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## PRETEEN LESSON ON NOT BEING PERFECT

Preteens often struggle with the fact that, even though they are a Christian, they still mess up.

They may even say something like this: I think I accepted Christ, but I still sin; does that mean that I'm not really a Christian?

Being a Christian means that we are on a life-long journey of sanctification, with glorification awaiting us on the day of Jesus Christ. Being a Christian means that we are saved from our sins, but there is a fight against sin to be fought until God's work in us is complete.

Helping preteens to understand this will not only help them to have peace about their current state of imperfection, but also help them to "fight the good fight" (1 Timothy 6:12) and "work out [their] own salvation with fear and trembling for it is God who works in [them]" (Philippians 2:12).

**Bible Verses:** Philippians 2:12, Philippians 1:6, Isaiah 1:18, Hebrews 10:10, 10:14, Romans 7:15-16, Romans 17-20, 2 Corinthians 3:18

**Bottom Line:** As God works in us, we become more like him and reflect his glory more clearly.

### SUPPLIES

1 Hand-held mirror for each student (You can usually find these at your local dollar store)

1 Wet-erase or dry-erase marker for each student

1 Wet wipe for each student

2 Large mirrors (the kind that you hang on the back of a closet door. K-Mart sells these for \$6 each)

Dirt

1 Spray bottle

Optional: 1 Large squirt gun

2 Buckets

1 Towel

## PREP

Fill one of the buckets with water.

Fill the spray bottle and squirt gun with water.

Cover one of the large mirrors with dirt. Start by misting a mirror with a spray bottle, then grab some fine-grain dirt and throw it at the mirror. Repeat this until the mirror is covered with dirt. You may need to use your hands to smear the dirt and give it a “dirty” look.

Put the wet wipes in the fronts of the room. Preselect leaders to hand out the wet wipes during the last part of the lesson.

On the side of the spray bottle and squirt gun, write the word “SANCTIFICATION” in large letters.

On the side of the bucket of water, write the word “GLORIFICATION” in large letters.

## TEACH

(SAY:) Imagine one day you make a decision to fly, superman-style, toward the Sun. (Put your hands up as those you are flying super-man style.) So you start flying toward the Sun like this. You are flying and flying and getting closer and closer to the Sun as you go. What will start to happen to you?

(Take responses. You’ll probably get responses like “catch on fire”, “get hot”, “glow”)

It’s interesting, because if I asked you what the Sun is like, you’d probably give some of the same answers. The Sun is fire. The Sun is hot. The Sun glows. And these are the same things that would happen to me if I started flying toward the Sun.

If I made that decision – to fly toward the Sun superman style – I would start to become more and more like the Sun.

Tell me, who’s doing the work of changing me to become more like the Sun? Is it me that’s doing the work? Or is it the Sun?

(Take responses. Both you and the Sun play a factor in these changes, but it’s the Sun that’s changing you as you draw closer to it.)

**The reason I’m talking about this today is because the same type of thing is happening to you and me as Christians.**

The day we believed in Jesus as our Savior is the day we started flying toward the Son. Not the Sun – the Son. I'm talking about Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

And the longer we are on this journey – the longer we are a Christian, the more we are changed to be like the Son. Not the Sun – the Son.

**As we draw closer to Jesus, he changes us.** Here's how 2 Corinthians 3:18 says it:

“So we are being changed to become more like him so that we have more and more glory. And this glory comes from the Lord, who is the Holy Spirit.”

As Christians, we look at Jesus. And that changes us. But, also we reflect Jesus to the people around us.

It's like this mirror. (Pull out clean mirror.) If I angle the mirror so that it's “looking” at the lights on the ceiling in this room, it reflects those lights toward you. (Have a little fun flashing lights in the preteens' eyes.)

As we look at Jesus' greatness, and he changes us, we also start to reflect his greatness to the people around us – our friends, our family, our neighbors.

However, there seems to be a problem with this “reflecting God's glory” thing, doesn't there? (Look into the mirror as you say this next part:) If I look at myself, even though I'm a Christian, there are sinful tendencies in my life. I mess up. Every day. And that sin seems to block my ability to see God...and to show others God, too.

In Matthew 5:8, Jesus says, “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.” But if I'm being honest with you guys, my heart isn't 100% pure. Isaiah 1:18 says that even though my sins are like bright red, they will be washed away and I shall be like pure white snow. But I don't feel like my heart is like pure white snow.

I mean, I've accepted Jesus as my Savior, but I still sin. A lot. Does anybody else see this in themselves, too? (Look for response.)

Let me tell you some of the sin that is in my heart, even now. (Be general, and give the preteens a few examples of sins that you struggle with, like selfishness or pride. Remember to be age-appropriate in what you share. By sharing your struggles, you'll let them know that even a teacher like you isn't perfect...yet. This can help remove the pressure that some of them feel to be “perfect”. **As you share a few sins, write them in big letters with a red dry- or wet-erase marker on the mirror.**)

Many of you, when you look into the mirror at yourself, see all the sin that's in your heart, too. I want us to try something here today before we continue.

Right now, we are going to hand out mirrors and dry- or wet-erase markers to each of you. Don't do anything with them until I tell you. (Hand out mirrors and markers.)

First of all, I want each of you to look silently at yourself in the mirror. Look right at your own eyes for a minute. God loves you. God forgives you. When God looks at you he sees somebody who was wonderfully made. Somebody that he carefully knit together. God loves you.

As you look at yourself, though, you may think of some of the sins in your life. I want to give you a minute to use the marker we handed you to write some of the sins in your life on the mirrors. You may have something in your life that you don't want the people around you to know about, so instead of writing the whole thing out, you could just put a letter. So, for instance, if you struggle with stealing things, you could put a letter "T" for thief. Or whatever letter you want.

I'm going to give you a minute to write all the things down on your mirror that you are sin in your life.

(Give students a minute to write these down before continuing. If you are able, you could break into small groups for a time of sharing before continuing.)

Alright. Here are two sentences. You tell me which one is correct:

**We have been made holy.**

**We are being made holy.**

Which one is correct? (Take responses before continuing.)

Let's see what it says in the Bible, in Hebrews chapter 10.

"We have **been made holy** because Jesus Christ offered his body once and for all time...By that one sacrifice he has made perfect forever those who are **being made holy**." (v. 10b, 14)

So it's both! We have been made holy, and we are also being made holy.

Wow! That's so good to know.

See some of you, if we looked at your hearts, it would look like this. (Pull out dirt-covered mirror and place it in the empty bucket.) That's pretty gross! And it

doesn't reflect light very well either. A heart like that doesn't see God clearly, and doesn't reflect God clearly either.

But because "Jesus Christ offered his body once and for all time" on the Cross, you have been made Holy in God's eyes. When you stand before God, he doesn't see any of your sins, because Jesus already paid for them on the Cross. So in one way, you've already been made holy even though you still sin. There's a fancy word for this – it's "JUSTIFICATION". Everybody say "Justification".

But justification is not the end of the story (or the fancy words). No – your first day of being a Christian was just the beginning of something called sanctification.

See, you and I, as we go through life, are continuing to go through this process called "sanctification." (Hold up spray bottle to show the word "SANCTIFICATION" written on the side.)

When you come to church and hear his word being taught (spray some water on the mirror so that some of the dirt rolls down), God changes you to become more like him...more holy. When you spend time with God in prayer (spray some water on the mirror so that some of the dirt rolls down), God changes you to become more like him. When you read your Bible (spray), when you worship God (spray), when you do a good deed with help from the Holy Spirit (spray).

As you go through life, God is making you Holy. (Squirt...Squirt.) This is called "SANCTIFICATION". Everybody say "Sanctification."

Now, when you have a season where you are really pressing hard into Jesus, spending extra time in prayer, and reading your Bible more than ever, and worshipping God with more of your heart that you've ever done before, those seasons of sanctification change us even more (pull out the squirt gun and give the mirror a good shot of water).

Throughout your lives, you will continue to fight against sin, and you'll continue to grow closer to God. Remember how 2 Corinthians 3:18 says it:

"So we are being changed to become more like him so that we have more and more glory. And this glory comes from the Lord, who is the Holy Spirit."

And this will make you able to more clearly see God, and more clearly reflect him to the people around you. That's what sanctification is all about.

I want everybody to know today that if there is sin in your life, it doesn't mean that you aren't a Christian. It just means that God is still working in you, and you still have some work to do, too.

Just like flying superman-style toward the Sun changes us to become more like the Sun, choosing to spend time with Jesus will change you to become more like Jesus. That's sanctification.

There's this guy named Paul that wrote a lot of the New Testament of the Bible. When I read what Paul wrote, I say, "MAN! This guy is so awesome. I wish I could be like him." But, listen to what Paul says about himself in Romans 7:

"15 I don't understand what I do. I don't do what I want to do. Instead, I do what I hate to do. 16a I do what I don't want to do. 17 As it is, I am no longer the one who does these things. It is sin living in me that does them. 18 I know there is nothing good in my desires controlled by sin. I want to do what is good, but I can't. 19 I don't do the good things I want to do. I keep on doing the evil things I don't want to do. 20 I do what I don't want to do. But I am not really the one who is doing it. It is sin living in me that does it."

So, according to Paul, was he perfect just because he was a Christian? (NO!)

And we aren't either.

I want all of you to know that God was working in Paul's life, and I want you to know that God is working in my life right now. AND he's at work in you, too!

Just keep flying toward him. Keep spending time with him. He will continue to change you!

And one day, that day in the future when we see Jesus face to face, something new will happen! (Pick up bucket of water that has the word "GLORIFICATION" on the side. As you speak the next sentences, pour the bucket over the mirror and then use the towel to wipe off all the dirt.) On that day when we see Jesus face to face, all of our sins are washed away completely in this amazing, beautiful thing called glorification. When God is done with you and me, we will shine his glory so perfectly. We will be holy as he is holy – perfection will come! This (looking at clear mirror) is glorification. Say "Glorification" with me.

This is the day that we all are looking forward to.

Every Christian goes through all three of those fancy words: Justification – on the day they receive Jesus as Savior; Sanctification – throughout the rest of their lives; and Glorification – on the day of Jesus Christ.

Look at how Paul says it in Philippians 1:6 (NIRV):

"God began a good work in you. And I am sure that he will carry it on until it is completed. That will be on the day Christ Jesus returns."

I love this verse. It has all three of the fancy words that I used today:

“God began a good work in you. (**JUSTIFICATION**)

And I am sure that he will carry it on until it is completed. (**SANCTIFICATION**)

That will be on the day Christ Jesus returns.” (**GLORIFICATION**)

Look at those mirrors that you guys wrote on earlier. How many of you would like all those sins in your life to be washed away? (Look for response.)

Well, here’s some great news for you. Throughout your life, God is doing a work in your life called Sanctification, and he is removing those things from your heart and mind. And one day, the day that you stand face to face with Jesus, all of those things will be gone.

We want you to take these mirrors home with you and keep them as a reminder that God is doing a work in your life. But first, we want you to do one more thing to symbolize what God is doing and WILL DO in your heart.

I have a leader (or leaders) who is coming up to the front of the room right now. As we go into a time of worship, I want to invite you to come to the front and get a wet wipe from them. As you do, thank God for what he’s doing and WILL DO in your heart as you spend more time with him. Thank God for sanctifying you.

Then take that wet wipe and wipe away the sins on your mirrors. Do this as a symbol of what God is going to continue to do in your life.

God is at work in you! God loves you! God is sanctifying you, and you are becoming more and more like him as you continue to know him.

“Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, **work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you**, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.” -Philippians 2:12-13

Let’s pray.



## PRETEEN LESSON – YOU'RE GOD'S MASTERPIECE

It can be hard for preteens to see themselves with the same value that God has for them in Christ Jesus.

This lesson offers a healthy dose of encouragement to those who don't see themselves as the masterpieces that God created them to be!

As I look back on my preteen years, I wasn't the coolest kid in school. In fact, I was a bit on the nerdy side.

I had huge tinted glasses that were an inch thick, a mop style hair do, was embarrassingly uncoordinated, had braces that were bigger than my teeth, and was really skinny.

To say that I was self-conscious was an understatement. I struggled with feelings of inferiority for years.

But now, as a 40 year old, I embrace my nerdiness. I've come to love who God created me to be. Yeah, I regularly trip on my own feet, randomly break out and dance for no apparent reason in the grocery store embarrassing my kids, and annoy my family with a steady dose of corny jokes.

It's just who I am. It's who God created me to be. And I love it!

My hope is that this lesson will help the preteens in your ministry embrace who God made them to be too.

Enjoy!

***Nick Diliberto, Preteen Ministry***

**Lesson's Bottom Line:** The change God makes in our lives through Jesus doesn't just make us good. It makes us a masterpiece! Teach students about the transforming power of Jesus and the potential God sees in them, regardless of how they or others around them see themselves.

## **SUPPLIES**

**Note: You'll have to copy and paste all URL**

Print and cut these "masterpiece" coloring pages:

<http://juniorhighministry.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/masterpiece-puzzles.pdf>

Crayons, colored pencils or markers

Scotch tape

*\*Optional: Our Mess, God's Masterpiece video by the Skit Guys:*

<http://skitguys.com/videos/item/our-mess-gods-masterpiece>

## **OPENING GAME: Masterpiece Puzzle Race**

*Ahead of time, print out the Masterpiece Coloring pages and cut them into pieces based on the grid lines. Be sure to keep each pile of pieces separate. Set out your markers, crayons or colored pencils.*

Divide students into two teams.

Give each team a pile of coloring pieces and a set of coloring supplies (crayons, markers, and/or colored pencils).

Tell them they will have three minutes to color all of their pieces for part one. When time is up, you'll tell them what part two is.

Play some fun music for them to color by.

When the song has finished, tell them they will now race to be the first to assemble their pieces into one masterpiece.

Ten points go to the team who has their masterpiece assembled first, with every piece in the correct location.

There are also twenty bonus points available: 10 for naming the work and 10 for naming the artist.

Play a fun song or video while they assemble their masterpieces.

\*If you use social media, take a picture of each team with their assembled masterpiece to share online. You can also show on screen a copy of what the original masterpieces look like. Just do a Google search for Mona Lisa and Starry Night to find some pictures.

## **TEACH**

Ask: How many of you consider yourself “artistic”? You can draw, paint, etc.

(Allow students to respond)

I believe I could make the argument that all of us are artistic in different ways, but I understand how some of you may feel more artistic than others.

How about this question: How many of you like a fresh start? It could be a new calendar year, a new school year, a new season – regarding weather or sports – or even just the start of a new week?

(Allow students to respond)

There’s something fun and exciting about fresh starts.

Now, what do old paintings and fresh starts have to do with life as a preteen? Let’s go to the Bible to find out.

Open your Bibles to the book of **Ephesians**. It’s in the New Testament, just after **Galatians** and before **Philippians**.

Whether you are using a paper Bible or a Bible app, you should know how to find this book. There are lots of good teaching in this short book. Once you find **Ephesians**, go to **chapter 2**. Then find verse 1. (Once everyone has time to find it, have a student read Ephesians 2:1-10.)

**“Once you were dead...” (Ephesians 2:1-3)**

Not a very encouraging way to start out a chapter, is it? I mean, I guess it’s good that we’re not dead anymore, right? Looking at these three verses, Paul is writing to people who used to live very differently than

they do now. It sounds like they made a bunch of goals in changing their lives and have seen transformation in their everyday lives!

Circle the word “you.” That’s who these verses are all about.

He says, “You used to live in sin...” (Ephesians 2:2, NLT). In fact, he says, “All of us used to live that way...” (Ephesians 2:3, NLT). So Paul is the author of this book. He is writing to a group of Christians at a church in Ephesus. And as he opens up the second chapter, he points out that both he and his audience used to live in a way that went against God’s teaching.

### **“But God...” (Ephesians 2:4-7)**

While verses 1-3 are all about “you”, verses 4-7 are all about God! Look!

2:4 “God is so rich in mercy”

2:4 “he (God) loved us so much”

2:5 “he (God) gave us life”

2:5 “he (God) raised Christ from the dead”

2:6 “he (God) raised us from the dead”

2:7 “his (God’s) grace and kindness towards us”

Paul wants to make sure we understand something. On our own, we pretty much make a mess of things.

God, on the other hand, does all the work of fixing things.

And just in case we were slow learners, Paul makes things abundantly clear in the final three verses of this section.

### **Ephesians 2:8-10 (NLT)**

**“God saved you by his grace when you believed. And you can’t take credit for this; it is a gift from God. Salvation is not a reward for the good things we have done, so none of us can boast about it. For we are God’s masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so we can do the good things he planned for us long ago. “**

God did the saving. He turned that into a gift he offers to people who don't deserve it instead of some kind of reward we should try to earn and then brag about.

And then Paul does something strange. He goes from describing the works of God to describing a specific work of God: people, specifically Christians. They are described as being a "masterpiece."

And we are not just some work of art for people to visit in a museum. We are living art! He has good things planned for Christians to do!

*"We are God's masterpiece."*

*\*Optional – This would be a good time to play the Skit Guys video:*

<http://skitguys.com/videos/item/our-mess-gods-masterpiece>

So as we finish today, you have a lot to think about and a few different scenarios you might find yourself in.

Some of you today are interested in God but haven't become Christians yet. The Bible says you were created in God's image. In other words, you display in your life characteristics that resemble God. That goes all the way back to the beginning of the Bible! (Genesis 1:26-27) You have to decide if you want to become a masterpiece. It has nothing to do with your artistic ability or how you see yourself. Remember, in verses 1-3 Paul made it clear what a mess all of us- even me – make of our lives. But verses 4-10 made it clear how much God loves us and wants to transform us from a mess to a masterpiece.

Others of you have become Christians, but you are kind of like a masterpiece in a museum. In God's eyes you are amazing, but you aren't doing anything!

Paul reminded us and taught us that God transformed us when we became Christians into people with a purpose! He wants us to be doing the work He planned for us! So some of you need to find a way to get involved doing God's work!

And finally, there may some of you – whether you are a Christian or not-yet – who need this time just to pause and understand how much God loves you.

Maybe you've had a hard home life. Maybe you get bullied at school. Maybe this year has just been a tough year and you would love a fresh start.

No matter what your situation is, understand the truth that God loves you more than you can imagine. And His love for you is not something you earn or deserve.

He loves you because He created you with His characteristics and when He sees you, you remind Him of Himself.

Let's work through this more specifically in our small groups today.

### **SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

How many of you enjoyed coloring those papers?

Were you surprised at the picture your group made when you put all the pieces together?

If we look at those papers without realizing they go together, they kind of look like a mess. But when we put them together in the right order, they resembled a masterpiece! How is that similar to how we might see our lives compared to how God sees them?

Why do you think Paul wrote so specifically and repeatedly about how all the fixing and good things come from God?

Do any of you who have become Christians want to talk about why you made that decision?

Why is it important to see becoming a Christian as receiving a gift instead of earning a reward?

Have you ever thought of yourself as a masterpiece? How does that change your self-esteem and self-worth?

I've seen a walking taco, but I haven't seen much living art. What is the difference between just "being" a masterpiece versus a masterpiece who "does" God's work?

How might this week/semester/year/school year be a good opportunity for you to try something new?

If any of you want to talk about making that decision to become a Christian, to receive God's gift of grace, I'd love to talk to you more about that too.

## **TEACH WRAP-UP**

I hope you had some good conversations in your small groups!

I don't know about you, but I like the image of God taking our mess and turning it into a masterpiece.

*\*Optional: This would be a great time to play the "Our Mess, God's Masterpiece" video from the Skit Guys.*

**"For we are God's masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so we can do the good things he planned for us long ago." (Ephesians 2:10, NLT)**

Let today be a new day where you see yourself through God's eyes, a masterpiece! And once that truth sinks in, then get busy! God has work for you to do! After all, there's a world of people out there making a mess who could be making a masterpiece! Let's go help them know and live out the good news about Jesus!

## PRETEEN LESSON ON THE FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT

Bible: Galatians 5:16-17, Galatians 5:22-23

Bottom Line: The Holy Spirit works in us to change our words, thoughts, and actions.

### LESSON OVERVIEW

The Holy Spirit is a gift for all believers. He helps us by interceding for us, reminding us of the Truth, and sealing us with the promise of eternity. Another major role of the Holy Spirit is guiding us to spiritual maturity. We want to be more like Jesus, but how do we know if we're moving in the right direction? The book of Galatians tells us that we can monitor our spiritual growth by the Fruit of the Spirit.

### OPENING ACTIVITY: FRUIT-BASKET TURNOVER

#### Supplies:

- Chairs
- Optional: cards with fruit names to help preteens recall fruit names

**What to Do:** If possible, have the opening activity led by the same person each week of the series. Have this game host dress in ninja attire and speak like a Sensei. Have fun with the ninjas-in-training.

**Say:** You are halfway through your ninja training. I told you last week that the challenges would only get tougher from here. Today, we will test your ninja quickness and wits. Each of you will have to think quickly and move even quicker to be a true ninja. Do you think you have what it takes? We shall see!

**What to Do:** Have group sit in a circle of chairs. You should have one less chair than you do people, so that one preteen is left standing. Number people off, but instead of saying, "one, two, three..." say, "apple, banana, orange, kiwi, peach"—or whatever fruit comes to mind. The more people you have, the more groups you may want. The last person is "It" and stands in the center of the circle.

When the game begins, It yells out a fruit name. Everyone with that name must get up and exchange seats with someone else with that name. It tries to take one of the empty chairs before they are all taken. Whoever is left without a chair is now It.



At any point in the game, It can yell “Fruit-basket turnover!” and everyone must change seats. After a few rounds, you may also allow It to call more than one fruit at a time. This gets more people up and moving.

**Say:** Your ninja quickness is impressive. You must keep practicing so that you never fall behind in your ninja training. Next week will be your final challenge, and it will be the most difficult challenge yet.

Get ready, ninjas, because today you will learn a great lesson about becoming a Fruit Ninja!

## **TEACH: WHAT’S THE FRUIT?**

### **Supplies:**

- Rope
- Clothes line
- Clothespins
- Flesh Cards on 11X17 paper
- Spirit Cards on 11X17 paper

Welcome! We’re jumping into week three of our series, Fruit Ninja! Just like a ninja who trains to be like the Sensei, we’ve been talking about how we are called to grow more and more like Jesus. In week one of our series, we talked about how when we place our faith in Jesus, we are a new creation which means our whole identity changes.

Last week, we talked about God’s gift to us in the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is God living with us and in us. We saw a few of the ways that the Holy Spirit helps us. Remember that He intercedes for us, He reminds us of the Truth, and He seals us with His promise to be with us for eternity.

Today, we’re talking about how the Spirit changes us. The Holy Spirit helps us transform our thoughts and actions. But first, I need a few helpers to play a game.

(Select four to six preteens to play a game of Tug of War. Use rope or other long material for the Tug of War game. Mark the floor with tape at an equal distance from each team. The game is over once one team is pulled over that line.)

**Say:** How many of you have ever played the game Tug of War? To play the game, each side will hold one end of the rope. When I say, “Go,” each team will begin to pull and try to overpower the other side. The winner is the first to pull the other team past this line. Are you ready? On your mark, get set, go!

(Play one to three rounds of Tug of War. Be sure to stop the game if it is getting out of control. Thank the volunteers for playing and have them return to their seats.)

**Say:** Tug of War is a fierce game. Each team is fighting and pulling to overpower the other team. One minute, this team is winning and doing great. Then, bam! The other team takes over and starts to win. It's a back-and-forth battle. That's why it's called Tug of war!

We've been talking for a couple weeks about how we are given a new identity and called to be more like Jesus Christ. We want our words, thoughts, and actions to be like Jesus, but that is really hard. It's kind of like this game of Tug of War. Open your Bibles to Galatians 5:16-17.

*So I say, let the Holy Spirit guide your lives. Then you won't be doing what your sinful nature craves. The sinful nature wants to do evil, which is just the opposite of what the Spirit wants. And the Spirit gives us desires that are the opposite of what the sinful nature desires. These two forces are constantly fighting each other, so you are not free to carry out your good intentions.*

(Read Galatians 5:16-17.)

**Say:** These verses clearly show us that there is a battle going on. As we learn more about Jesus, we want to be more like Him. Remember, the Holy Spirit reminds us of what Jesus taught us. We want to do those things and be more like Christ, but at the same time we are still making bad choices and messing up.

I can imagine this is a hard part of the ninja life. A ninja must follow the Sensei's instructions at all times. There are probably times when the ninja wants to use his skills to impress others or get revenge against his enemy. But at the same time, the ninja knows what the Sensei has taught him and shown him. This is exactly that we go through in following Jesus!

On one side we have the Spirit, who is God living with us and in us. He is showing us what needs to change to be more like Jesus. On the other side, we have the flesh. This is the part of us that is sinful and selfish. It's the part of us that has been forgiven, but it still trips us up.

Both sides are pulling back and forth, so how do we know who's winning? How do we know that we're actually growing and becoming more like Christ? The Bible says that we can track our growth by looking at the Fruit of the Spirit.

**Ask:**

- Can anyone tell me what type of trees these are? (There's an apple tree, orange tree, banana tree.)

- How can you tell what type of tree it is? (We can tell the type of tree that it is by looking at the fruit that it produces.)

**Say:** The fruit is a quick and easy way for us to tell that the tree is healthy because it's putting out fruit like it's supposed to. And it helps us to identify the type of tree by just looking at what fruit is growing.

We can see the Holy Spirit working in us and changing us by the fruit that we produce. We're not going to start sprouting apples and oranges out our armpits, but we will produce certain words, thoughts, and actions. We want those to be more like Christ, and the Holy Spirit works in us to produce that kind of fruit.

It's a battle because we still want to do sinful things because we are sinful people. But the Spirit in us overpowers the flesh, and He helps us to become more like Jesus. So, what is the Fruit of the Spirit? What are the words, thoughts, and actions that show us we are growing more like Christ?

Let's read Galatians 5:22-23 to find out.

*But the Holy Spirit produces this kind of fruit in our lives: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. There is no law against these things!*

(Have a preteen read Galatians 5:22-23.)

**Say:** So, the fruit of the Spirit is: love, joy, peace, patience (forbearance), kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. I want to encourage you to memorize this passage of Scripture over the next two weeks. It's an important verse for all of us to remember as we grow in Christ. Today, we're going to talk about love, joy, peace, and patience. We'll save the other part for next week.

Let's talk about these first four words and how we can see the Spirit producing this fruit in us.

**What to Do:** For this teaching section, hang a clothesline across the stage or focal wall. On the line, hang 11X17 sheets of paper with the following list of words. Create another set of 11X17 sheets that have the Fruit of the Spirit listed on them.

As you go through each card, explain how our flesh displays the words hanging from the line. Then explain how the Spirit works in us to produce Christ-like fruit. As you describe the Spirit's work, hang the corresponding Fruit of the Spirit card over the flesh card. Emphasize the difference between the actions of the flesh and the actions of the Spirit in us.

Be clear that this is not a list of “Do’s and Don’ts.” Paul is listing some changes that occur in us by the work of the Spirit, but there are many other changes that come in our sanctification.

1. Jealousy, Gossip, HateàLove
2. Worry, Sorrow, SadnessàJoy
3. Anger, Fighting, UnhappyàPeace
4. Impatient, Compulsive, IntolerantàPatience (forbearance)

## LOVE

**Say:** The first card hanging here on the line says, “Jealousy, Gossip, and Hate.” What feelings do these words give you? (Pause for responses.) When you are put into a situation with a friend who has done something wrong to you, these are actually the natural reactions you might have. Because we are sinful, we react in a sinful way. We get jealous. We talk about others and spread gossip about them. We might even go so far as to really hate that person in our hearts.

(Cover the first card with the “Love” card.)

**Say:** So how does the Spirit produce a change in us? The Spirit helps us to *love*. Instead of reacting with jealousy, gossip, hatred, or any other sinful attitude, the Spirit helps us to respond with love.

In John 13:34-35, Jesus said to his disciples, “So now I am giving you a new commandment: Love each other. Just as I have loved you, you should love each other. Your love for one another will prove to the world that you are my disciples.’”

To be like Christ and to help others know that we are His disciples, we must respond to all situations with love. It means we put the needs of others before our own needs. If someone wrongs us, we must be willing to forgive and to love that person, even in his or her faults, just as God loved us. The fruit of love helps us know (and others to see) that we are being transformed to look more like Jesus.

## JOY

**Say:** The second card on our string says, “Worry, Sorrow, and Sadness.” Do you ever feel these emotions? Sometimes life is stressful. There are times when school or home life is just overwhelming. There are times when all your friends seem to turn on you or abandon you. In those times, we tend to worry a lot and become upset about our situation.

When the disciples learned that Jesus was leaving them, they began to worry and get upset. In that moment, Jesus said to them, “Now is your time of grief, but

I will see you again and you will rejoice, and no one will take away your joy.” Jesus wanted them to remember His promises and trust in Him. Even though things seemed to be going sour, they could still have joy in that situation.

(Cover the second card with the “Joy” card.)

**Say:** The Holy Spirit is with us and in us to remind us of God’s promises. In the worst times, we can still have joy because we remember who God is and all that He has done for us. Joy helps us to look past the struggles of today, and focus on the promises God has made to us.

## **PEACE**

**Say:** Has anyone ever gotten under your skin? Is there someone in your family or at your school who just makes you angry? We all face people who make us unhappy, angry, or want to fight! Our flesh tells us it’s ok to get angry and to fight with that person.

On the other hand, Jesus taught his disciples to turn the other cheek. He said, “Blessed are the peacemakers.” In John 16:33, Jesus said, “I have told you all this so that you may have peace in me. Here on earth you will have many trials and sorrows. But take heart, because I have overcome the world.”

(Cover the third card with the “Peace” card.)

**Say:** As we see how Christ loved others, the Spirit helps us to change our attitude and behavior to be more like Him. Instead of arguing and fighting, we can choose to forgive and make peace because we know that Jesus has overcome the world. When things are getting under our skin, we can go to God for help. Philippians 4:6-7 says, “Don’t worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need, and thank him for all he has done. Then you will experience God’s peace, which exceeds anything we can understand. His peace will guard your hearts and minds as you live in Christ Jesus.” As the Spirit changes us and makes us more like Christ, we can respond to difficult situations with peace.

## **PATIENCE**

**Say:** The last card on our string shows some sinful attitudes and actions that come from our flesh. It says, “Impatient, Compulsive, and Intolerant.” Sin makes each one of us selfish. It makes us want things that will make us feel good. When we don’t get what we want when we want it, we often become impatient. We can also become impatient with others. When others don’t do what we want them to do or just don’t do it fast enough, we become impatient and intolerant.

(Cover the fourth card with the “Patience” card.)

**Say:** James 1:19-20 says, “Understand this, my dear brothers and sisters: You must all be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to get angry. Human anger does not produce the righteousness God desires.” Over and over, the Bible reminds us to be patient with others just as God is patient with us. Being like Christ means we must listen to others and respond to their needs with patience. Patience requires us to use all the other Fruit: love, peace, kindness, and self-control. Each of these traits works in us to show the love of Jesus to others and make us more like Him.

## **CONCLUSION**

**Say:** We will cover the rest of the Fruit of the Spirit next week, but hopefully you can already see the Tug of War that happens as the Holy Spirit changes us to be more like Christ. When we put our faith in Jesus, we are immediately forgiven of sin. But there is still a process of us learning to be more like Christ and changing our behaviors to be like Him. The Holy Spirit helps us to make those changes.

Just like these cards covered up the cards that represented our sinful flesh, the Holy Spirit works in us to replace our words, thoughts and actions with those that are Christ-like. This doesn’t happen overnight. As we grow and understand more, we are changed. We can see the effect of those changes when we see the fruit that we produce. Like an apple tree that produces apples, those who are in Christ will produce fruit that looks like Him.

**The Bottom Line:** Our Bottom Line for this week and next week is this: The Holy Spirit works in us to change our words, thoughts, and actions.

**Say:** We want to remember that the Holy Spirit is God living with us and in us. He is here reminding us of the things Jesus taught so that our words, thoughts, and actions will match those of Jesus. Like a ninja in training, we are growing to be more and more like Jesus.

Let’s pray and then head to small groups to talk more about how the Holy Spirit works in us to change our words, thoughts, and actions.

## **SMALL GROUPS: NINJA THEATER**

### **Supplies:**

- None

**What to Do:** Divide the small group into two teams. Explain that each team will have three minutes to create a skit that shows the Fruit of the Spirit in action.

They may choose any of the four words we discussed today—love, joy, peace, or patience.

Remind them that the skit does not need to be very long, but it should be a situation that would require them to respond “in the flesh” or “by the Spirit.” For instance, the group could show how they would respond with love to a group of students that were gossiping and picking on a classmate. After each skit, discuss how the students would react to that same situation in real life and how the Holy Spirit could help them in those instances. Be sure to talk about the difference the Spirit makes in our words, thoughts, and actions.

If the small group is less than five preteens, keep the group together and do the activity all together. Afterward, lead preteens in discussing the following questions.

### **Discussion Questions:**

- How is becoming Christ-like similar to a game of Tug of War?
- How are our words, thoughts, and actions like the fruit produced by a tree?
- Why do you think the Bible gives us a description of the Fruit of the Spirit? How does this “list” help us grow?
- How is “love” a Fruit of the Spirit? What are the opposite behaviors that change in us?
- How is “joy” a Fruit of the Spirit? What are the opposite behaviors that change in us?
- How is “peace” a Fruit of the Spirit? What are the opposite behaviors that change in us?
- How is “patience” a Fruit of the Spirit? What are the opposite behaviors that change in us?
- Do you think the characteristics in this list are the only changes to happen in us? What are some other words that describe our new attitudes and behaviors? (trustworthy, humble, servant-hearted, obedient)
- Do you think we would be able to make any of these “changes” without the help of the Spirit?
- In your own words, what do you think it means to “live by the Spirit?”

Close in prayer.

## PRETEEN LESSON ON FOLLOWING GOD (JOSIAH)

**The Point:** What decisions do I need to make right now so that I can bring glory to God when I'm 18?

**Scripture:** 2 Chronicles 34; 1 Timothy 4:12

### Lesson Overview:

What were you doing at age 8? You were probably doing homework for school and playing with friends, but you definitely weren't getting ready to become king! That's the story of Josiah. He became king at age 8, and he reigned for thirty-one years. Josiah did many great things for the nation, but the most dramatic was a return to worshipping and obeying the Lord after finding the Book of the Law during Temple repairs.

### OPENING GAME

#### ***Guess Who?***

*Before service, find pictures of adults in your church (pastor, parents, worship leaders, etc.) when they were in elementary school.*

*Arrange the pictures on a wall in your preteen ministry space and assign each picture a number.*

*As preteens enter, give them a note card and pen.*

*Have them look at the pictures and try to guess who each individual is.*

*They will write the number assigned to the picture and their guess.*

*When they've written a guess for each question, they can turn in the notecard.*

*Give prizes to the first to get them all correct or all preteens who guess some of the pictures correctly.*

### TEACH

*Before service, pass out a sheet of paper/cardstock and a marker to each preteen*

Did you like checking out these pictures of some well-known adults when they were in elementary school? Can you imagine what they were like at that age?



Let's start our time together with a little art project.

Each of you should have a marker and a piece of paper.

I want you to think about your life when you were 8 years old and draw a picture about that time of your life.

What did you look like?

What was your favorite thing to do?

Did any major events happen like getting a new pet, new house, or glasses?

I'll give you a few minutes to think and to draw the picture of your 8-year-old life. Ready...set...go!

*Give preteens several minutes to draw the picture that describes their 8-year-old life.*

*When most of the preteens have finished, move on to the next section of the teaching time.*

Let's see and hear about what you were doing when you were 8 years old.

*(Call on a few preteens to show their pictures and tell about their 8-year-old self.)*

You all did a great job describing what was happening when you were 8, but I noticed that none of you mentioned becoming king or president.

Were any of you elected president when you were 8 years old? No??

Today, we're going to be talking about Josiah.

The crazy thing about Josiah is that he became king of Judah when he was just 8 years old!

What would you do if you were declared President of the United States when you were only 8 years old?

What rules or laws do you think you would make? (Pause for responses)

Those are some interesting laws!

If it were me, I'd make school illegal and ice cream would be the official breakfast for all Americans!

It would've been easy for Josiah to start making some crazy laws like that, but that's not what he did.

It was pretty common for young men—like 12 or 14 years old—to become king.

Most of the time, these kings would just do what their parents had done.

They would sit on the throne and make sure that the people followed the rules that his father had made.

But Josiah was different. Listen to what the Bible says about Josiah when he became king.

**Read 2 Chronicles 34:1-2**

Josiah's father, Amon, was a wicked King and so was his grandfather, Manasseh.

Both of them worshipped idols and led the people away from God rather than closer to God.

So, when Josiah became King, everyone was watching to see what he would do.

Would Josiah act like his father and grandfather? Or would Josiah do something different?

The Bible says Josiah did what was right in the eyes of the Lord and followed in the step of his ancestor David, who loved the Lord.

At 8 years old, Josiah was probably terrified to be king of an entire nation, but decided to let his faith guide him in making decisions.

**Let's look at some of the things Josiah accomplished while he was King.**

***First, Josiah set an example by following God, and he destroyed the idols that had been built by his father and grandfather. 2 Chronicles 34:3-4 says,***

*"In the eighth year of his reign, while he was still young, he began to seek the God of his father David. In his twelfth year he began to purge Judah and Jerusalem of high places, Asherah poles and idols. <sup>4</sup> Under his direction the altars of the Baals were torn down; he cut to pieces the incense altars that were above them, and smashed the Asherah poles and the idols. These he broke to pieces and scattered over the graves of those who had sacrificed to them."*

When Josiah was 16, he got serious about following God.

As Josiah grew closer to the Lord, he saw the idols that were coming between the people and God. So, he destroyed all of them.

He went throughout the entire country and destroyed everything that was used to worship idols.

When he was about 20 years old, Josiah wanted to give the people an opportunity to worship the One, True God.

***The next big thing Josiah did was when he ordered that the Temple be repaired.***

The people had turned to so many other gods and idols, but Josiah wanted the worship of the people to be focused back on God.

While they were repairing the Temple, the High Priest found a book in the Temple.

It was the Book of the Law, or what we have in our Bibles as the book of Deuteronomy.

Apparently, the people had lost this scroll or just forgotten about it. Can you imagine losing part of the Bible??

As Josiah read the Book of the Law, he quickly realized the people had not been obeying all that God had commanded. He called together all the people, and he read the entire Book of the Law to them.

In front of everyone, Josiah recommitted himself and the people to God. They made a pledge to follow God with all their heart and soul, and to obey His commandments.

When Josiah became king at 8 years old, the country was watching him to see what he would do next. Would he follow his father or would he do something different? Listen to the way the Bible describes Josiah's rule as king:

***Read 2 Chronicles 34:33***

Josiah's decision to hold onto his faith and follow God helped the rest of the nation to also follow God.

He was just an 8-year-old boy, but he changed the lives of thousands of people by pointing them back to the One True God.

By the time he was 26, the Temple was repaired and everyone had pledged to follow the Lord.

As a preteen, you are at a very critical point.

For most of your life, you've been attached to your parents and they've told you what to do and what to say. They have shaped the way you think about pretty much everything, including God and church.

But now, you've reached a point when you have to start thinking for yourself.

You are starting to make decisions about what you like and don't like, what you want to do and don't want to do, and what you believe and don't believe.

This is a very important time for you and your relationship with God.

When Josiah was 8 years old, he had to make some decisions about how he would follow God.

It was time for him to take the things he knew about God in his head, and start living like he believed it in his heart.

When he did that, it changed who he was and everything he did. And that changed the world around him.

***For you, it's time for you to take what you have learned about God and start living it.***

It's time for you to make some decisions about who you will be, what will you do, and how you will glorify God in the next 10, 20, 30 years.

I want you to look at the other side of that paper that we used early for your 8-year-old self-portrait.

On this side of the paper, I want you to draw another self-portrait.

I want you to think about yourself at age 18 and draw a picture that describes what you want your life to be like then.

Maybe you'll draw yourself graduating and heading off to college, playing sports for your high school or college, working in a job that you love, or maybe you'll draw yourself leading a small group here at church.

You can also write some words that you hope others would use to describe the 18-year-old you.

I'll give you just a few minutes to think and draw that picture. Ready...Set...Go!

*Give preteens a few minutes to draw their 18-year-old self-portrait.*

*When you see that most preteens are finished, continue with the last portion of the teaching time.*

*Remind students to keep their self-portraits to use in Small Group.*

Look at the picture that you drew of yourself at age 18.

Think about all the things that you'll be doing and places you'll be going. Here's the last question that I want you think about as we close...

***What decisions do I need to make right now so that I can bring glory to God when I'm 18?***

In other words, how can I start owning my faith in God and living like I believe right now? And how can I keep that going for the next 10, 20, 30 years. Josiah made a decision to follow God.

It wasn't his parents' decision or any of the people around him. He owned his faith and lived it out. How can we do the same?

We're going to head to small groups where you can talk about that question a little bit more.

Let's pray.

## **SMALL GROUP**

***Read 1 Timothy 4:12:*** *"Don't let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for the believers in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith and in purity."*

As a small group, practice memorizing 1 Timothy 4:12.

Use a dry erase board to write the verse.

Recite the verse one time and then erase one or two words.

Continue until the group can recite the verse without help.

You may also want to practice the verse by creating hand motions, rhythm/song, or other method.

*Allow small groups to present their motions or song for the other groups if time allows.*

**After practicing the verse, discuss the following questions as a small group:**

How do you think Josiah felt when he became king at 8 years old?

What was the spiritual condition of the country when Josiah became king?

Why do you think Josiah decided to “do what was right in the eyes of the Lord” and follow the ways of David?

What were some of the events/accomplishments that came from Josiah’s decision follow the Lord? How did those accomplishments help the people to turn back to God?

Why do you think it was important for Josiah to destroy everything that had been used to worship idols?

What was Josiah’s reaction when he heard the Book of the Law? Why did he react this way? For help, read 2 Chronicles 34:19-21

What are some ways that you are making decisions for yourself? What responsibilities or freedoms have your parents given you that you’ve never had before?

What does it mean to “own your faith”? Why is this so important?

How can living out your faith help others to do the same?

*Note: Spend some time talking about doubts, questions, and other concerns that come with owning our faith. It’s not enough to just believe because mom and dad said it was so. Preteens need evidence to help them believe. Talk about how and when we can safely ask questions and express doubts in a way that will help us to find answers.*

## PRETEEN BIBLE LESSON ON STEWARDSHIP

**The Point:** How well do you manage the money that God has given to you?

**Scripture:** Matthew 25:14-27

### Opening Game: What Do You Know about Money?

Let's start this morning with a little trivia game about money. I'm going to give you a few multiple-choice questions about money, and we'll see who's the smartest about money.

*Put the questions and multiple choice answers on screen or on a poster board. Allow kids to shout their guesses for each question. Randomly pass out chocolate coins to those who shouted the correct answer. \*Answers are highlighted in bold.*

1. *Whose face is on the \$2 bill?*  
a) James Monroe b) Ben Franklin **c) Thomas Jefferson**
2. *Who is the only non-president to appear on a bill?*  
a) Paul Revere **b) Ben Franklin** c) Christopher Columbus
3. *How many grooves are on the side of a quarter?*  
**a) 119** b) 211 c) 307
4. *How many times can a \$5 be folded back and forth before it tears?*  
a) 600 b) 2,000 **c) 4,000**
5. *If you had a mile of pennies, how much money would you have?*  
**a) \$844.80** b) \$643.32 c) \$538.12

Those are some really interesting facts about money, and you guys did pretty well with the answers. Unfortunately, knowing some fun facts about money does not make you wise with money. It doesn't help you make wise choices about how you deal with money that you may or may not have. So, where do we go to learn how to be wise with money? (*Pause for responses*)

Yes! We look to God's Word for help. The Bible has thousands of verses that teach us about money. Whether you have money now or not, this is a great time to learn how God wants you to deal with money.

## Teach - Stewardship

Today, we're going to be talking about MONEY! Whether you have a lot of it or none of it, we need to understand what the Bible teaches us about money.

How many of you get an allowance or something similar? (*Pause for responses*) How many of you typically get some cash for your birthday or around Christmas time? (*Pause for responses*) How many of you have ever just found some money lying in the parking lot? The point is that we've all possessed some cash at some point in our lives. \$5, \$10, or \$100—it's really exciting to think of how we'll spend it or what we could possibly do with that amount of cash!

When we talk about money, we need to understand the word *STEWARDSHIP*. Does anyone know what this word means? (*Pause for responses.*)

Stewardship is **managing someone else's stuff**. It's like this, say, I took a cupcake and gave it to you. Then I said, "This is *my* cupcake. Will you please hold it for me and make sure that no one else takes it, eats it, licks the icing, or even touches it with their grubby hands!"

You are now holding the cupcake, but is it really yours? No, it's still mine! You're just holding it for me, and you are supposed to be following the instructions that I gave you. This is stewardship.

Stewardship is important because everything belongs to God. It's all His! Our money, our time, and our talents—it all belongs to God. He has given it to us to use, but it still belongs to Him. Since "our money" is really God's money, we need to follow His instructions on how to use it. Let's study one of Jesus' parables about money and stewardship. Open your Bibles to Matthew 25:14-18. Let's read the first part of this story...

### **Read Matthew 25:14-18**

*Beforehand, prepare 15 bags of coins. Use the bags to illustrate the rest of the parable. (Matthew 25:19-27)*

The story begins with the master entrusting his money with three servants. This was a lot of cash, and he wanted to see how the servants would deal with the responsibility. After being gone for a period of time, the master returned and called for the servants to see what they had done with the money.

The first servant came and showed the master that he had doubled the 5 bags of gold. When the master saw the 10 bags of gold, he said, "*Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness!*"



Then the second servant returned with his 2 bags of gold plus 2 more bags of gold! He had also doubled the master's money. Again the master said, *"Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness!"*

Then, the third servant arrived with just the 1 bag of gold that he had been given. He said that instead of investing it or trying to work for more, he had hid the money in the ground. The master was furious with the third servant. He asked the lazy servant why he didn't at least invest it in the bank so that it would gain a little bit of interest. He took away the bag of gold and gave it to the first servant who had been wise with the master's money.

The first and second servants were wise with the money given to them. They showed that they could be trusted. They took the responsibility seriously and they doubled the master's money. Then, the master let them share in His happiness because they had been wise with the money he gave them.

This parable is a great picture of how God wants us to deal with money—an all the other resources he has given to us. The master in this story represents Jesus. Just as the master went away for a while, Jesus has gone to Heaven but will one-day return. When he does return, he will want to know what we did with the resources He gave us to use? He'll ask, *"How well did you manage my stuff?"*

The reason God gives us His resources is so that we can use them to build up His kingdom. When it comes to money, God wants to know that we manage it wisely and use it to bring glory and honor to Him. We still get to use it for our needs and enjoy it, but its main purpose should be to bring glory to God and build up His kingdom.

We really want you to focus on being wise with money. ***How well do you manage the money that God has given to you?***

When you get your allowance, do you spend it all as fast as you can or do you have a plan to save some? When your grandma drops a \$100 bill in your Christmas stocking, do you give part of that back to God or just keep it all for yourself?

Being wise with money doesn't come naturally. I think that's why the Bible says so much about money and warns us not to let the love of money control us. To be wise with money, we have to have a plan.

You can develop a wise-money plan by first talking with you parents. Ask them to help you set up some rules and be accountable for the way you deal with money. You can also create a budget to wisely use the money that you're given. If you get \$10 a month, decide how much of that you're going to give back to God, how much you're going to save, and how much of that you're going to spend on the

things you need or want. You can think about that more and get started on that plan in small groups.

We want you to remember that it everything belongs to God. Every last penny is His, and we're just managing it. He has given us His money to do His work. How we manage our money tells a lot about our relationship with God.

Our bottom line for today is a question that we want you to think about. Here it is..

### ***How well do you manage the money that God has given to you?***

You'll have a chance to talk more about that in small group. I want to encourage you to also talk with your parents about this. They are the best help that you have for making wise choices with money. Plus, if you show them that you want to work on being wise with money, they might just start trusting you with more of it!

### **Small Group - Being Wise with Money**

*Print a copy **My Budget Worksheet** for each preteen:*

<http://preteenministry.net/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/My-Budget-Worksheet.pdf>

Begin a discussion with the preteens in your group about being budgeting money wisely. Start by defining the different words used in the Budget Worksheet.

Explain the following definitions for preteens:

- **Salary**—the amount of money you receive weekly, monthly, or on a special occasion. This could include an allowance, money earned for chores/work, or gifts that are received.
- **Tithe/Offering**—the amount of money that you give back to God through the Church. This can also include additional offerings to other ministries or charitable causes.
- **Long-Term Savings**—the amount of money that you do not touch, borrow, or spend. Long-term savings is a good practice that will help once you're a late teenager or adult.
- **Short-Term Savings**—the amount of money you put aside to buy something that costs more than you get on a weekly or monthly basis (phone, iPad, clothes, shoes)
- **Spending**—the amount of money you have available to use for immediate needs and wants

*The budget suggestion that will be used with preteens looks like the following:*

For any given amount of Salary (allowance, gift money, etc.), the preteen budgets:

- Tithe 10%
- Long-Term Savings 10%
- Short-Term Savings 40%
- Spending 40%

**After explaining the definitions, give each preteen a copy of “My Budget Worksheet”:**

<http://preteenministry.net/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/My-Budget-Worksheet.pdf>

1. Instruct them to begin by entering a Salary that they might receive in a typical month. If they don't receive money on a regular basis, have them use \$40/month (\$10/week). *This is just an exercise!*
2. Instruct them to decide what portion of the salary they will give back to God. Explain that 10% is a common amount that is used based on Old Testament examples, but it could be more or less than that.
3. Instruct them to figure 10% of their salary into Long-Term Savings. Have them write out some of the things this money could be used for: wedding, car, college, house, etc.)
4. Instruct them to 40% of the salary for short-term savings. Have them think of a large item they really want to purchase. How much is the item and how quickly do they want to buy it? (Example: If you receive \$10/week and you put \$5 a week into short-term savings each week, then you could purchase a \$50 video game by the end of just 10 weeks.)
5. Instruct them to figure 40% of their salary for spending. Encourage them to think through the things that they would use this money to purchase. After they've made a list, have them label each item as a need or want. Remind them that just because this money is called *Spending*, it doesn't have to be spent. If their list includes more items in the want category, then they could put a larger percentage into tithe/offering or into savings.

Strongly encourage preteens to share the “My Budget Worksheet” with their parents. Remind them that their parents have the right to change anything on the worksheet because they are in charge.

**After preteens have finished their worksheet, discuss the following questions as a group:**

1. What questions or comments came to your mind during Large Group?
2. What is stewardship?
3. How does knowing that “our money” is really God's money change the choices we make?

4. How were the first and second servants wise with money? Why did the master call the third servant lazy and punish him?
5. What does this parable teach us about the way God expects us to handle His resources (money, talents, etc.)?
6. What are some things that can help us be wise with money?
7. On a scale from 1 to 10, how well do you manage the money that God has given to you? How can you improve?

## PRETEEN LESSON ON FRIENDSHIPS

**Bible:** Luke 5:17-26

### **Opening Activity: Two-Friends and Me**

Students need to be in groups of three. You can make this a race or you can just allow everyone to give this a try. The point is for one friend to be carried by two friends. You can find diagrams and details on three different options for two people to carry a third here:

<http://www.wikihow.com/Do-a-Two-Person-Arm-Carry>

### **Say:**

In that experience, you literally were being carried by two of your friends. Hopefully, you know that's also a metaphor for friendship. When you hear someone say they were "carried" by someone else, it usually doesn't mean literally. It usually means that friend helped them out in a significant way in a time of need.

When you think back over last year, were there times where friends or family "carried" you this way?

Or were there times where you were the one doing the carrying?

You might have a friend who really struggles in school and you were able to help them with their studying.

Or maybe you have a friend who is having a tough time at home and you were there to listen to them.

Or maybe your Mom or Dad is a single parent and you help them out by doing some of the chores around the house.

Or maybe it was you who needed help last year and your friends or family were there for you.

There's an extreme example of friends helping a friend out in Jesus' day. I want you to see what these friends did and see what we can learn from them to help us in this new year!

### **Read Luke 5:17-20.**

"One day while Jesus was teaching, some Pharisees and teachers of religious law were sitting nearby. (It seemed that these men showed up from every village

in all Galilee and Judea, as well as from Jerusalem.) And the Lord's healing power was strongly with Jesus.

Some men came carrying a paralyzed man on a sleeping mat. They tried to take him inside to Jesus, but they couldn't reach him because of the crowd. So they went up to the roof and took off some tiles. Then they lowered the sick man on his mat down into the crowd, right in front of Jesus. Seeing their faith, Jesus said to the man, "Young man, your sins are forgiven."

**Say:**

That was crazy! These four friends were so intent on helping their friend get to Jesus that they went up on the roof of the house, tore a hole in the roof, and then figured out a way to lower their friend down right in front of Jesus!

Now, to be fair, people in Jesus' day often used their roof like we use a porch. There was probably a stairway leading up to the roof. So going up there was pretty normal.

However, even in Jesus' day, it wasn't normal for someone to make a hole in your house so they can get to see the guest of honor. That was not okay. That was not how things are supposed to be done. And there were some people who were upset...not about the roof, but about the rules.

**Read Luke 5:21-25.**

"But the Pharisees and teachers of religious law said to themselves, "Who does he think he is? That's blasphemy! Only God can forgive sins!"

Jesus knew what they were thinking, so he asked them, "Why do you question this in your hearts? Is it easier to say 'Your sins are forgiven,' or 'Stand up and walk'? So I will prove to you that the Son of Man has the authority on earth to forgive sins." Then Jesus turned to the paralyzed man and said, "Stand up, pick up your mat, and go home!"

And immediately, as everyone watched, the man jumped up, picked up his mat, and went home praising God.

**Say:**

These religious leaders obviously didn't get the point. They were all about how things were "supposed" be done. These friends obviously didn't care about that.

If you want your friend to get to Jesus, and you can't get to him through a door, you just come back later.

No you don't! You go up on the roof, make a hole in the ceiling, and lower your friend down to Jesus!

Wouldn't we all like to have friends like that?

I hope we all can *be* friends like that!

**Bottom Line: Friends help Friends Follow Jesus.**

Because of his friends, the man was able to meet Jesus, be forgiven and healed! And the result?

**Read Luke 5:26.**

Everyone was gripped with great wonder and awe, and they praised God, exclaiming, "We have seen amazing things today!"

**Say:**

Not only did these four men help their friend, they helped the whole crowd see the power of God at work in Jesus!

When you look ahead to 2017, who are some people you know – friends or family members – who could really use your help?

It may not be that you have to knock a hole in someone's roof to help them. But maybe you do some extra chores around the house without being asked or without expecting a reward just to help "carry" your parent or parents.

Maybe you take time to listen to a friend who is already having a rough year – and it just started! Then pray for them and send them a text letting know you did and that you are here when they need to talk again.

I can almost be sure that you have people in your school, neighborhood and/or family who don't know Jesus. They probably have driven by a church. They might know some of his followers. But they don't know Jesus.

How can 2017 be the year you are so creative in how you help them get to know Jesus, that the story of what you do rivals what these four friends did.

Or maybe, you are that friend! Maybe you didn't even realize all of the praying and work your friends have been doing to get you to come here and learn about Jesus! Is this the year that you say "yes" to following Jesus yourself?

Remember: Friends help Friends Follow Jesus.

Let's get into our small groups and move this from history and hypothetical to now and personal.

## **SMALL GROUPS**

### **Goal of Small Groups**

The goal here is to help students understand the importance of friendship in helping others know Jesus and to take responsibility to put that into action this year and this week.

### **JUST FOR FUN (5 minutes)**

*These students need a little fun to help them relax and transition into this small group time. Don't skip over this. It is an intentional part of building relationships and setting up your group to have a great discussion time!*

What is one of the nicest things a friend has done for you?

What is one of the strangest things a friend has done for you?

In what ways has someone in your family been creative in helping you out?

How have you been creative in helping a family member or friend out?

*(When you have spent about 5 minutes on this section, transition into the discussion questions.)*

### **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS (15 minutes)**

(The goal is to guide the students as they talk, to have a discussion. Get them to do most of the talking. Make sure you watch the clock and save 5 minutes at the end for the closing, even if that means you skip some questions and don't discuss them all. )

- The man was paralyzed. He was literally unable to do anything to help himself. How have you seen someone else be unable to help themselves and need their friends? Or has this happened to you?
- The four friends had so much faith in Jesus that they didn't care what others thought about them in order to help their friend. How can our fears about what others think about us stop us from helping other people get to know Jesus?
- The friends could have given up when they saw the crowd. But they didn't. They were persistent. How easy would it have been to give up? How have you seen friends or family members who could have given up choose instead to be persistent?



- What's an example of a time you prayed for your friends, asking Jesus to help them? (If you haven't done this, start thinking about a friend you could be praying for this week.)
- Sometimes, we have low expectations. We might not invite our friends to church because we expect them to say "No" or not to like it. What would be different if we had the same attitude about getting our friends to church as these friends did about getting their paralyzed friend to Jesus?

### **Closing Challenge**

We can talk about what these friends did and even dream about what we *might* do. But that's not the point. God gave us this true story in the Bible to motivate us to action! We need to imitate these four friends and help our family and friends get to Jesus!

*You have a few different options here:*

1 Pick one specific action you can do for a family or friend this week that will really help them and "carry them" this week. Pray, and ask God to help you follow through on it. And if they ask why you did it, tell them you are trying to be more like Jesus. Maybe even tell them about the four friends.

2 Pick a friend or family member you can invite to church this week. Then actually invite them! If they say "No," pray for them and be open to asking again in the future. If they say "Yes," then make sure you get them to church and thank God for using you with your friend or family member like He used those four friends of the paralyzed man.

3 Have the courage to know when to ask for help. Maybe you are like that paralyzed man. You need help and don't know what to do. Talk to your parents, your small group leader, your pastor and your closest friends. Whatever you do, don't put it off. Talk to someone this week and be able to ask for the help that they would love to give you!

*(When that time is up, close your group in prayer – or even better, ask one of the students to close in prayer.)*

## PRETEEN LESSON – GOD IS ALWAYS PRESENT

**Bottom Line:** God will never leave or forsake His children

**Bible:** Deuteronomy 31:6, Joshua 1:9, Joshua 6, Romans 8:38-39

### LEADER OVERVIEW

When Joshua took the reins of Israel, God made a promise to Him. God promised that He would never leave or forsake Joshua. He promised that He would go before Him so that Joshua would never have to fear. Hebrews extends this promise to us. We can trust and know that God goes before us because God will never leave or forsake His children.

### SUPPLIES

Candy or prizes for Fear Factor participants

### TEACH

Today, we're going to look at one of the many promises that God makes to us in His Word.

As we study God's promises, 2 Corinthians 1:20 is a very important verse for us to read and think about.

**2 Corinthians 1:20 says,** *“For no matter how many promises God has made, they are “Yes” in Christ. And so through him the “Amen” is spoken by us to the glory of God.”*

In a world of broken promises, it's so awesome to know that God is faithful to keep all His promises.

The greatest proof we have of His faithfulness is found in Jesus Christ. We can trust God to keep His promises because He has kept His first and most powerful promise—the promise of a Savior.

To kick things off today, I have a question for you. Have any of you ever been afraid?

Can you tell us about a time when you were scared and what made you so scared? (Pause for responses)

No matter who you are—big, small, short, tall—we all suffer from fear.

At some point, we encounter a situation, an animal, or a person that just makes us scared.

In fact, there is actually scientific proof that humans can be scared of just about anything.

Since we're talking about fear, let's play a game called Name that Fear!

I'll give you the scientific name of a phobia or fear, and you will guess what the person is actually afraid of.

For example, arachnophobia is the fear of what? (Pause for responses)

Right, it's the fear of spiders. Ok, let's play!

Give preteens the name of a fear or phobia.

Allow them to guess from the multiple-choice options for what the person actually fears.

Toss out candy or prizes for correct answers.

(Correct answers are in bold.)

1. Coulorophobia is the fear of:

**a) clowns** b) bright colors c) people with long hair

2. Ablutophobia is the fear of:

a) brushing your teeth **b) washing or bathing** c) things that are blue

3. Omphalophobia is the fear of:

**a) belly buttons** b) other people's feet c) Oompa Loompas

4. Hoppopotomonstrosesquipedaliophobia is the fear of:

**a) really, really long words** b) being attacked by wild animals c) monster hippos

5. Anatidaephobia is the fear of:

a) oversleeping b) nocturnal animals **c) being watched by a duck**

I think hearing about all those weird fears has actually made me more afraid!

Who knew there were so many phobias and fears that can creep into our lives?

So, let's look at one of God's promises that helps us to face all the fears and challenges of life.

We're looking at God's promise to never forsake us.

Does anyone know what the word forsake means? (Pause for responses)

Forsake is just another word for leave or abandon.

So, this promise means that God will never leave His children.

No matter what challenges stand in front of us or what fears we face, we can be confident that God is with us and will never leave us.

God first made this promise to the Israelites after He delivered them from slavery in Egypt.

As the people faced the enemies that stood between them and the land God had promised them, God reassured them with this promise.

Look at what God said to Moses in Deuteronomy 31:6.

**Deuteronomy 31:6 says,** *“Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid or terrified because of them, for the Lord your God goes with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you.”*

When Moses died, Joshua took over leading the Israelites.

The Lord spoke to Joshua and made him this same awesome promise.

**Joshua 1:9 says,** *“Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go.”*

Over and over, God was repeating this promise to His people.

He wanted them to trust that He would lead them and always be with them—no matter what they faced.

As Joshua was getting the opportunity to lead the Israelites into the land that God had promised, this promise was about to be put to the test.

The Israelites were camped beside the Jordan River, and directly across was the city of Jericho.

Jericho was a well-defended city. It had not one wall, but two.

The outer wall was six feet thick, and the inner wall was twelve feet thick.

This would not be an easy city to conquer, but it stood between the Israelites and the Promised Land.

Joshua and the Israelites remembered God's promise but they had to be wondering how God would pull this one off!

Joshua received specific instructions from the Lord.

The Lord told him to march around the city once a day for 6 days, and to march around the city 7 times on the seventh day.

After the 7th lap, the priests would blow a loud horn, all the soldiers would shout, and God said the giant walls of Jericho would fall right down.

This seemed like really odd battle plans, but Joshua believed God was faithful to keep his promise to be with him wherever he went.

He trusted that God would never leave or forsake His people.

So, Joshua followed God's instructions.

So, after the Israelites marched once a day for six days and then seven times on the seventh day, the priests blew the trumpets just as the Lord had instructed them to do.

This was the moment of truth! What if they shouted and nothing happened?

Was God still with them or did He leave?

**Joshua 6:20-21** tells us what happened next – *“When the trumpets sounded, the army shouted, and at the sound of the trumpet, when the men gave a loud shout, the wall collapsed; so everyone charged straight in, and they took the city.”*

They devoted the city to the Lord and destroyed with the sword every living thing in it—men and women, young and old, cattle, sheep and donkeys.

When Joshua and the Israelites faced the biggest challenge and probably a lot of fear, they remained confident in God's promise to never leave or forsake them.

And God was faithful to keep His promise.

He gave them the victory! God will never leave or forsake His children.

That is today's bottom line, so let's say it together.

God will never leave or forsake His children.

This promise that was made to Moses and Joshua has been extended to all of God's children.

Even when we face fears and challenges, we can be courageous because God is with us and will always be with us.

Here is what this promise means to those of us who believe in Jesus as Lord.

When you face the fear of heading to a new school, God has promised to be with you and never leave you.

When your family is going through a tough time, God has promised to be with you and never leave you.

When you mess up and face the consequences of bad choices, even then God is with you and will never leave you.

Before you head to small group, let me read Romans 8:38-39.

You've probably heard this verse before, but it seems to be a great way to wrap up today's teaching.

**Romans 8:38-39 says,** *“For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”*

No matter what fear or challenge you are facing, there is nothing that can separate us from God.

He is and always will be with us.

God will never leave or forsake His children! Let's pray.

### **SMALL GROUPS – Memorial Stone**

*Before small group, locate a large landscaping rock or brick for the group.*

Several times in the Old Testament, we see God's people wanting to remember His actions and His faithfulness.

When Joshua and the Israelites crossed the Jordan River, they took 12 stones and stacked them in the river as a memorial, or a picture to help them remember, what God had done for them.

These Memorial Stones were reminders that God is with His people—even in times when they didn't feel Him.

I have this rock, and I thought it might be a fun idea for us to talk about the ways God has been faithful to us.

Maybe he has helped you make new friends at school, helped you through a rough time with your family, or just always provided for you and your family.

We need to remember God's faithfulness to keep His promise to never leave or forsake.

As we share, we'll write those words here on this rock. It will be something to help us remember God's faithfulness at all times—even the hard times.

Be prepared to share a personal story of God's faithfulness to get the conversation started.

Don't force the conversation or force preteens to share.

If no one shares, ask them to think of Bible stories that show God's faithfulness and write those on the rock.

**After the activity, discuss the following questions as a group and do activity:**

What questions or comments came to your mind during Large Group?

When are some times in your life that you might be afraid?

Do you think Joshua and the Israelites were afraid? What are some of the things they might have been afraid of?

What promise did God make to Joshua? What does this promise mean to us?

What was so odd about the battle plans God gave to Joshua? How do you think the Israelites reacted?

How might the army of Jericho have reacted?

What happened next? Why do you think God chose to defeat Jericho this way?

How does this promise help you to be courageous in the face of fear and challenges?