

THE GIFT OF MEN

SCRIPTURE REFERENCE: EPHESIANS 4:1-24



God gave men as gifts to help the church mature and grow.

The STORY

Pray with children to start class.

Teaching Points for Class Discussion:

As Christians we are called to live lives worthy of our calling. After spending the first three chapters of his letter teaching the Ephesians of the magnificence of Christ and the power of His grace, Paul turns to apply this teaching to their everyday lives. Paul tells them that as followers of Christ, they should make every effort to live in peace and kindness with one another. Sin divides, but Paul appeals for unity on the basis that all Christians share the same hope, the same faith, the same Spirit, the same baptism, and the same Lord.

God gave us men to help us grow and walk worthy of our calling. Paul was aware that the command to live in unity is not going to be easy. He announces that God has given each believer the grace needed to live in unity and that He has also given us gifts to help us. Paul goes on to explain that these gifts are actually leaders - specifically, apostles, prophets, evangelists, and pastor-teachers.

The men called to these roles are given to the church to prepare God's people for service until we all reach unity and become mature in Christ. Until this happens, when we are with the Lord in heaven, God has given these ministries to the church.

Live holy lives in the goodness of God's grace. After telling them of the grace of God and the gift ministries of men, Paul exhorts the Ephesians to live holy lives. When he tells them to no longer live like the Gentiles, he means the unbelieving Gentiles who have hardened their hearts and lost their sensitivity. They have become so familiar with sin that they are no longer bothered in their conscience and have been completely given over to sin.

THE GIFT OF MEN

SCRIPTURE REFERENCE: EPHESIANS 4:1-24

WHERE IS THE GOSPEL?

Please use the following comments connecting today's lesson to the Gospel to help inform your understanding and serve you by aiding your preparation for class. Remember, we want to do more than present disconnected Bible stories and lessons to our young children. We want them to understand how each story in the Bible plays a part in God's greater plan of redemption.

In Ephesians 4, Paul turns to the practical issue of obedience, but the cross remains at the center. Although we need to obey and help one another obey, we do it for Christ. Our fellowship is designed to help us grow up into Christ, "reach unity in the faith and the knowledge of the Son of God, and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ" (Ephesians 4:13). We do not obey to become Christians; we obey to become more like Christ!

ON THE ROAD TO EMMAUS

Read the following Bible passage from the Old Testament. Use the following questions to help the children understand how this passage points to Christ in the New Testament.

Bible Passage: Psalm 68:16

Connecting the passage to Christ:

Paul quotes Psalm 68:18 in Ephesians 4:8 and then he relates it to Christ. Paul tells us in Ephesians 4:9 that if Jesus ascended, He must have descended. In Philippians 2:1-7, Paul tells us about Jesus descending to earth to become "nothing, taking the nature of a servant, being made in human likeness." We know, of course, that Jesus ascended after His resurrection.

When Jesus left, he left victorious, having accomplished what He set out to do. He was victorious over His captives: Satan, sin, and death. The result of His victory is that He is able to give gifts to men. In Ephesians Paul uses this passage from Psalm 68 to speak of the ministries of apostle, prophet, evangelist, and pastor-teacher.

Questions for reflection:

- How is Jesus' example of "descending" a good example for us to follow? (See Philippians 2:5-8, where Paul tells us that we should have the same attitude as Christ, who humbled Himself and became a servant.)
- What are the gifts we receive from Jesus, who has ascended? (In addition to the list in Ephesians 4:11, we could also say that we are given the gift of the Holy Spirit and the gifts of the Spirit.)

THE GIFT OF MEN

SCRIPTURE REFERENCE: EPHESIANS 4:1-24

SWORD BIBLE MEMORY

BE A DOER OF THE WORD

Take time during the class to review the *SWORD* Bible Memory verses with the class. Provide the opportunity for each child to recite the verses to an adult worker.

ACTIVITIES & OBJECT LESSONS

Use the following activities for practical application and discovery of this lesson. For the younger children, review the preschool questions and use them to help the children relate to the passage. For older children, ask them why they think this passage is in the Bible for us today. How is it supposed to affect our lives?

BLOWN BY EVERY WIND OF DOCTRINE

Supplies:

- fan
- 10 feet of yarn
- a paper cut out of a person
- Bible

Use this exercise to help the children understand just how a pastor can be used of God to help a person stay on the path of righteousness.

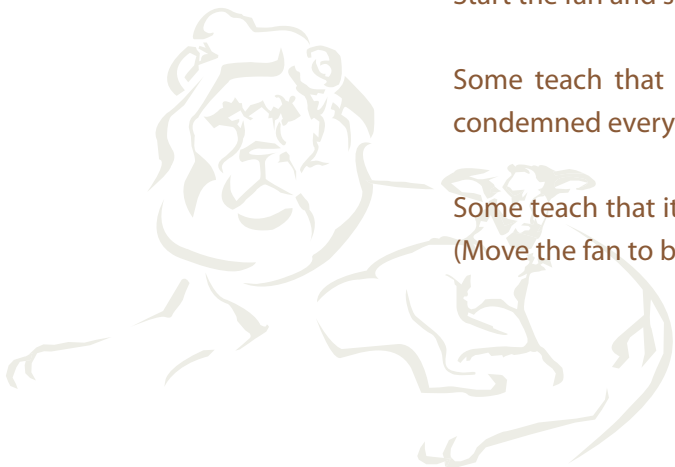
Tie a piece of yarn from the ceiling of your classroom and cut it off about four feet from the ground so that it hangs above a table in the front of the room. Attach the yarn to the head of the paper cut-out person. Place the fan on the table so that when you turn it on it blows the person all around. Then take a second piece of yarn and secure it to the bottom of the feet of the paper person.

Read Ephesians 4:1-16 and ask the children what it means to be like an infant tossed back and forth by the waves and blown here and there by every wind of teaching? (Explain to the class that if we are not well grounded in the Word of God we might be easily led astray.)

Start the fan and share these examples with the class:

Some teach that if you sin you are not a Christian. This causes people to be condemned every time they sin. (Let the fan blow the paper person.)

Some teach that it doesn't matter if a Christian sins because we have been saved. (Move the fan to blow the person another way.)



THE GIFT OF MEN

SCRIPTURE REFERENCE: EPHESIANS 4:1-24

But a pastor can preach God's Word to help us understand that although we have been saved by grace, we still sin. While you say this grab the bottom string to keep the paper person grounded so it is not blown. A pastor can teach us that we need to live for God, not to earn God's favor but because we have God's favor.

Some people teach that Jesus was just a man. (Let the fan blow.)

But a pastor can help us by teaching us from the Bible that Jesus was both fully God and fully man. (Hold the string.)

Talk to the class about the importance of the ministry of their pastors, who are charged with caring for the flock and feeding them sound doctrine.



THE GIFT OF MEN

SCRIPTURE REFERENCE: EPHESIANS 4:1-24

LOSING ALL SENSITIVITY

Supplies:

- eight blindfolds
- 2 pairs of surgical gloves
- 2 pairs of rubber kitchen gloves
- two pairs of heavy leather work gloves
- and a variety of small objects such as a nickel, flat washer, piece of Velcro® hook material, small piece of sponge, etc.

The object of this lesson is to demonstrate the process of desensitization. Blindfold eight volunteers and keep the objects for this lesson hidden in a bag.

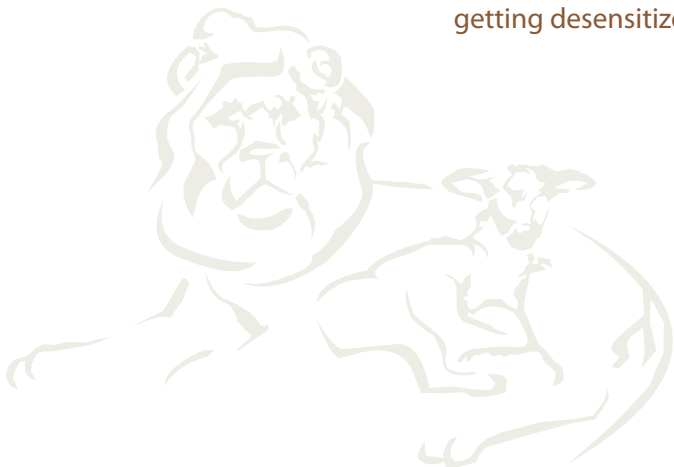
Have six of the volunteers put on the gloves. Then, starting with those wearing the work gloves give an object to the children and have them describe what it feels like to them. Pass the object on to those wearing the kitchen gloves, then to those wearing the surgical gloves, and finally to the two volunteers wearing no gloves at all. Each time the people should say what it feels like not what they think it feels like.

You might consider having the object brought back to the children with the gloves and allowing them to take the gloves off and feel the objects with their bare hands to appreciate the difference. Draw them out as to how different it was without the gloves.

Help the children appreciate the gift of touch as well and talk about how the gloves represent a hardened heart and conscience.

• What does it mean to harden your heart? (When we disobey God's Word we harden our hearts against God. The more often we disobey the more we get accustomed to disobeying and the less our conscience objects. One day we find ourselves freely disobeying without hardly any guilt at all.)

• In what kinds of areas do children struggle with losing their sensitivity to sin? (Disrespectful speech and treating their younger brothers and sisters with anger are two ways. Here is a desensitization test: Imagine your life was secretly recorded on video and shown for the church on Sunday. Would you be more embarrassed and filled with guilt if they saw your sin than you are at home? If so, you might be getting desensitized to sin.)



THE GIFT OF MEN

SCRIPTURE REFERENCE: EPHESIANS 4:1-24

SPEAK THE TRUTH IN LOVE

Supplies:

- masking tape
- two playground balls
- two blindfolds (Teachers be aware of children who might be sensitive to wearing a blindfold as some children do not do well having their eyes covered.)

The object of this lesson is to help the children see the value of speaking the truth in love to one another.

Prior to class, use the masking tape to outline a three foot wide race track around your classroom. The race track should form a loop, not a straight-away. Make two start lines opposite of each other.

Ask for two volunteers, one boy and one girl. Explain to them that the race track is the path of life and the ball is your life. The track represents the road of righteousness and the area outside of the lines represents sin. Tell the two volunteers that they are to roll their ball around the track with their feet and not let it get out of the lines into sin.

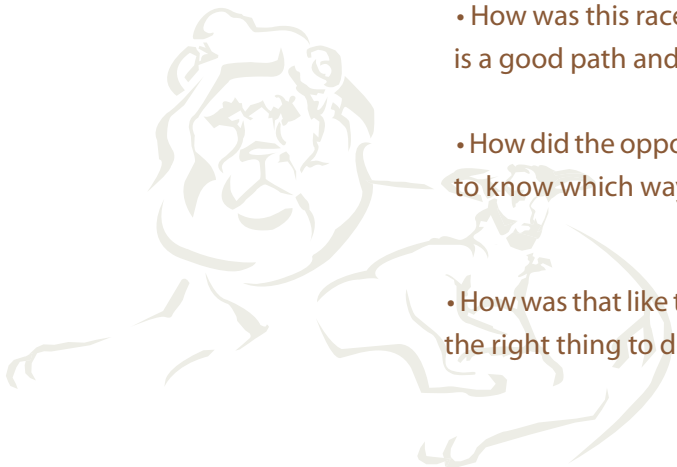
Just when they start to warm to the task, pull out the blindfolds and explain that we will not fully know Christ and be free of sin until we get to heaven. While we are sinners in this life we are often blind to our sins and need others to help us.

Position your class, (boy, girl, boy, girl) around the track. Tell your two volunteers to listen to the voices to know which way to go. They should make sure not to listen to the opponent's commands.

Blindfold the volunteers and then spin them around three times and then move them each to their own starting line. The first person who makes it back to their starting line is the winner. Run three races with new volunteers each time. The team with the most victories is the winning team.

Ask the children the following questions:

- How was this race like real life as a Christian? (Life is kind of like a race where there is a good path and bad; we need others to help us, etc.)
- How did the opponent's directions being given at the same time make it confusing to know which way to go? (If you didn't listen carefully you could be lead astray.)
- How was that like the temptations of the enemy? (Even though we sometimes know the right thing to do, we might follow the voice of temptation and fall into sin.)



THE GIFT OF MEN

SCRIPTURE REFERENCE: EPHESIANS 4:1-24

PRAYER

Pick several children to pray based on the day's scripture passages.

IN CLASS PROJECT

Draw a picture of two people shaking hands. Under the drawing write the words of Ephesians 4: 3.

FOR THE OLDER GRADES

OBEDIENCE AND THE GOSPEL

Supplies

Paper and pencil

Have the class read through Ephesians 4 and make two lists. The first list should be labeled Obedience and show all the things Paul is asking us to do as Christians. The second list should be labeled Grace and show the gospel and any reference to Christ or grace. The point is to see how we are not simply to obey in our own strength apart from Christ and the work of His grace. Use these two lists as a way to talk about the life of holiness we are called to without forgetting the Gospel and the grace of God which empowers us to obey.



THE GIFT OF MEN

SCRIPTURE REFERENCE: EPHESIANS 4:1-24

A LITTLE BIT MORE

The four-fold ministry. Some people who look at this list try to divide it into two groups. The first group is the gift ministries that some say do not exist anymore in the church – apostles and prophets. The second group are the gift ministries that do still exist in the church – evangelists, pastor-teachers (pastor and teacher are considered one.). The problem with dividing the list this way is that the apostle Paul tells us these leaders continue until we become mature and attain the whole measure of the fullness of Christ (Ephesians 4:13). This, of course, will not happen until we get to heaven.

Some are concerned about having modern day apostles and prophets because they associate these kinds of leaders with the writing of Scripture. But not all apostles wrote Scripture, and prophets in the New Testament were different from Scripture-writing prophets in the Old Testament.

The role of apostle in the church today does not involve the writing of Scripture. The grace given to an apostle is to plant and care for local churches, raise up and train pastors and protect sound doctrine in the churches he serves. In 1 Thessalonians 1:1 we are introduced to Paul, Silas, and Timothy. Paul includes these men in his greeting and in Thessalonians 2:6. Silas and Timothy were apostles, not in the sense of having grace to write Scripture, but in the sense that they had grace to help Paul lead, care for, and serve the local churches in Asia.

Old Testament prophets were considered false if their words did not prove true. This was important because God used many Old Testament prophets to speak His infallible Word. False prophets were to be stoned. In the New Testament, prophecy takes on a different role. Paul desires that everyone prophesy (1 Corinthians 14:5). Paul tells us in 1 Corinthians 14:3 that prophecy is designed for the strengthening, encouragement, and comfort of the church but that those prophesying don't always get it completely right. Paul says we prophesy in part, imperfectly (1 Corinthians 13:9). Pastor-teachers and other leaders govern the use of prophetic gifts and evaluate prophecies to assure that all is consistent with the gospel and sound doctrine.

