


I BELIEVE

The Christmas story is full of the miraculous! But not everyone believes. In the center column below, jot reasons people give (or might give) for their skepticism, then list responses to the skepticism out to the right. Since skeptics might not accept an answer of “because the Bible says so,” try to push deeper than that.


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	Reason Skeptics Say, “No.”	My Response
Angels can and have appeared in the physical realm.		
God intervenes in human history to bring forward His will.		
Jesus was conceived of a virgin, by divine activity of the Holy Spirit.		
God miraculously made conception and childbearing possible to those physically incapable by old age.		
Mary’s baby, Jesus, was God-in-the-flesh (God incarnate).		

MARY AND I

Mary demonstrated all the following attributes of one who can be used by God. In what ways do you see yourself like Mary? In what ways do you fail? Use the checkboxes to mark your responses.

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	I am not like Mary since I still fail to honor God this way	I am like Mary since I do indeed honor God this way
Mary kept herself sexually pure, as God required.		
Mary believed God’s Word, even though it seemed incredible.		
Mary submitted graciously to God’s will for her life.		
Mary was willing to do something difficult (the trip to see Elisabeth) to share her good news with someone.		
Mary was willing to trust God in difficult circumstances.		

What changes do you need to make to move all your check marks to the right? Jot ideas below:

GOD IS FAITHFUL

Mary's song in Luke 1:46-55 is centered on God's faithfulness. The coming of Jesus in the flesh completes many of the promises God made to His people in the Old Testament. Look at these texts and identify how Jesus fulfilled the promise God made.

Genesis 3:15 _____

Genesis 12:3 _____

2 Samuel 7:16 _____

Psalms 2:6, 7 _____

Psalms 89:26-29 _____

Isaiah 7:14 _____

Isaiah 9:6, 7 _____

Daniel 7:13, 14 _____

Micah 5:2 _____

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MAGNIFY AND GLORIFY

Those who would follow God and His Son should do the same as Mary did: magnify and glorify the Lord! Mary affirmed what God had done and submitted to His will. How will you do so?

He has become my Savior, and I will

He has done great things for me, and I will

He has shown His mercy to me, a sinner, and I will

He has filled those hungering for righteousness, and I will

He has kept His Word to the fathers and the prophets, and I will



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DIVINE ILLUMINATION

Zacharias, by the revelation of God, knew something of the future of his son, John. That future—although not fully disclosed to Zacharias—involved John’s playing a key part in bringing God’s mercy as the dawning of a new day, a new sunrise, “the dayspring from on high . . . to give light to them that sit in darkness” (Luke 1:78, 79). What areas of darkness have been dispelled for you as a result?

One “behavior of darkness” I engaged in was this: _____ ,
but now I have replaced that with this “behavior of light”: _____ .

One “belief of darkness” I entertained was this: _____ ,
but now I have replaced that with this “belief of light”: _____ .

One “attitude of darkness” I wallowed in was this: _____ ,
but now I have replaced that with this “attitude of light”: _____ .

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JOHN THE BAPTIST AND I

John was to “go before the face of the Lord to prepare his ways; to give knowledge of salvation unto his people by the remission of their sins” (Luke 1:76, 77). How do you see yourself filling a similar role in various situations as a forerunner of Jesus?

Ways that I can be a forerunner for Jesus in bringing “knowledge of salvation” in these opportunities:



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At work or school: _____

At home: _____

At church: _____

On social occasions with unbelievers: _____

At a family reunion: _____

In missions I support financially: _____

By participating in short-term missions: _____

At a class reunion: _____

In my prayer life: _____

O LITTLE TOWN OF BETHLEHEM

How much do you know about Bethlehem's history? Without looking in your Bible, see if you can fill in the six blanks below from the nine possible answers on the right.

- David
- Ephrathah or Ephrath
- Jesse
- Judah
- Levi
- Naomi
- Rachel
- Ruth
- Samuel

- A. After she died, _____ was buried on the way to Bethlehem (Genesis 35:19; 48:7).
- B. In the period of the judges, _____ and her husband left Bethlehem because of a famine (Ruth 1:1, 2).
- C. The Lord sent the prophet _____ to Bethlehem to anoint a son of _____ as king to replace Saul (1 Samuel 16:1-4).
- D. Bethlehem is also known by the name _____ (Genesis 48:7; Ruth 1:2; 4:11; Micah 5:2).
- E. Bethlehem was located in the tribal territory of _____ (Judges 19:1, 2, 18).

ANGELS AND SHEPHERDS AND ME

Regarding Luke 2:8-18, which of the following affirmations fit the shepherds or the angels or both? Put check marks in the boxes to the left as appropriate. Then jot notes out to the right regarding your own role in that regard.

<u>APPLIES TO SHEPHERDS</u>	<u>APPLIES TO ANGELS</u>		<u>HOW IT APPLIES TO ME</u>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Were submissive and supportive	_____
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Served as God's messengers	_____
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Cooperated with others for God's tasks	_____
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Completed their tasks anonymously	_____
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Didn't waste time	_____
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Honored and/or worshipped the Messiah	_____



SIMEON, ANNA, AND ME

Luke, by the Holy Spirit, notes certain characteristics of Simeon and Anna. Put check marks out to the left as you see the description applying to one or both. Then rate yourself on the scale to the right regarding how well the description applies to you, from 1 (not at all) to 5 (completely). How can you get your scores up?



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<u>Simeon</u>	<u>Anna</u>	<u>Description</u>	<u>Me</u>				
___	___	1. Remained faithful through a long life	1	2	3	4	5
___	___	2. Worshipped regularly.	1	2	3	4	5
___	___	3. Patiently waited for God's plan to unfold	1	2	3	4	5
___	___	4. Proclaimed Jesus' future.	1	2	3	4	5
___	___	5. Unashamedly told others of the Christ.	1	2	3	4	5
___	___	6. Thanked, praised, and/or blessed God for the Messiah.	1	2	3	4	5
___	___	7. Acknowledged that God's promise is for everyone	1	2	3	4	5



JESUS' MIDDLE NAME?

A birth announcement includes the name of the newborn, and today's text is no exception (see Luke 2:21). Since baby announcements today also list middle names, what middle names do you think Simeon and Anna might have suggested had the giving of middle names been a practice in the first century? Use the reactions of those two in today's text as a basis of your ideas as you fill in the blanks below. One example is given to get you started.

	<u>POSSIBLE MIDDLE NAME</u>	<u>REASON</u>
Luke 2:30	_____	_____
Luke 2:31	_____	_____
Luke 2:32	_____	_____
Luke 2:34	_____	_____
Luke 2:35	<i>Pearce</i>	<i>"a sword will pierce..."</i>
Luke 2:38	_____	_____

LORD OF THE SABBATH

Jesus' lordship involves *authority* (the right to do something) and *power* (the ability to do something), and He demonstrated both regularly (examples: Luke 5:20-26; 8:24). When Jesus stated, "The Son of man is Lord also of the sabbath" in Luke 6:5, He claimed both authority and power to do what He chose on and with the Sabbath. In which verses do you see Jesus exercising authority and/or power with regard to the Sabbath in today's text? Jot discoveries below.

Jesus' Authority Jesus' Power Why

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- A. God can set aside or modify laws He has established.
- B. Meeting basic human needs may supersede the need for Sabbath rest.
- C. God's Sabbath was designed for humanity's good, not oppression.
- D. Mercy and grace are always appropriate, even on special days of religious duty.
- E. A good thing carried to legalistic extremes becomes a bad thing.
- F. In the godly approach to life, motive is more important than external obedience.

TIME TO REST

One of God's principles for His creation is that there is a time to work and a time to rest (Exodus 23:12; Leviticus 25:4; Hebrews 4:9, 10; etc.). How do you see each of the following as playing a part in that principle in your life? Jot ideas below.

Day and night rhythm

A day set apart for gathering to worship

Seasons

Bodily strength and fatigue

Special days



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HARD IMPERATIVES

Jesus presents four hard imperatives in Luke 6:27, 28. For each of the four, rate the level of difficulty you have: from 1, "It's a snap!" to 5, "I find it nearly impossible!" After each, write the reason(s) why you have so rated it. Add a brief commitment statement to moving closer to obedience.

My Rating

- _____ 1. "Love your enemies."
- _____ 2. "Do good to them which hate you."
- _____ 3. "Bless them that curse you."
- _____ 4. "Pray for them which despitefully use you."

Why

THE GOOD LIFE

Jesus offers strong contrasts to what most today consider "the good life." Look at the following choices and describe the two opposing views.

Contemporary View

Jesus' View

Type of leader one chooses to follow or to be
(Luke 6:12)

Level of wealth one pursues
(Luke 6:24)

Degree of "creature comforts" that one seeks
(Luke 6:21a, 25a)

Importance of "being happy"
(Luke 6:21b, 25b)

Seeking to be popular or liked
(Luke 6:22, 23, 26)

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What needs to happen for you to move from the contemporary view to Jesus' view? Be specific:

TIME TO EAT

A reader of the Gospels will find Jesus frequently participating in table fellowship; one writer counts 19 such instances. In today's text, Jesus speaks of the bad motives of those who would issue and/or respond to invitations for such fellowship. How do you see each of the following principles in Jesus' teaching and in your own life?

1. Sometimes people issue or accept invitations to meals for the wrong reason.

In Jesus' teaching: _____ **How I can do better:** _____

2. One should not be presumptuous regarding which seat to take at a dinner party.

In Jesus' teaching: _____ **How I can do better:** _____

3. If one's goal as host is to receive a reciprocal invitation, then the goal needs to be reevaluated.

In Jesus' teaching: _____ **How I can do better:** _____

4. Those who serve as hosts out of a motive of kindness will be honored by God at the judgment.

In Jesus' teaching: _____ **How I can do better:** _____

5. Christians should anticipate that the best meal to enjoy will be at the feast of Heaven.

In Jesus' teaching: _____ **How I can do better:** _____

6. A last-minute excuse for skipping a "by invitation" meal may give a person a bad reputation.

In Jesus' teaching: _____ **How I can do better:** _____

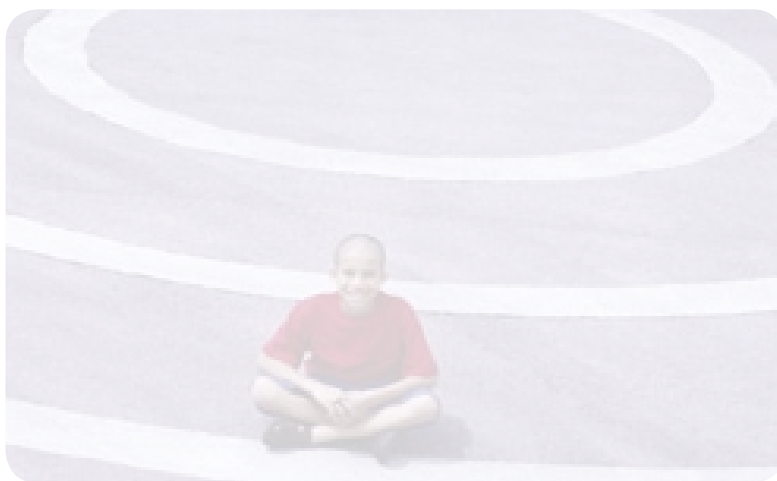
YOUR CHURCH AND ITS CIRCLE

In the innermost circle to the right, characterize the people (without using names) who seem to form "the core" of your church family.

Then in the next circle out, describe those who seem to be "somewhat outside" the core group—those who attend congregational functions at least semi-regularly, but who don't really seem to "belong."

Finally, characterize in the outermost circle those whom you think would be downright uncomfortable coming to your church.

After characterizing these three groups, decide how those in the innermost circle can improve relationships and communication with those in the other two circles. Jot ideas below:



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COLOR ME . . . WHAT?

The 15 words to the right, from today’s lesson text, can be found in the puzzle below. Use your red pencil to circle the ones associated with the rich man; use your green pencil to circle the ones associated with Lazarus; use a regular pencil to circle the ones associated with Abraham.

T V Q V S S C S X C N H B F S
 E D R X U R T M E E L R K L G
 M V V E M R S N K R E N L A O
 J L W L P B E O E T O I Z M D
 A C R A T E Q Z H M N S U E Q
 F D G L U R N R P E R G I O M
 Y E L W O U E T N P T O J I F
 A I T B U N P U R P L E T L P
 R R Q W S Y N O A C Q A U K N
 J R U K L S Q W R W Q G R J R
 S A K Q Y R E B M E M E R A U
 V C F Z V T Q R D X G T G E E
 N H E L L V S O S U P G V I W
 Q X R Z U F U C R E E F B G G
 R R T C L V Y T H B S E S O M



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CHOICES, GOOD AND OTHERWISE

The section of Luke within which today’s lesson text is found is a treasure trove of teaching stories. Indicate good and bad choices made in each story below. Then recall both choices you made in a similar life circumstance. How did you grow spiritually from your choices?

Story and Text	Choices Made in the Story	My Choices in a Similar Situation
Dinner Seating, Luke 14:7-11		
Banquet Excuses, Luke 14:16-24		
A Lost Sheep, Luke 15:3-7		
A Lost Coin, Luke 15:8-10		
A Prodigal Son, Luke 15:11-32		
A Dishonest Manager, Luke 16:1-8		
Rich Man & Poor Man, Luke 16:19-31		
Dutiful Servant, Luke 17:7-10		
Pharisee & Publican, Luke 18:10-14		
Tested Servants, Luke 19:12-26		

HERE AND NOW, HEAR AND DO

Select the appropriate action(s) for the speaker below from the list to the right. You may select more than one action for any given scenario; also, you might not use all the potential actions listed.

- ___ A. "I feel so sorry for Julie and her kids, now that her husband has died of cancer. I would go over there, but I just wouldn't know what to say."
- ___ B. "You thought Sunday's sermon was really helpful? You know, I can't even remember what it was about."
- ___ C. "When that lady let go of her shopping cart and it rolled over and dinged my car, I let her have a piece of my mind. She was talking about being dizzy, but I didn't pay much attention."
- ___ D. "Do you know what the preacher said to me? He said I need to try to forgive my husband. He's not getting off that easy!"
- ___ E. "You aren't going to believe what I just heard about the Johnsons. You know, the ones at church who act so high and mighty? Listen to this."
- ___ F. "I know that place has a bad reputation, but I go there for the food."
- ___ G. "I can't help it if I swear occasionally. Sometimes it just slips out before I know it."
1. Be swift to hear.
 2. Be slow to speak.
 3. Be slow to wrath.
 4. Lay apart all filthiness.
 5. Receive with meekness the engrafted word.
 6. Be doers of the word, and not hearers only.
 7. Continue in the perfect law of liberty.
 8. Bridle your tongue.
 9. Visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction.
 10. Keep yourself unspotted from the world.

THE REAL PICTURE

As you reflect on today's lesson, circle the silhouette below that best represents your relationship with God and His Word right now. What changes do you need to make to improve that relationship?



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HOW GOD LOOKS AT PEOPLE

Throughout Scripture, we read of times when God used those whom the world would have considered “less than desirable” to accomplish His purpose. Unscramble the words to the right to review some of those times from Scripture.

The World Would Choose . . .

1. A great orator to present a case before a ruling authority
2. A great general to lead a huge army
3. A man of proper lineage to be king
4. A noble statesman to prepare the way for a visit by the king’s son
5. Highly educated theologians to debate and confront others of similar standing
6. Professional teachers to teach others

God Chose . . .

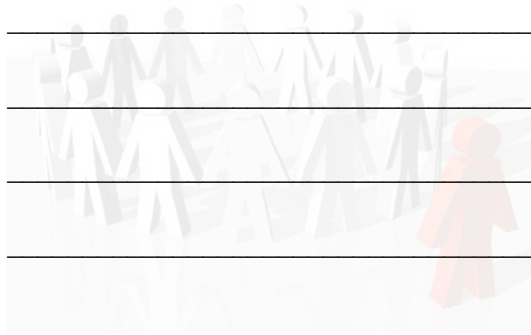
- A man named _____, self-described as “not eloquent, . . . slow of speech, and of a slow tongue,” to be God’s spokesperson (Exodus 4:10).
- A man named _____, self-described as “least” in his family, to lead a group of 300 men armed with trumpets, pitchers, and lamps (Judges 6:15; 7:7, 16, 22).
- A shepherd boy named _____ to be king of Israel (1 Samuel 16:1, 13).
- A rugged man dressed in camel’s hair clothes called _____ the Baptist to be the forerunner of Jesus (Matthew 3:1-6).
- Two “unlearned and ignorant men” named _____ and _____ to confront the high priest and other members of the Sanhedrin. (Acts 4:13)
- The husband and wife tentmaking team of _____ and _____, who had been expelled from Rome, to teach Apollos, a man who was already “eloquent . . . and mighty in the scriptures” (Acts 18:2, 3, 24-26).

ESSMO OEGDIN AIDV OJHN (used twice)
 RTEPE QLUAI LILCPARSI

LOVING MY NEIGHBOR

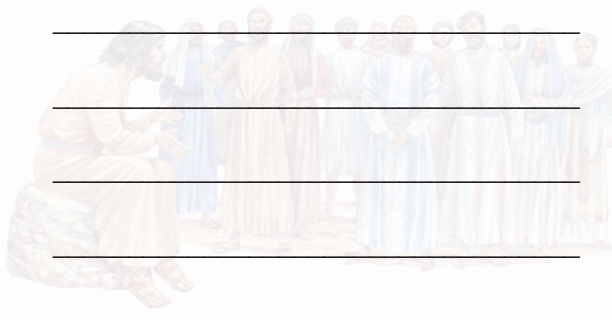
On the left, make a list of “categories” of people in your area (no names) who are treated unequally for no rational reason. On the right, identify how Jesus expects you to treat them. Avoid superficial answers such as “equally”—be specific!

People treated unequally and why



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How Jesus expects me to treat them



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ACTION TEST

In our text today, we see that faith or belief should result in actions. Fill in the blanks below with words or phrases that show this relationship. One has been done for you.

If I believe that my surgeon is an alcoholic, then I will *find someone else to perform my surgery.*

If I believe that the brakes on my car are worn out, then I will _____.

If I believe that my child is taking drugs, then I will _____.

If I believe that some food in my refrigerator has gone bad, then I will _____.

FAITH AND WORKS

Today's text demonstrates that *faith* and *works* are two sides of the same coin. Complete the acrostics below with words or phrases that show this relationship. One has been done for you in each acrostic.

F
A
I
Inspires AcTion
H

W
O
R
K
Show our faith

What is one way you will put faith into action in the week ahead? How will you do so?

PUTTING MY FAITH INTO ACTION

Putting faith into action requires self-reflection. Before we can act, we must know what we believe. Take a few minutes to reflect on today's lesson and then fill in the blanks below.

I believe _____; therefore, I will show it by

_____.

IMPROPER TALK

Find the words at the right in the puzzle below. The unused letters will spell out an important issue, repeated several times, regarding the tongue. Write the resulting sentence in the blanks below the puzzle.

C G T H E L I T T L B E T O N G U E E C
 A O N N C A U S E O B I G P R O B A L E
 M S N I T E H E A L I T T L E T O R N G
 U E C D S A N S N C A U P S E B I T G P
 R O B L E R T E E M S O T H E L L H I T
 H T A E D M U T C L I C E T O N I L G U
 F E C A N C N C A S U S O E B D V Y I H
 G I P R O B L A O E B M S A E T E H E E
 L I L T T L E N T T O O N F R G U L E C
 A N C T A U S E B I I G I P R S L O B L
 E M S T H H E L I T O L T L E T E O N G
 U E C A N Y C A U S E N E B I G P R O B
 L E M S T H E L I S T T L E T O N G U E
 C A N C A U S E B I G P R O B L E M S T
 H E L I T T L E T O N G U E C A N C A U
 S E B I G P R O B L E M S T F H E L I T
 T L E T O N G U E C A N C A U I S E B I
 G P R O B L E M S T H E L I T T R L E T
 O N G U E C A N C A U S E B I G P E R O
 B L E M S M L K P X P W W P N T R C K G



Getty Images / George Doyle

- Boast
- Coarse
- Cursing
- Condemnation
- Death
- Defiles
- Earthly
- Evil
- Filthy
- Fire
- Hell
- Obscene
- Poison

A PRAYER FOR PERFECT SPEECH

If you struggle with a certain aspect of your daily speech, fill in the blanks below and then pray this prayer for God's help in taming your tongue.

Father, I want my speech to reflect your love and grace.

Please guide my tongue this week as I work on

_____:

I ask this through your Son, who is our source of salvation, amen.

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Lesson 2

God is Faithful

- Genesis 3:15—Jesus is the one who defeats Satan.
 Genesis 12:3—The blessing to all people on earth comes through a descendant of Abraham: Jesus (see Galatians 3:8).
 2 Samuel 7:16—Jesus is the ultimate son of David; it is in that role that Jesus' throne is established forever.
 Psalm 2:6, 7—Jesus is the one proclaimed to be God's Son (see Acts 13:33; Hebrews 1:5; 5:5).
 Psalm 89:26-29—Jesus is the one "firstborn" of God (compare Colossians 1:18).
 Isaiah 7:14—Jesus is the one predicted to be born of a virgin (compare Matthew 1:23).
 Isaiah 9:6, 7—Jesus is the one bearing all the titles and descriptions of these verses.
 Daniel 7:13, 14—Jesus' favorite self-designation is "Son of Man"
 Micah 5:2—Predicted birthplace of Jesus.

Lesson 4

O Little Town of Bethlehem: A. Rachel. B. Naomi; C. Samuel / Jesse; D. Ephratah or Ephrath; E. Judah.

Angels and Shepherds and Me: Learners can make a good case for checking all the boxes.

Lesson 5

Simeon, Anna, and Me: 1. Anna, v. 38 (vv. 25, 26 may also imply that Simeon also was old); 2. Anna, v. 37 (vv. 25, 26 imply that Simeon did so as well); 3. Both, vv. 25, 37; 4. Simeon, vv. 30-32, 34, 35 (implied for Anna, v. 38); 5. Anna, v. 38; 6. Both, vv. 28, 38; 7. Simeon, vv. 31, 32.

Lesson 6

Lord of the Sabbath

- A. Authority, v. 5; Power, v. 10
- B. Authority, vv. 1, 9; Power, v. 10
- C. Authority, vv. 3, 4; Power, v. 10
- D. Authority, v. 9; Power, v. 10
- E. Authority, vv. 7-9; Power, v. 10
- F. Authority, vv. 3-5, 9; Power, v. 10

Note: Your learners may make a good case for other responses!

Lesson 8

Time to Eat

- 1. v. 12; 2. v. 8; 3. v. 12; 4. vv. 13, 14; 5. v. 15; 6. v. 24.

Note: Your learners may make a good case for other responses!

Lesson 9

T	V	Q	V	S	S	C	S	X	C	N	H	B	F	S
E	D	R	X	U	R	T	M	E	E	L	R	K	L	G
M	V	V	E	M	R	S	N	K	R	E	N	L	A	O
J	L	W	L	P	B	E	O	E	T	O	I	Z	M	D
A	C	R	A	T	E	Q	Z	H	M	N	S	U	E	Q
F	D	G	L	U	R	N	R	P	E	R	G	I	O	M
Y	E	L	W	O	U	E	T	N	P	T	O	I	I	F
A	I	T	B	U	N	P	U	R	P	L	E	T	L	P
R	R	Q	W	S	Y	N	O	A	C	Q	A	U	K	N
J	R	U	K	L	S	Q	W	R	W	Q	G	R	J	R
S	A	K	Q	Y	R	E	B	M	E	M	E	R	A	U
V	C	F	Z	V	T	Q	R	D	X	G	T	G	E	E
N	H	E	L	L	V	S	O	S	U	P	G	V	I	W
Q	X	R	Z	U	F	U	C	R	E	E	F	B	G	G
R	R	T	C	L	V	Y	T	H	B	S	E	S	O	M

Red words: brethren, flame, hell, linen, purple, repent, sumptuously, torments; **green words:** beggar, carried, dogs, sores; **uncolored words:** gulf, Moses, remember.

Lesson 10

Here and Now, Hear and Do

Possible answers: 9-A; 5-B; 1, 2, 3-C; 6-D; 8-E; 10-F; 2, 4-G.

Note: these are only possible answers; learners may make a good case for others.

Lesson 11

How God Looks at People: 1. Moses; 2. Gideon; 3. David; 4. John; 5. Peter and John; 6. Aquila and Priscilla.

Lesson 13

Improper Talk

C	G	T	H	E	L	I	T	T	L	B	E	T	O	N	G	U	E	E	C
A	O	N	N	C	A	U	S	E	O	B	I	G	P	R	O	B	A	L	E
M	S	N	I	T	E	H	E	A	L	I	T	T	L	E	T	O	R	N	G
U	E	C	D	S	A	N	S	N	C	A	U	P	S	E	B	I	T	G	P
R	O	B	L	E	R	T	E	E	M	S	O	T	H	E	L	L	H	I	T
H	T	A	E	D	M	U	T	C	L	I	C	E	T	O	N	I	L	G	U
F	E	C	A	N	C	N	C	A	S	U	S	O	E	B	D	V	Y	I	H
G	I	P	R	O	B	L	A	O	E	B	M	S	A	E	T	E	H	E	E
L	I	L	T	T	L	E	N	T	O	O	N	F	R	G	U	L	E	C	
A	N	C	T	A	U	S	E	B	I	I	G	I	P	R	S	L	O	B	L
E	M	S	T	H	E	L	I	T	O	L	T	L	E	T	E	O	N	G	
U	E	C	A	N	Y	C	A	U	S	E	N	E	B	I	G	P	R	O	B
L	E	M	S	T	H	E	L	I	S	T	T	L	E	T	O	N	G	U	E
C	A	N	C	A	U	S	E	B	I	G	P	R	O	B	L	E	M	S	T
H	E	L	I	T	T	L	E	T	O	N	G	U	E	C	A	N	C	A	U
S	E	B	I	G	P	R	O	B	L	E	M	S	T	F	H	E	L	I	T
T	L	E	T	O	N	G	U	E	C	A	N	C	A	U	I	S	E	B	I
G	P	R	O	B	L	E	M	S	T	H	E	L	I	T	T	R	L	E	T
O	N	G	U	E	C	A	N	C	A	U	S	E	B	I	G	P	E	R	O
B	L	E	M	S	M	L	K	P	X	P	W	W	P	N	T	R	C	K	G

Hidden Phrase: *The little tongue can cause big problems.*