



Lesson Overview

Week of March 28

1 Life Need:

Recognize the impact that fear has on our lives.

2 Bible Learning:

Study the example of Elijah's courage and God's faithfulness.

Suggested Material

■ *Adult Teacher's Resource Kit:* Poster and reproducible sheet—God's Faithful Prophets

3 Bible Application:

Acknowledge the relationship between obedience and our spiritual victory.

Suggested Material

■ *Adult Teacher's Resource Kit:* Reproducible sheet—Fear: The Enemy of Faith

4 Life Response:

Courageously obey God.

Church/Home Theme:
Revive Us Again,
O Lord!

Lesson Focus:
Overcome your fears
to do what God says.

Lesson Scripture:
1 Kings 18:5-18

Elijah: Prophet of Courage

Fear—Obadiah, one of God's servants, worked in King Ahab's administration. The king and his wife Jezebel promoted idol worship and wickedness throughout the kingdom of Israel during his reign. In spite of the corruption, Obadiah stood firm on behalf of the true and living God. He struggled with fear but eventually fulfilled several tasks God required of him.

The Lord caused a famine in Israel because of the king's disobedience. He shut up the heavens, and King Ahab blamed Elijah, not himself, for the drought. Ahab sent Obadiah to find grass for pasture, and Obadiah unexpectedly met Elijah, who asked Obadiah to speak to Ahab and bring the king back to talk with him.

Initially, Obadiah refused Elijah's request. He had already risked his life to hide several of God's prophets in a cave. Obadiah felt as if he'd done enough. Obadiah also knew Elijah was sometimes in one place and then just disappeared. If that happened, the king might hold Obadiah responsible for the prophet getting away. But Elijah confidently told Obadiah he would be there to speak with Ahab.

Courage—Overcoming one's fears is not always an easy task, even when God is making the request. The Bible repeatedly says, "Fear not." This is because God knows our natural tendency is to live in anxiety, especially when faced with challenging situations.

It's okay to be afraid and express anxious thoughts. However, God is with us, and when He calls us to be bold we can depend on the invisible heavenly host, and move forward. It's always important and essential to carry out what God is calling us to do.

As Your Students Arrive

Before students arrive, write the statement "Obedience Requires Courage" on a board or a sheet of newsprint. Ask your students to explain what that could mean in a particular situation. For example, it would require courage to say "No" to friends encouraging you to do something you know God would not want you to do.

Link to Last Week: Encourage some of your students to share how or in what way they found God’s peace this week as they confessed a sin to Him. (They certainly don’t need to tell exactly what they confessed, unless they want to do so.)

1 Life Need

Recognize the impact that fear has on our lives.

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Elijah: Prophet of Courage

It was Saturday morning, and Elise sat looking at the “No Contracts” sign above the fitness center reception desk. She was biting her lip and going over what the Lord told her to tell one of her closest friends.

Kandace was dating a man who belonged to a group that calls themselves “Christians” but do not believe Jesus is God, that salvation comes only through grace by faith, and other things that strike at the heart of Christianity. Elise and Kandace came to Christ as teenagers. However, in their early 30s and still not married, Kandace had become discouraged. When Elise learned about Jamal, she had hoped he was an answer to prayer. He was not.

The closer Kandace got to Jamal, the further she moved from God—and Elise. Eventually, Elise learned of Jamal’s religious beliefs, and she asked her dear friend if she now shared these views. Kandace’s reply was frightening.

The Lord had given Elise her marching orders. She could either obey and risk losing her friendship, or disobey and incur God’s displeasure.

“Elise?” a startled Kandace said as she entered the lobby of the 24-hour fitness center.

“I’ve been waiting to talk to you,” Elise said. “I can no longer watch you drift away from God. You must leave Jamal alone and run back into the arms of Christ. Trust the Lord to bring you the man of God that He wants for you, not a counterfeit one.”

1. Give an example of a time you’ve allowed fear to stop you.
2. What is a good way to address and overcome our fears?
3. Why does Scripture often tell us to be of good courage?

LESSON FOCUS: Overcome your fears to do what God says.

Ask your students to read the story in their book, then have them answer **Questions 1, 2, and 3** in small groups.

For Question 1, the safe route is the easy route, but it leaves us unfulfilled and asking the “What if” question. It ultimately leads to regret and sorrow; we settle into mediocrity. If we don’t overcome fear, it will prevent us from fulfilling God’s will and diminish the abundant life He planned for us.

Question 2 talks about addressing our fears. If we desire to be strong in faith, courageous, and bold, then we must dwell in the presence of God, who embodies love, faith, courage, strength, power, authority, wisdom, victory, and so much more. When we are courageous, God honors our faith and shows Himself strong on our behalf.

Question 3 reminds us that what God commands cannot be accomplished by human strength, for it is “‘Not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit,’ says the LORD Almighty” (Zech. 4:6) that our work for Him is done. God is always faithful, and He is always good!

2 Bible Learning

Study the example of Elijah's courage and God's faithfulness.



On the poster hand-out, read paragraph five and point out on the poster a monastery

painting of the prophet Elijah.

SEARCHING FOR WATER

Read 1 Kings 18:5-8 and discuss these important ideas:

- Ahab, the eighth king of Israel, was married to idol-worshiping Jezebel, who had established Baal worship in the land.

- Because of that fact, God had sent a drought on the land for three years, which was threatening to destroy the kingdom.

- Ahab sent the prophet Obadiah to find water somewhere in the land to preserve the country's livestock. The king also went out on his own to locate water and grass.

- As Obadiah journeyed, the Lord directed his steps so that he—not Ahab—met Elijah along the way as Elijah was heading to meet the king himself.

BIBLE EXTRA

Obadiah

The Obadiah who plays the role of mediator between Ahab and Elijah may have been the same prophet who wrote the Book of Obadiah, but there are 13 men who have that name in the Old Testament. Whoever this Obadiah was, he provides a strong biblical example of how a godly person can serve a tyrannical person in power without compromising his commitment to the Lord.

SUGGESTED ANSWER TO QUESTION 4

The Lord had stopped the rain in Israel for three years because of the nation's idolatry, encouraged by King Ahab and Queen Jezebel.

SUGGESTED ANSWER TO QUESTION 5

He and his palace administrator, Obadiah, went out to look for any grass left in the land to keep the country's livestock alive—and also to find

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Searching for Water

1 Kings 18:5-8, KJV

5 And Ahab said unto Obadiah, Go into the land, unto all fountains of water, and unto all brooks: peradventure we may find grass to save the horses and mules alive, that we lose not all the beasts.

6 So they divided the land between them to pass throughout it: Ahab went one way by himself, and Obadiah went another way by himself.

7 And as Obadiah was in the way, behold, Elijah met him: and he knew him, and fell on his face, and said, Art thou that my lord Elijah?

8 And he answered him, I am: go, tell thy lord, Behold, Elijah is here.

1 Kings 18:5-8, NIV

⁵Ahab had said to Obadiah, "Go through the land to all the springs and valleys. Maybe we can find some grass to keep the horses and mules alive so we will not have to kill any of our animals." ⁶So they divided the land they were to cover, Ahab going in one direction and Obadiah in another.

⁷As Obadiah was walking along, Elijah met him. Obadiah recognized him, bowed down to the ground, and said, "Is it really you, my lord Elijah?"

⁸"Yes," he replied. "Go tell your master, 'Elijah is here.'"

King Ahab supported his wife Jezebel's establishment of Baal worship in the land. In response to this wickedness, Elijah predicted that God would bring a severe drought upon the land (1 Kings 17:1). Baal supposedly controlled the elements of nature, so the drought showed Baal's powerlessness.

The severity of the drought caused Ahab and Obadiah, his "palace administrator" (vs. 3), to look for grass to feed the livestock before they perished. Ahab had also been hunting Elijah down to call an end to the drought, but he had repeatedly failed to find him. However, the Lord had already told Elijah to tell the king to announce after three years that rain was coming (vs. 1). On his way to do so, Elijah encountered Obadiah, who recognized the prophet and bowed to the Lord's messenger.

4. Why was there a drought in the land?

5. How was King Ahab trying to address the "no rain" problem?



Further commentary on this Scripture passage can be found on pp. 657-658 in *The Wiersbe Bible Commentary: Old Testament*.

Elijah, who had prophesied about the drought.

OBADIAH FINDS ELIJAH

Read 1 Kings 18:9-15 and note these important points:

- When Obadiah found Elijah, Obadiah feared for his own safety because there had been a nationwide search for Elijah, and no one could uncover his location because God hid him.
- Obadiah feared to tell Ahab that he knew of Elijah's location lest Elijah would go into hiding again and make him to be a liar.

- Obadiah asked Elijah a rhetorical question: Are you actually setting me up by sending me to the king with a false message? If so, the message would cause Obadiah to incur the wrath of Ahab.

- Obadiah feared the Lord, but he also feared Ahab and his ruthless ruling. Obadiah feared Ahab would kill him if Elijah was not found in the place he declared.

- Obadiah had shown great faith and courage by hiding 100 of the Lord's prophets from Jezebel, bringing food and water to sustain them.

- This time there would be no hiding and no secrets: Obadiah would have to reveal his involvement with Elijah

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Obadiah Finds Elijah

1 Kings 18:9-15, KJV

9 And he said, What have I sinned, that thou wouldest deliver thy servant into the hand of Ahab, to slay me?

10 As the LORD thy God liveth, there is no nation or kingdom, whither my lord hath not sent to seek thee: and when they said, He is not there; he took an oath of the kingdom and nation, that they found thee not.

11 And now thou sayest, Go, tell thy lord, Behold, Elijah is here.

12 And it shall come to pass, as soon as I am gone from thee, that the Spirit of the LORD shall carry thee whither I know not; and so when I come and tell Ahab, and he cannot find thee, he shall slay me: but I thy servant fear the LORD from my youth.

13 Was it not told my lord what I did when Jezebel slew the prophets of the LORD, how I hid an hundred men of the Lord's prophets by fifty in a cave, and fed them with bread and water?

14 And now thou sayest, Go, tell thy lord, Behold, Elijah is here: and he shall slay me.

15 And Elijah said, As the LORD of hosts liveth, before whom I stand, I will surely shew myself unto him to day.

1 Kings 18:9-15, NIV

"What have I done wrong," asked Obadiah, "that you are handing your servant over to Ahab to be put to death?" ¹⁰As surely as the LORD your God lives, there is not a nation or kingdom where my master has not sent someone to look for you. And whenever a nation or kingdom claimed you were not there, he made them swear they could not find you. ¹¹But now you tell me to go to my master and say, 'Elijah is here.' ¹²I don't know where the Spirit of the LORD may carry you when I leave you. If I go and tell Ahab and he doesn't find you, he will kill me. Yet I your servant have worshiped the LORD since my youth. ¹³Haven't you heard, my lord, what I did while Jezebel was killing the prophets of the LORD? I hid a hundred of the LORD's prophets in two caves, fifty in each, and supplied them with food and water. ¹⁴And now you tell me to go to my master and say, 'Elijah is here.' He will kill me!"

¹⁵Elijah said, "As the LORD Almighty lives, whom I serve, I will surely present myself to Ahab today."

BIBLE EXTRA

Elijah: The Uncompromising Yet Fearful Prophet

Elijah the prophet was a man of uncompromising devotion to God in the face of the rampant idolatry of Israel's king and the people who followed his example. He faced down not only wicked King Ahab but also the 450 prophets of Baal on Mt. Carmel, calling down fire from heaven in a dramatic show of whose god was greater (1 Kings 18:16-40).

But in addition to being almost larger-than-life, this man of God also struggled with despair and depression when he faced continued hostility in response to God's message of repentance and redemption. When he had the 450 prophets killed, Jezebel hunted him to kill him, so Elijah fled south out of the kingdom in fear for his life. He headed toward Mt. Horeb in the desert (most likely Mt. Sinai or near there). Exhausted, he sat down under a broom bush and prayed, "I have had enough, LORD," he said. "Take my life; I am no better than my ancestors" (19:4). But on the mountain, God sustained him, giving him food and water and a mission to end Ahab's wicked reign over the country. Bravely, the prophet turned back to fulfill his mission.

and suffer the consequence if Elijah disappeared.

- So, Elijah made an oath with Obadiah, declaring by the name of the Lord that he would remain in sight when Ahab arrived.

- Obadiah was reassured by the promise of Elijah because he declared it by the name of the Lord and reminded Obadiah that he too was a servant of the Lord and would suffer whatever consequences came from seeing Ahab.

SUGGESTED ANSWER TO QUESTION 6

The prophet thought the king would kill him if he announced Elijah's arrival—and then Elijah didn't show up. Elijah had hidden himself well before, and Obadiah would be telling the king where Elijah was and then find the prophet was not there.

BIBLE EXTRA

Wicked King Ahab

The confrontation between King Ahab and the prophet Elijah set the stage for understanding a monarch who led Israel into pagan worship. The northern kingdom of Israel (after the split with the southern kingdom of Judah) had no good kings—and Ahab was likely the worst. He was the eighth king of Israel, reigning for 22 years, coming after his father Omri, who was also known for his deep wickedness. The writer of 1 Kings said that Ahab did more to provoke the Lord's anger than any of the monarchs that went before him (1 Kings 16:33). In addition to repeating the sins of his ancestors, Ahab took Jezebel as his wife, the daughter of a Sidonian king and a fanatical follower of the demon-god Baal. At Jezebel's prompting, Ahab had a man falsely accused and executed—just to obtain his property. Despite the darkness of his soul, however, Ahab did sometimes experience and express deep remorse, which the Lord affirmed and accepted as genuine (see 1 Kings 21:27-29).

SUGGESTED ANSWER TO QUESTION 7

He promised he would not disappear again but would be there when Obadiah gave Ahab the news. As a servant of the Lord himself, Elijah would bravely face whatever consequences came from confronting Ahab.

NAME CALLING

Finally, read 1 Kings 18:16-18 and highlight these ideas:

- Reassured that Elijah would see Ahab, Obadiah returned to the king and told Ahab where to meet the prophet.
- In light of all the evil that Ahab and Jezebel had

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Obadiah was a faithful servant of God, even though he had been caught up in the service of a tyrannical ruler and his wife. When Jezebel sought to cut off the Lord's prophets, Obadiah took the initiative to hide 100 of them in a cave (vs. 13) without the knowledge of the king and queen. Elijah told Obadiah to inform Ahab of his arrival, but Obadiah hesitated. He even wondered if Elijah's instructions were some sort of discipline for inappropriate behavior by the faithful servant.

Through his reply to the prophet, we are given a glimpse of the measures Ahab had taken to find Elijah. The king had sent emissaries to multiple nations looking for the one who had called down a drought upon the land. If the residents claimed not to know where Elijah was, the king would make them swear an oath to that effect. Obadiah reminded the prophet that he had remained faithful to God, even though was forced to serve a king who was full of spiritual apathy (at least for the God of Israel). By hiding the prophets, Obadiah was risking his life. At least with this exploit, it was possible to cover up his involvement so that he would not have to answer to the king for what happened. Telling the king that he had found Elijah, however, was an entirely different matter. If for some reason, Elijah did not show up, surely Obadiah's head would be removed from his shoulders for upsetting an already-paranoid monarch.

Obadiah was afraid that if he told the king of Elijah's arrival, and the Spirit of the Lord suddenly transported the prophet to sights-unseen, the servant would lose his life. In order to assure Obadiah and assuage his fears, Elijah promised the faithful servant that he would be there if Obadiah announced his arrival. In fact, Elijah did so with an oath to the God they both served. He was willing to meet the consequences of his obedience head on—even if that meant his execution. This may have given Obadiah the courage to move forward with the prophet's message, even at the possible cost of his own life.

6. *What were Obadiah's concerns?*

7. *What did Elijah promise to Obadiah?*

carried out, it is astounding that the king spoke of Elijah as a “troubler of Israel” (vs. 17). Although he was king, Ahab took no responsibility for the judgment on the nation.

- Elijah boldly exposed Ahab as the person responsible for the suffering, judgment, and consequences of what he and the queen had done to the nation.

- Not only Ahab, but his family had deserted the Lord and carried out every evil in the land. Nothing had happened without his knowledge and consent; the murders, idolatry, and other sins were placed squarely in the hands of the king and Jezebel.

Name Calling

1 Kings 18:16-18, KJV

16 So Obadiah went to meet Ahab, and told him: and Ahab went to meet Elijah.

17 And it came to pass, when Ahab saw Elijah, that Ahab said unto him, Art thou he that troubleth Israel?

18 And he answered, I have not troubled Israel; but thou, and thy father's house, in that ye have forsaken the commandments of the LORD, and thou hast followed Baalim.

1 Kings 18:16-18, NIV

¹⁶So Obadiah went to meet Ahab and told him, and Ahab went to meet Elijah. ¹⁷When he saw Elijah, he said to him, “Is that you, you troubler of Israel?”

¹⁸“I have not made trouble for Israel,” Elijah replied. “But you and your father's family have. You have abandoned the LORD's commands and have followed the Baals.”

Ahab finally got what he wanted—a face-to-face encounter with the prophet who had called down a drought upon his kingdom. However, when Elijah came to visit Ahab, the king refused to accept responsibility for his actions. Instead, he focused on the inconvenience to him that the response to his destructive actions was causing the kingdom. Not only did he refuse to acknowledge his contribution to the current situation (and that of his idolatrous wife), he attempted to deflect responsibility for the consequences of his actions on to the prophet himself, by describing Elijah as the one who brought “trouble” upon the king and the land.

But Elijah directly placed responsibility for the drought on the shoulders of Ahab and his household. Also, Elijah made it clear as to why no rain had come—Ahab had forsaken the Lord and followed the pagan gods, “the Baals” (vs. 18) worshiped by his wife. The spiritual adultery this represented was vile in the eyes of God, and a contest between God and the Baals was coming soon.

8. What title did King Ahab give to Elijah?

9. How did Elijah react to Ahab's accusation that the prophet was responsible for the troubles in Israel?

SUGGESTED ANSWER TO QUESTION 8

He called him the “troubler of Israel” (vs. 17) for calling down a drought on the nation.

SUGGESTED ANSWER TO QUESTION 9

The prophet responded to Ahab's deflection by placing responsibility for the dry spell where it belonged—on the shoulders of the king and his household. God had brought the drought because the king had led the land to worship the Baals rather than the Lord Almighty.

BIBLE EXTRA

Baal, Lord of Rain and Dew

Elijah rebuked Ahab for his devotion to Baal, the pagan god of Canaanite culture. In this ancient culture, Baal was a fertility god who was also called the Lord of Rain and Dew. Three years of drought was God's way of saying that the king's so-called “god” held no real power at all.

Ahab built a temple to Baal and personally inaugurated its altar. He set up a pole in honor of Asherah, Baal's mistress (1 Kings 16:31-33). Baal's temple also contained a sacred stone that may have been an image or an engraved column. King Jehu destroyed the temple and stone when he came to power in Israel (2 Kings 10:23-28).

WINDOW ON THE WORD

Jesus, Our Model of Courage

Christ was both lion and lamb, based on the situation. Sadly, believers are sometimes out of sync with God's commanded response for the circumstance; we are a lamb when we should have been a lion or vice versa. Jesus was led by the Spirit because He abided in the presence of God; He was always in the will of God because He knew the commands of God.

Without God's Word, we won't know the appropriate biblical response; without a life of continual prayer and praise, we won't know the mind of the Holy Spirit. We can't walk in accord with our flesh and be led by the Holy Spirit. Remaining in God's presence brings us the capacity to do all things through Christ who strengthens us.

3 Bible Application

Acknowledge the relationship between obedience and our spiritual victory.

Copy this page and give the instructions to each group. Also, make copies of the handout from the Resource Kit for the group using it.



Handout:

'Fear: The Enemy of Faith'

Answer the handout questions, then discuss your answers with the rest of your group.

GROUP ACTIVITIES

Discussion Group

Read "A Man of Like Passion," then answer **Questions 10, 11, and 12**. One of the reasons Satan tempts and entices believers with fear and sin is because it renders our prayers ineffective. It's not a sin to be tempted; the sin is yielding to the temptation. Our free will has been given to us by God, but we decide how we will use it. A submitted vessel is an effective vessel. The problems we face today aren't the only problems of our lives; God has delivered us before and He will do so again. In fact, His mercies are new every morning.

Overcoming Our Fears

In the Lord's strength we can do things that otherwise we would be afraid to do. List on a board or sheet of newsprint what fears the following biblical heroes faced and how they overcame those fears to serve the Lord. How can their examples help us overcome our own fears?

- Queen Esther
- Daniel
- the apostle Peter
- the apostle Paul

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A Man of Like Passion

James 5:17-18 tells us, "Elias [Elijah] was a man subject to like passions as we are, and he prayed earnestly that it might not rain; and it rained not on the earth by the space of three years and six months. And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth brought forth her fruit" (KJV).

Elijah had the passions we do, but he didn't yield to those passions; he yielded himself to the will of God as an instrument of righteousness, service, humility, and obedience. The capacity was there to ignore the Lord, follow what the rest of the country was doing and worship the Baals, but Elijah's will and decision were set to please the Lord. Although Elijah was courageous in faith when he confronted Ahab and later when he challenged the prophets of Baal, he became afraid (as we likely would have) when murderous Queen Jezebel threatened to kill him (1 Kings 19:2-3).

Although we have faith, we too have to resist the urge to fear the threats of men. When we abide in God's presence, we can be courageous and peaceful, knowing that He is with us; the battle and the victory are His. When we fret over all the worst-case scenarios, passion turns into panic. When the servant of the prophet Elisha saw the city surrounded by an army, the prophet opened the servant's eyes to show him the Lord's army and said, "Fear not: for they that be with us are more than they that be with them" (2 Kings 6:16, KJV).

The Lord helps us even when we're unaware of His caring hand. We can trust Him no matter what we face. A key element of faith is this: if the problem wasn't greater than our capacity, then it wouldn't require courage!

10. What is the relationship between having God's power and submitting to Him?

11. How would you describe your present obedience to Him versus your fears?

12. How can relying on God's strength and mercy help our fears?

4 Life Response

Courageously obey God.

On this Palm Sunday, it is good to remember the courage of our Lord. Jesus entered Jerusalem knowing that He would be the true Passover Lamb. He knew all the prophecies concerning His betrayal and the false accusations, mockery, shame, pain, and death that awaited Him—yet He still rode into Jerusalem, fully understanding His crucifixion was near.

Ask your students to read “Finding Courage,” then read Deuteronomy 31:6 and Psalm 27:14.

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Finding Courage

In the world, courage is bravery; it is the nerve and audacity to run into danger; it is selflessness and valor. Those are admirable attributes and characteristics. However, our battle for courage is first spiritual, then physically tangible. The true power and authority behind our courage is Christ our Savior, the hope of glory. We go forward fearlessly when we understand that the battle belongs to the Lord.

► *As a class, read Deuteronomy 31:6 and Psalm 27:14 together. Make a commitment this week to show courage and overcome any fear you have of doing what God asks you to do. You may want to write that commitment here.*

KEY VERSE

And he answered, I have not troubled Israel; but thou, and thy father's house, in that ye have forsaken the commandments of the LORD, and thou hast followed Baalim. —1 Kings 18:18, KJV

“I have not made trouble for Israel,” Elijah replied. “But you and your father's family have. You have abandoned the LORD's commands and have followed the Baals.” —1 Kings 18:18, NIV

DAILY BIBLE READINGS FOR NEXT WEEK'S LESSON

Week of March 29 through April 4

(See *The Quiet Hour* and *Cross* devotionals on these passages.)

Mon. Isaiah 52:13–53:3—Isaiah Foretells the Suffering Servant.

Tues. Acts 8:26–35—Jesus, the Suffering Servant.

Wed. Luke 18:31–34—Jesus Foretells His Death and Resurrection.

Thurs. Luke 24:1–12—Jesus Raised from Death.

Fri. Luke 24:13–27—The Risen Christ Appears to Disciples.

Sat. Luke 24:28–35—Christ Revealed in Breaking of Bread.

Sun. Isaiah 53:4–11—Christ Suffered and Interceded for Sinners.

They may want to sign a statement of commitment in their books saying, “This week I will be courageous for the Lord in this area,” and name the area.

End the class with a prayer like this one: “Heavenly Father, thank You for elevating our faith and courage that we may boldly say that You are our help. We ask for daily guidance, grace, faith, and obedience to fulfill Your will concerning each of our lives. We trust You, Lord, and we bless Your holy name. In Jesus' name, amen!”



As the class members are leaving, hand out copies of this week's *Power for Living*. Take or mail copies of *Lesson Leaflet* to those who couldn't be with you today, or send them to those you would like to join your class.

Before Teaching Next Week's Lesson

Before next week, read Isaiah 53:4–11a. Ask your students to think of a situation where some kind of suffering was ultimately good for them in some way. For example, in school they may have “suffered” studying for a test, but because of that, they received a good grade.