cocoon and suddenly see the world from the air—from a heavenly viewpoint? Wow!! How would it be to spread beautiful colored wings and soar away on the wind? Encourage responses.

When we believe in Jesus as Savior, truly trust Him to forgive and save us—we go through a change that can be compared to the butterfly. Before Jesus comes, we live with an earthly view of the world. We are wrapped in the darkness of sin. When He comes to live in us, suddenly we have a new view, a heavenly view! We become beautiful new creatures because our sins have been washed away and Jesus has come to live within us. We become God's children, and He puts His love in our hearts so that we become more and more like Him as we grow (picture 2D.7).

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There is a great difference between the lives of people who live in sin and the lives of people who have crossed the bridge by confessing their sins and trusting Jesus. The Bible describes some of these differences. Many unbelievers are full of selfishness, hate, and greed, and they face eternal death. God's children are filled with love, obedience, selflessness, and they have the promise of eternal life with God.

What happens when a child is adopted? He or she belongs to a new family. His or her name is changed. The new family's characteristics become part of that child's life. It's a new life, like the butterfly or spring flowers that bloom after the winter (picture 2D.8).

Satan tries to convince people that it is better to stay in sin and live exactly as they want to live. But living only as we want hurts us and hurts other people. That is why God wants to adopt us into His family. He wants to give us new hearts that naturally obey and love Him. He wants us to live with love and goodness, and He wants to change us to become more and more like Him. God calls His children to walk with Him all their lives.

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Big Idea: **God sends His Spirit who lives in, guides, and empowers His children.**

1 John 4 [outline form]

Intro: *The Holy spirit helps us discern lies from the truth.*

Ask: *Why is the truth so important?*

1. We should always test what we hear or read, to see if it is truth.

- *We should not believe everything we hear or read.* 1 John 4:1
- *Everyone who acknowledges Jesus was God and human is from God* 4:2
- *Anyone who rejects Jesus is from the antichrist* 4:3
- *The Holy Spirit is greater than the evil one* (picture 2D.9). 4:4
- *God's children listen to each other* 4:6

2. God's love is the greatest thing we hold onto.

- *Love comes from God.* 4:7
- *God is love* 4:8
- *God showed His love by sending Jesus* 4:9-10
- *God's love is complete in us when we love each other.* 4:12

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3. The Holy Spirit confirms God's love (picture 2D.10).

- *The Holy Spirit helps us testify about Jesus.* 4:14
- *We rely on God's love* 4:16
- *Perfect love (God) drives out fear* 4:18
- *God's love inspires us to love each other* 4:19

Conclusion: *The Holy Spirit came to guide and empower us. When we rely on God's love and love each other, we can be confident the Holy Spirit lives in us!*

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1 John 4 [narrative form]

Intro: *The Holy spirit helps us discern lies from the truth.*

Ask: *Why is the truth so important?*

In today's Bible lesson, John talks about another test. He says we should test what we hear, to see if a person's message is from God. So how do we do this? Read 1 John 4:1-2. First of all, the message or the messenger will tell the truth about Jesus. The message will not say anything against what the Bible teaches. Read verse 3. Anyone who says that Jesus is not from God is an antichrist or is under the control of an antichrist.

John told us about a secret weapon that helps us know the truth! Jesus promised to send this Helper to His disciples. Read 1 John 4:4 (picture 2D.9). The Holy Spirit helps us know what is true and what is not true. He guides us to know what to do. He gives us strength to do the right thing.

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And there is one very important thing that God wants us to do. Read 1 John 4:7-8. *What are we supposed to do? Where does this love come from? To whom does God give this love?* The more we listen to God's Holy Spirit and learn about God's truth, the more our love will grow to be like God's love.

John wrote some of the most beautiful words in the Bible in chapter 4. Read 1 John 4:7-10. *Whom should we love (v. 7)? Why did God send Jesus (vv. 9-10)? Who loved us first (v. 10)?* Now read 1 John 4:11-16. *Because God loves us so much, what should we do (v. 11)? What happens when we love one another (v. 12)? How do we know that we live in God and God lives in us (v. 13) (picture 2D.10)? What happens when we confess that Jesus is God's Son (v.15)?*

Read 1 John 4:17-21. *Why do people who love God have nothing to fear (v. 18)? Why can we love other people (v.19)?*

God's love is pure. He has no hidden, selfish motive. God's love is reliable. God will never disappoint or let us down. God's love is complete and perfect. There is nothing missing in God's love. When we confess our sins and believe in Jesus as our Savior, God puts His love into our hearts through His Holy Spirit. He gives us the desire and the ability to show love to others with the same kind of love that He shows to us.

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Big Idea: **God gives the gift of eternal life to everyone who believes in Jesus.**

1 John 5 [outline form]

Intro: *God gives the gift of eternal life to everyone who believes in Jesus.*

Ask: *How does having eternal life change the way we live now?*

1. Those who believe in Jesus have overcome the world.

- *God's children love each other and obey God's commands 1 John 5:1-2*
- *God's commands are easy, for we have overcome the world 5:3-4*
- *Only those who believe in Jesus overcome the world 5:5*

2. God Himself testifies about Jesus.

- *The Spirit, the water, and the blood testify about Jesus 5:7-8*
- *People can testify, but God's testimony is greatest 5:9*
- *God's testimony is that we have eternal life (picture 2D.11) 5:11-12*

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3. John wanted Christians to be sure of their eternal futures.

- *Everyone who believes in Jesus can know they have eternal life 5:13*
- *We can pray in confidence and ask for things within His will 5:14*
- *God keeps us safe from the devil 5:18*
- *Jesus is God and the source of eternal life (picture 2D.12) 5:20*

Conclusion: *Those who believe in Jesus have overcome the world and have eternal life! Praise God for His great love for us!*

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Big Idea: **God gives the gift of eternal life to everyone who believes in Jesus.**

1 John 5 [narrative form]

Intro: *God gives the gift of eternal life to everyone who believes in Jesus.*

Ask: *How does having eternal life change the way we live now?*

When we confess Jesus as God's Son and accept Him into our hearts, God gives us the gift of eternal life. This gift is perfect and will never wear out, and it begins the moment we trust Jesus. He will live within us and walk with us through life. Then when we die, we will live forever in heaven with Him (picture 2D.11)!

Let's pretend that your parents have told you about plans to take a family trip to a grand amusement park. The date is set and you start thinking of all the fantastic rides you will go on and all the sights you will see. As you begin to tell your friends about your trip, most are excited—but one person doesn't believe that you are really going on the trip. In fact, he doesn't even really believe there is such an amusement park. He says, "You're not really going on that trip. There is no such place. All those rides are just made up. Those brochures are just fake." This would take a little of your excitement away, wouldn't it? In fact, if you were around this person for too

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long, you might begin to wonder if the amusement park is a real place.

Christians have an enemy, Satan, who does not want us to believe that Jesus told the truth. After we give our hearts to Jesus, Satan will try to confuse us and make us question the truth, just like the kid who said the amusement park doesn't exist. Who would you believe more—your parents who love you and want what is best for you, or some jealous child who doesn't want you to be happy? God wants His children to know the truth and to be confident in that truth. God wants His children to know that Jesus is His only Son, that He gave His life on the cross to span the barrier of sin, and that when we receive Him as Savior, we are given the gift of eternal life (picture 2D.12).

God doesn't leave us to battle Satan alone. He answers our prayers and promises His protection. God wants us to pray, and He remembers our prayers. When we pray, we must realize that God is listening and He will answer with what is best for us.

And let's not forget to thank Him for His gift! God's special gift—eternal life—is too good to keep to yourself. If you believe in Jesus and have eternal life, tell others so that they can become God's children, too!

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Big Idea: **True faith enables God's children to endure trials joyfully.**

James 1 [outline form]

Intro: *God brings us trials to test and strengthen our faith.*

Ask: *Why do you think God allows Christians to face trouble?*

1. James wrote a letter encouraging Christians with practical advice about how to live faithfully (picture 2D.13).

- *Face trials with joy.* James 1:2
- *Perseverance matures our faith* 1:3-4
- *Ask God for wisdom, believing He will answer* 1:5-6
- *Persevering under hardship wins the crown of life* (picture 2D.14) 1:12

2. God tests us with trials, but He does not harm us or make us stumble.

- *God does not tempt people* 1:13
- *Our evil desires can turn into sin and death* 1:14-15
- *God gives only good things* 1:17

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3. God wants us to listen to His Word but also to do what it says.

- *Be quick to listen and slow to speak.* 1:19
- *Do what God's Word says to do.* 1:22
- *Faithfully obeying God's commands brings blessings* 1:25
- *Care for those less fortunate and stay pure* 1:27

Conclusion: *Walking with God is not always easy. Our faith will be tested, yet God gives us strength to continue. We can pray for wisdom and rejoice knowing that God gives us good gifts.*

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Intro: *God brings us trials to test and strengthen our faith.*

Ask: *Why do you think God allows Christians to face trouble?*

What are some hard times that kids your age face? How do you think Christians are supposed to act when we go through a hard time? Should we expect hard times? The Bible says, "Yes, hard times will come." But the Bible also tells us what to do!

James was Jesus' brother, and the leader of the Jerusalem church (picture 2D.13 of James). He wrote a letter with much practical advice for carrying out God's Word. One of the first things his letter says is to face trials joyfully. *How do you feel when you are in a trial? Do you ever feel joyful in a trial or when you are tempted? Encourage responses. What if you never had any chores at home or any work at school? All you had to do was sit around. What kind of person do you think you would be?* Encourage responses. You would be a weak and sickly person. That is why God tells us to face trials with joy. Through trials, we grow, learn, and strengthen our faith.

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Explain the difference between a trial and temptation. God sends trials to make His children strong. Satan tempts God's children to sin. Trials lead God's children closer to God; temptations lead them away (picture 2D.14).

Read James 1:12. *What do you think the word "persevere" means?* Encourage responses. To persevere means to keep on doing something, even when it is hard. In this case, James says to keep on walking with God. The person who perseveres under trial is blessed and receives the crown of life, eternal life with God.

God wants us to rejoice when we're going through a hard time. But the Bible also says that every good and perfect gift comes from God. Read James 1:17. *What is one good gift God has given you this year? What two gifts does God give to all His children?* (He gives them the Holy Spirit and eternal life.)

Walking with God is not always easy. Our faith will be tested, yet God gives us strength to continue. We can pray for wisdom and rejoice knowing that God gives us good gifts. Sometimes He sends trials to help us grow strong. He gives us His Word. He wants us to do the things we read in the Bible.

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Big Idea: **True faith leads God's children to perform good deeds.**

James 2 [outline form]

Intro: *Christians must show their faith with their actions.*

Ask: *Why is faith without deeds "dead"?*

1. Favoritism is a danger among believers and should be avoided.

- *Do not show special attention to those who are rich* James 2:3-4
- *God has chosen the poor to be rich in faith* 2:5
- *The rich do evil but are wrongfully treated with respect anyway* 2:6-7

2. God has given His people a "royal law."

- *We should love others as we love ourselves* (picture 2D.15) 2:8
- *Favoritism breaks this law, and is therefore a sin* 2:9
- *Anyone who breaks one law, breaks all of it* 2:10
- *Mercy triumphs over judgment* 2:13

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3. Faith must be accompanied by deeds.

- *Only our actions actually help others and show our love* 2:15-16
- *Even demons believe in Jesus, but their actions are evil* 2:19
- *Abraham's faith was made complete by his actions* 2:22
- *Rahab's actions showed her faith* (picture 2D.16) 2:25
- *Faith without deeds is dead (useless)* 2:26

Conclusion: *We are not alone when we tell others about God's Word—God is with us! Pray for God's power when you need help to do His will!*

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James 2 [narrative form]

Intro: *Christians must show their faith with their actions.*

Ask: *Why is faith without deeds "dead"?*

Read James 2:1-4. *How do you think the rich person felt? How do you think the poor person felt? How would Jesus have wanted the people to act toward the poor person?*

What are some ways that kids today show favoritism and are not fair to each other? How do you feel when someone has not been fair to you? How do you feel when you have not treated someone fairly or have shown favoritism?

Read James 2:8-9. *What is God's royal law? Why do you think it's called a "royal law"?* Encourage responses. It's not enough not to show favoritism. We should love other people the way we love ourselves (picture 2D.15).

Read verses 14-16. *What problem does James mention?* (The people didn't have clothes and food.) *Love is a deed—not just words and feelings. How could we love the people mentioned here the way we love ourselves?* Encourage responses.

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Read James 2:17. True faith always shows in what we do. Faith without deeds is like an empty balloon. It's worthless. Read verse 18. It's easy to say you believe in Jesus, but other people should be able to see that you believe by what you do.

Read James 2:19. Just knowing that Jesus is God is not enough. It is true that the demons know who Jesus is. But they do not love God, and the awful things they do prove it!

Read verse 21-24. James gives two examples of people who showed their faith by their actions. The first one was Abraham. Review what the kids know about Abraham, and briefly explain the story of Isaac and the altar. Abraham was considered righteous because his actions showed his faith in God. Read James 2:25. Rahab was a woman who helped God's people when they were trying to live in the Promised Land. Briefly explain the story of Rahab and the Israelite spies (picture 2D.16). Even though she had done many wrong things in her life, Rahab's good actions showed her faith in God.

One of the most important ways to show your faith is by loving others. Remember, love is action—not just words or feelings. God wants you to love others without favoritism by treating them as you'd want to be treated.

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Big Idea: **True faith directs God's children to speak words that bless God and others.**

James 3 [outline form]

Intro: *Our words have great power to hurt or to heal.*

Ask: *Why is "the tongue" such a powerful part of the body?*

1. A small part of the body can control a person's entire life.
 - *Everyone can stumble in many ways, including by what we say. . . . James 3:2*
 - *Small "things" can have great effects 3:3-4*
 - *The tongue (what we say) can also have a great effect on our lives 3:5-6*
2. The tongue is extremely difficult to control.
 - *No man (only God) can completely tame the tongue. . . . 3:8*
 - *Our words can both praise God or curse people 3:9*
 - *Our mouths should only speak good words (picture 2D.17) 3:10*

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3. There are two kinds of wisdom—God's wisdom and the world's wisdom.
 - *The world's wisdom brings jealousy and ambition 3:14*
 - *Heaven's wisdom is pure, peace-loving, and considerate. . . . 3:15*
 - *It is also submissive, merciful, and sincere (picture 2D.18) 3:15*

Conclusion: *God wants us to speak words that praise Him and bless others. Pray for God to "control your tongue" so that you can speak with God's wisdom!*

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Intro: *Our words have great power to hurt or to heal.*

Ask: *Why is "the tongue" such a powerful part of the body?*

How many of you have ever ridden a horse? Encourage responses. The bit in the horse's mouth enables the rider to control the animal. Can you imagine being on the horse and having no way to control him?

In James 3, we read about a very important matter: controlling our tongues. In comparison with the rest of your body, your tongue is very small. James talks about how small things can control large things. A little bit can control a large horse. A small rudder can steer a huge ship. The tiniest spark can lead to a raging, uncontrollable forest fire! And an uncontrolled tongue can corrupt the whole person. When Jesus comes to live in us, God's love begins to flow out of us, including the words that come from our mouths. It is not easy to learn to control our tongues, but God's Spirit changes us and fills us with good words.

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Sometimes, however, words just pop out, almost before we realize it. Living for Jesus means learning to choose words wisely. *How many of you have ever gotten into trouble for an out-of-control tongue?* All of us have been in trouble at one time or another for something we said.

Sometimes people use their tongues to praise God. Sometimes they use their tongues to curse other people. What you say shows what is inside you. *What kind of fruit do you expect to find on an apple tree?* You won't find oranges on an apple tree. *What kind of water do you expect to find in the ocean?* You won't find fresh water in the ocean. What kind of words do you expect to come from the mouth of a believer in Jesus? You shouldn't find curses in the mouth of a Christian.

Instead of using words to hurt others, God wants us to use our tongues to encourage and bless others, and most of all to bring praise to His name (picture 2D.17). As we walk closely with God and listen to Him, we can then speak more carefully and live in His power. God promises that He will change us and help us gain control where it is needed. God wants to fill us with His wisdom (picture 2D.18). He is the way that we can learn to control our tongues.

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Big Idea: **True faith helps God's children live selflessly and overcome pride.**

James 4 [outline form]

Intro: *God wants us to live selflessly and overcome pride.*

Ask: *Why does God care so much about the desires of our hearts?*

1. Selfish desires only lead to quarrels and sin.

- *We always want what we don't have* James 4:2
- *God does not say "yes" to selfish prayers* 4:3
- *Friendship with the world is hatred toward God* 4:4
- *God gives us grace to fight selfish desires* 4:6

2. Submitting to God is the only way to please Him (picture 2D.19).

- *Resisting Satan causes him to flee* 4:7
- *God comes near to us when we come near to Him* 4:8
- *We cannot both judge others and obey God's commands* (picture 2D.20) 4:11

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3. Acknowledge that God is in control of the future.

- *Our lives are short and insignificant compared to God* 4:14
- *We should humbly state our plans within God's will* 4:15
- *Failing to do what is good is also a sin* 4:17

Conclusion: *Submitting to God is one way to show true faith. He is all-powerful and in control of everything. Rely on Him!*

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Big Idea: **True faith helps God's children live selflessly and overcome pride.**

James 4 [narrative form]

Intro: *God wants us to live selflessly and overcome pride.*

Ask: *Why does God care so much about the desires of our hearts?*

Everyone struggles with selfishness. We can't get rid of these selfish desires on our own. When we confess to God and ask Him to take those desires away, we can live in His power. Jesus submitted Himself to God each day of His life (picture 2D.19).

James wrote to some Christians who were caught up in wrong attitudes and desires. Sometimes they got into fights and quarrels. Sometimes they prayed for something and didn't receive it, because they asked for the wrong reasons. Read James 4:4. The Bible tells us that we cannot love both God and the world. If we are friends of the world, then we are enemies of God. Friendship with the world is hatred toward God. Worldly desires are selfish desires. God wants first place in our hearts.

Here's a story of what a selfish person can end up looking like:

People just sort of stayed out of Brian's way. He always plopped down in the back seat

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of the school bus and took up the whole seat himself. He always elbowed his way to the front of any line at school. When it was recess time, he made sure that he had the best basketball and appointed himself team captain, always demanding the best players for his team. On through the day it went. Brian was caught up in extreme selfishness. Deep inside he was miserable, and he made everyone around him miserable, too.

But selfishness doesn't always have to be so extreme. It can happen in the Church, too! Jesus told a story about two men (Luke 18:9-14) (picture 2D.20). A Pharisee walked into the Temple. He stood where everyone could see him. He prayed aloud so that everyone could hear him, "I thank You that I am not a sinner. I fast twice a week. I also give offerings."

A tax collector came to the Temple. People didn't like tax collectors. They made people pay more taxes than the law commanded. He stood at a distance. He looked down at the ground. He probably spoke quietly. He said, "Lord, have mercy on me. I am a sinner."

Which man was proud? Which man was humble? Our sinful nature makes us selfish, but God has a better way for us. If we ask Him, God will forgive our selfishness and give us a humble, loving heart that makes Him "number one."

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Big Idea: **True faith entitles God's children to receive eternal rewards.**

James 5 [outline form]

Intro: *We should live with an eternal point-of-view.*

Ask: *Why are heavenly rewards more important than earthly riches?*

1. God warns people not to rely on wealth or riches.
 - *Wealth and possessions do not last* (picture 2D.21) James 5:2-3
 - *Love of wealth leads to sinful actions* 5:4-6

2. God rewards patience in suffering.
 - *Be patient until Jesus comes again* 5:7
 - *God's judgment is close at hand* 5:9
 - *God blesses those who persevere in His name* 5:11

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3. Pray all the time for all things.
 - *Pray when in trouble or when happy* 5:13
 - *Pray for those who are sick, pray to confess sins* 5:14-16
 - *A righteous person's prayer is powerful and effective* (picture 2D.22) 5:16
 - *Prayer can help save people from their sins* 5:19-20

Conclusion: *Jeremiah was God's servant even when threatened with death. Pray for courage and strength when you are persecuted for following God.*

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Big Idea: **True faith entitles God's children to receive eternal rewards.**

James 5 [narrative form]

Intro: *We should live with an eternal point-of-view.*

Ask: *Why are heavenly rewards more important than earthly riches?*

Read James 5:1-3 (picture 2D.21). Suppose that you and your family are leaving on a very special trip tomorrow. *What would you do today to get ready?* Encourage responses. You would not wait until the morning you were leaving to do these things, because you would not be ready for the trip. If it is important that we get ready for an earthly trip, how much more important to be ready for our heavenly trip. We don't know when Jesus will return, but we should always be ready. We want to put things in the suitcase that will help us get ready for Jesus' return.

Have any of you ever helped plant a vegetable garden? How long does it take for the plants to grow? That's right, it takes a long time. You have to be patient. It's the same way while we wait for Jesus to return. Be patient. Stand firm.

We've heard many Bible stories about prophets who were patient when they

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suffered. God blessed them because they persevered when trouble came. Think about Job. He lost his family and his possessions, and he was very sick. Yet he believed God, and in the end, God blessed him.

When we are in trouble, we should pray. When we are happy, we should sing songs of praise. When we are sick, we ask others to pray for us. We should confess our sins and pray for each other. If we see someone in trouble or someone who is doing something wrong, we try to help him.

Elijah shows us that prayer is powerful and effective (picture 2D.22). Elijah was an ordinary person whom God used in a very special way. But Elijah knew how to pray. He prayed that it wouldn't rain so that the people of Israel would stop worshipping false gods. And it didn't rain for three years. Then after the people promised to worship God again, Elijah prayed for rain. At first, a cloud as small as a man's hand appeared in the sky, then the sky grew black with clouds. It rained and poured!

Jesus will return one day and judge all people according to what they have done—including us! Only those who have a true relationship with Jesus will go to heaven. What are things He wants us to do while we wait? What things does He want us to avoid? What does God promise those who are ready for His return?

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Big Idea: **God guides His children to walk in love and truth.**

2, 3 John [outline form]

Intro: *God guides His children to walk in love and truth.*

Ask: *How can you walk in love? How can you walk in truth?*

1. God commands us to walk in love.

- *Jesus is with us in love and in truth.* 2 John 1:3
- *From the beginning, God has commanded us to love each other.* 1:5
- *Love means obeying God's commands* 1:6
- *Beware of those who appear to believe, but do not walk in love.* 1:7-9

2. God commands us to walk in truth (picture 2D.24).

- *Walking in truth brings great joy* 3 John 1:3
- *Walking in truth means helping each other* 1:5
- *Showing hospitality and working together please God.* 1:8
- *The truth testifies to our good works* 1:12

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Conclusion: *Walking in love and truth lead to loving actions and true faith. Pray that God would continue to guide you with His Word!*

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Big Idea: **God guides His children to walk in love and truth.**

2, 3 John [narrative form]

Intro: *God guides His children to walk in love and truth.*

Ask: *How can you walk in love? How can you walk in truth?*

John wrote the letters we are reading today. As the people came to know the truth about Jesus, they wanted to tell others how much Jesus loved them. In 2 John, John wrote to a lady and her children as well as to all who know the truth. John quickly reminds the believers how to walk in truth and love. *Who commanded us to walk in truth? What does "walking in the truth" mean to you?*

In verse 5 what does John say to do? (Love one another.) (picture 2D.23) *In verse 6, how does John tell us to love one another?* (To walk in obedience to His commands.) *Is this a new command?* (No, it has been from the beginning!)

What does John want us to know about people who do not believe that Jesus is God in the flesh? (They are the false teachers who will try to make us believe lies.)

In verse 10, who does John say not to welcome into our homes? (Those who do not

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teach the truth that Jesus is God.) This is very important because we become like the people we hang around. If we are around nice people, we will be nice. If we spend time with bad people, we tend to become like them. That is the way people are. God wants us to make wise choices about whom we choose to be around.

Let's look at the other letter we have from John, 3 John. This letter was written to John's friend, Gaius, and yet it was also written to us. In verse 4, John says there is no greater joy than to hear that people are walking in the truth. *In verse 8, to whom should we show hospitality?* (Those who work together for truth.) *What does it mean to show hospitality? Can you think of someone who is working to share God's truths?*

Finally, John tells us what to imitate. *What does verse 11 say?* (Do not imitate what is evil but what is good.) *What does John say about a person who does what is evil?* (He or she is not of God.) *What about a person who does what is good?* (He or she is of God.)

John wanted his friends to remember that God wants them to walk in truth and in love. God wants us to walk in love and truth also, and He will guide our walk with Him (picture 2D.24).

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