

# 12 Foundation Stones—Class 8A

## The Love of Jesus

### The Greatest Love, Part 1

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#### Section 1: Getting to know Jesus

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##### ➤ The gift of getting to know Jesus

The story is told by the Persians of the great Shah Abbas, who reigned magnificently in Persia, but loved to mingle with the people in disguise. Once, dressed as a poor man, he descended the long flight of stairs, dark and damp, to the tiny cellar where the fire man, seated on ashes, was tending the furnace.

The king sat down beside him and began to talk. At mealtime the fire man produced some coarse, black bread and a jug of water and they ate and drank together. The Shah went away, but returned again and again, for his heart was filled with sympathy for the lonely man. He gave him sweet counsel, and the poor man opened his whole heart and loved this friend, so kind, so wise, and yet poor like himself.

At last the emperor thought, 'I will tell him who I am, and see what gift he will ask.' So he said, 'You think me poor, but I am Shah Abbas your emperor.' He expected a petition for some great thing, but the man sat silent, gazing on him with love and wonder. Then the king said. 'Haven't you understood? I can make you rich and noble, can give you a city, can appoint you as a great ruler. Have you nothing to ask?'

The man replied gently, 'Yes, my lord, I understood. But what is this you have done, to leave your palace and glory, to sit with me in this dark place, to partake of my coarse fare, to care whether my heart is glad or sorry? Even you can give nothing more precious. On others you may bestow rich presents, but to me you have given yourself; it only remains to ask that you never withdraw this gift of your friendship.'

*Mark 10:45—For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.*

*Galatians 2:20—I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.*

*Ephesians 5:2—Walk in love, as Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma.*

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#### Section 2: God's Great Love for You

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##### ➤ Introduction

The really important thing to know and realize is that Jesus understands what we go through, and He loves us and wants to help us. He promises to always be with us. His love is so great that He died an agonizing death on the cross for us. His love is so great that He hasn't expected any one of us to earn our salvation, but He gives it to us as a great gift. No matter what mistakes and sins we've committed, as we bathe in the ocean of His love, we receive forgiveness. We can receive His blessings, all the goodness that He offers to us freely.

We're going to spend a few minutes now talking about the Lord's love for us. We hope these readings will bring the reality of the Lord's presence closer to you, that you will feel His great love for you personally and He will wash away anything that is troubling you.

*Romans 8:35–39—Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? (36) As it is written: "For Your sake we are killed all day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter." (37) Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. (38) For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, (39) nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

*Jude 1:21—Keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.*

*Ephesians 3:19—To know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.*

##### ➤ Jesus calls us His friends

*John 15:14–15—You are My friends if you do whatever I command you. (15) No longer do I call you servants, for a servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I heard from*

*My Father I have made known to you.*

*James 2:23b—"Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness." And he was called the friend of God.*

*Luke 12:4a—And I say to you, My friends...*

*Hosea 2:23b—I will say to those who were not My people, 'You are My people!' And they shall say, 'You are my God!'*

### **Jesus wants to be close to you**

Jesus really cares about you and He wants you to be happy. When you're lonely and sad, He sees and He feels and He knows. He's always right there, just waiting to be your Best Friend. He's lonely sometimes, too, because He wants to be with you more. He wants to understand you, to listen to you, and to give you answers. You might think you're not very important and wonder why Jesus would want to spend time with you, but that's not the way He sees it. He's your Friend. He wants to talk to you. He wants to listen to you, and He wants you to listen to Him. He's always there; He never goes away. Jesus, your wonderful Best Friend, is always there for you, so don't forget it.

## ➤ **Jesus loves each of us personally, and cares about us as individuals**

*Luke 12:7a—The very hairs of your head are all numbered.*

*John 10:2-3—But he who enters by the door is the shepherd of the sheep. (3) To him the doorkeeper opens, and the sheep hear his voice; and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out.*

*Isaiah 43:1b—"Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by your name; you are Mine."*

He loves each one of us, as though there were no one else to love. He died for each one of us, as if there were no one else to die for. He calls us by our names, for He cares for each of us as individuals.

### **Don't be afraid, Papa is here!**

A husband had been happily married for a handful of years. He dearly loved his beautiful wife and their sweet little daughter. Sudden sorrow struck the home when the young wife was killed in a traffic accident, and it seemed that all of the light had gone out of his life forever. The night after the funeral, the young father was putting his three-year-old daughter to bed, and with awkward fingers was buttoning her sleeping garment when the lights suddenly went out all over the house. He suspected that a fuse had blown out in the basement, and said to the little child, "Papa will be right back; you lie still and wait here."

But she, frightened at the thought of being left alone, pleaded to be taken with him, so he picked her up in his arms and started through the darkened hallways and down the stairs. The child snuggled in his arms for a while in silence; but as they entered the basement she tightened her arms about his neck, and said, "It's awfully dark; but I'm not afraid, because my papa is here!"

A sob shook the man's whole body. He buried his face in the baby's hair and wept, as he said, "Yes, dear, it is dark, indeed; but I also am not afraid, because my Father is here!"

"I will never leave you nor forsake you" (Hebrews 13:5b).

### **How the grapes are ripened**

Galileo, the pioneer Italian astronomer, is best remembered for his work based on the theory of Copernicus, that the sun, rather than the earth, is the center of our universe. He was also the first man to use a telescope to study the skies.

One day someone asked him how he could reconcile the vastness of the universe with the idea of the care of God for every one of His creatures. His reply bears thinking about, especially as on first reading, it doesn't even seem to be an answer to the question asked. He said: "The sun, which has all those planets revolving around it, is able to ripen the smallest bunch of grapes as though it had nothing else to do in the universe."

## ➤ **He holds our hand. He holds us in His arms. He is always with us!**

*Psalms 139:7-10—Where can I go from Your Spirit? Or where can I flee from Your presence? (8) If I ascend into Heaven, You are there; if I make my bed in Hell, behold, You are there. (9) If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, (10) even there Your hand shall lead me, and Your right hand shall hold me.*

*Isaiah 41:13—For I, the Lord your God, will hold your right hand, saying to you, 'Fear not, I will help you.'*

*Isaiah 42:6a—I, the Lord, have called You in righteousness, and will hold Your hand; I will keep You...*

*Matthew 18:20—For where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them.*

You'll never walk alone if you have Jesus in your heart and your hand in His! If you have Jesus, you always have company and love. No matter where you are, you are in His hands and He'll take care of you. Jesus is the one possession you'll never have to give up, never have to leave behind, never lose. You can give Him away as much as you like but you'll always have Him with you. He'll always be near.

### Footprints in the sand

One night a man had a dream. He dreamed he was walking along the beach with the Lord. Across the sky flashed scenes from his life. For each scene he noticed two sets of footprints in the sand, one belonging to him and the other to the Lord.

When the last scene of his life flashed before him, he looked back at the footprints in the sand. He noticed that many times along the path of his life there was only one set of footprints. He also noticed that it happened at the very lowest and saddest times in his life.

This really bothered him and he questioned the Lord about it. "Lord, You said that once I decided to follow You, You'd walk with me all the way. But I have noticed that during the most troublesome times in my life, there is only one set of footprints. I don't understand why when I needed You most, You would leave me."

The Lord replied, "My son, My precious child, I love you and would never leave you. During your times of trial and suffering, when you see only one set of footprints, it was then that I carried you."

### ➤ Jesus hears our cries and answers our prayers

*Exodus 22:27b—And it will be that when he cries to Me, I will hear, for I am gracious.*

*2 Samuel 22:7—In my distress I called upon the Lord, and cried out to my God; He heard my voice from His temple, and my cry entered His ears.*

*Psalm 4:3—But know that the Lord has set apart for Himself him who is godly; the Lord will hear when I call to Him.*

*Psalm 55:17—Evening and morning and at noon I will pray, and cry aloud, and He shall hear my voice.*

*Psalm 66:19—But certainly God has heard me; he has attended to the voice of my prayer.*

*Psalm 102:19–20 —For He looked down from the height of His sanctuary; from Heaven the Lord viewed the earth, (20) to hear the groaning of the prisoner, to release those appointed to death.*

*Psalm 145:19—He will fulfill the desire of those who fear Him; he also will hear their cry and save them.*

*Isaiah 65:24—It shall come to pass that before they call, I will answer; and while they are still speaking, I will hear.*

### ➤ The Lord not only listens, but talks to us too—a faithful Counselor

*Proverbs 8:17—I love those who love Me, and those who seek Me diligently will find Me.*

*Psalm 85:8a—I will hear what God the Lord will speak, for He will speak peace to His people and to His saints.*

We have a dear Friend who is always ready to listen to what we have to say—and not only listen; He is eager to speak to us in return.

### God's life-saving intervention

Peter Marshall (chaplain to the U.S. Senate for a number of years), in his youth, spent a summer working in the English village of Bamburgh, sixteen miles southeast of the Scottish border. One very dark night as he was walking back to Bamburgh from a nearby village, he decided to take a shortcut. He knew that there was a deep, deserted limestone quarry in the area, but he thought he could avoid the danger spot. So he struck out across the moors. The night was starless and inky black, and the sound of the wind seemed to give it an eerie quality.

Suddenly he heard someone call, "Peter!" The voice was urgent.

He stopped. "Yes, who is it? What do you want?"

For a second he listened, but there was only the sound of the wind. Thinking he must have been mistaken, he walked on a few paces. Then he heard it again, even more urgent: "Peter!"

This time he stopped dead still and tried to peer into the impenetrable blackness, and suddenly he stumbled, falling to his knees. He put out his hand to catch himself, but there was nothing there. Cautiously he felt around in a semicircle and found that he was on the very brink of the abandoned stone quarry. Just one more step would have sent him plummeting to his death!

Peter Marshall never forgot that voice. And there was never any doubt in his mind about the source of it.

### The Pencil

By Mrs. Theo Hill

It was a cold midwinter day in South Carolina, but I was busy—and warm—inside the house I had lived in alone for the past 15 years. I needed some wrapping paper, so I pulled down the folding stairs and started climbing to the attic. I was 81 at the time, and the moment the frigid attic air hit me, I knew I should have put on a coat. Oh well, I'd hurry.

To keep the warm air downstairs, I shut the door to the attic storage room behind me. I heard a click. I knew immediately that I was locked in. The door had no knob; I'd taken it off to replace one downstairs. And there was no one else in the house.

The cold penetrated my bones. I wrapped myself in a blanket to stop my shaking and looked out the attic window. No neighbors in sight. Anyway, the window was stuck shut from years of disuse.

An hour passed ... then another. "Dear Lord, please send my children to help me." I knew this prayer was unrealistic. None of my four children was due to visit.

At my feet sat a yellowed and dusty pile of my son Billy's school papers. On top of them lay an old pencil. I picked it up, thinking of the hours it had spent in Billy's hand.

Once again I prayed for help. Immediately, as clear as any words I've ever heard, a question came to me, "What is that in thy hand?"

I looked at the pencil, my glance falling not on the leaded end, but on the metal end that had once held an eraser. It was now flattened, no doubt by my Billy's biting down as he sought to unlock a math problem.

I went to the door and inserted the end of the pencil into the keyhole. The lock turned. The door opened.

## ➤ **He carries our burdens**

*Nehemiah 4:20b—Our God will fight for us.*

*Isaiah 41:17—The poor and needy seek water, but there is none, their tongues fail for thirst. I, the Lord, will hear them; I, the God of Israel, will not forsake them.*

*Luke 5:15—However, the report went around concerning Him all the more; and great multitudes came together to hear, and to be healed by Him of their infirmities.*

*Matthew 11:28–30—Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. (29) Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. (30) For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.*

### **A testimony of what happens when we keep holding tight to Jesus!**

From Joyce, Philippines

One very hot day, my son and I stepped into a shop to buy some bottled drinking water, and he handed the saleslady a copy of our To You!—With Love tract.

"Does God love me?" she asked glumly.

"Yes, He does!" we answered. "Whatever our troubles may be, no matter how heavy our burdens may be, God loves us! He loves us so much, in fact, that He sent Jesus to help us. During our most difficult times, Jesus carries us and holds us tight. It's we who sometimes let go of Him."

At that, the saleslady, who turned out to also be the owner of the shop, began to explain her problems. Her husband had passed away recently, and she was left with a lot of debts. On top of that, she had just received notice from municipal hall that all the shops in that area were going to be demolished. "What am I to do?" she asked. "This shop is my only source of income."

By the time we finished our conversation, she had decided to plead her cause to the mayor's office. We prayed for her, bid her farewell, and parted with these words: "Keep holding tight to Jesus! Whatever happens, don't let go!"

Five days later we dropped by to say hello and see how she was doing. As soon as she saw us, she lit up and excused herself from the customers she was with. "The Lord answered your prayer!" she told us excitedly. "I can keep my shop! The first official I talked to said he couldn't do anything, but the words, 'Keep holding tight to Jesus,' kept ringing in my ears. This renewed my determination. I appealed to higher authorities, and my request was granted!"

## ➤ **He comforts us**

*Isaiah 30:19b—You shall weep no more. He will be very gracious to you at the sound of your cry; when He hears it, He will answer you.*

*Psalms 119:50—This is my comfort in my affliction, for Your word has given me life.*

*Isaiah 40:1—"Comfort, yes, comfort My people!" says your God.*

*Isaiah 66:13a—As one whom his mother comforts, so I will comfort you.*

*Matthew 9:22—But Jesus turned around, and when He saw her He said, "Be of good cheer, daughter; your faith has made you well." And the woman was made well from that hour.*

*2 Corinthians 1:4—Who comforts us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort those who are in any trouble, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.*

*John 14:1—Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me.*

### **Praying at her side**

By Sam Nix

Here in South Korea, I recently met Ms. Kyong Cha Lee, a woman who had suffered a terrible loss.

Ms. Lee's house, like many older homes in Korea, is heated by large charcoal briquettes placed under the floor. During a cold spell last spring this primitive heating system malfunctioned, spreading poisonous carbon monoxide fumes throughout the house, almost killing Ms. Lee.

She lay in the hospital in a coma for days, with her family at her bedside. When she finally awoke, they were too grieved to tell her the extent of her loss. But she astonished them when she said she

already knew her two children had been killed in the tragedy. "The doctor told me when he came to look after me," she explained.

"What doctor?" they asked.

"The doctor who prayed by my side and promised that God would watch over me."

They assured her they had seen no such visitor and they had been with her constantly. The physician must have been a dream, they said.

When Ms. Lee was well enough to go home, she was making her way out of the hospital when she caught sight of a portrait in the lobby.

"There," she said, "that's the doctor who came to my bedside. What is his name?"

"Jesus Christ," came the answer.

## ➤ **He strengthens us. We can depend upon His help.**

*Exodus 15:2—The Lord is my strength and song, and He has become my salvation; He is my God, and I will praise Him; my father's God, and I will exalt Him.*

*2 Samuel 22:33—God is my strength and power, and He makes my way perfect.*

*Psalms 28:7a—The Lord is my strength and my shield; my heart trusted in Him, and I am helped.*

*Psalms 37:39—But the salvation of the righteous is from the Lord; He is their strength in the time of trouble.*

*Isaiah 25:4—For You have been a strength to the poor, a strength to the needy in his distress, a refuge from the storm, a shade from the heat; for the blast of the terrible ones is as a storm against the wall.*

*Isaiah 40:29–31—He gives power to the weak, and to those who have no might He increases strength. (39) Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall, (31) but those who wait on the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint.*

*Daniel 11:32b—The people who know their God shall be strong, and carry out great exploits.*

*2 Corinthians 12:9–10—And He said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness." Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. (10) Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong.*

### **Trust Him!**

A man slid down a rope into a well. He supposed the rope to be of ample length, but to his dismay he reached the end of it without touching the bottom of the well with his feet. He tried in vain to climb up the rope, and dared not let go for fear of being dashed to pieces. He held on as long as he could, and when utterly exhausted let the rope slip from his grasp. He fell—just three inches!

### **Jump into His arms**

In order to clarify what faith involved, C.H. Spurgeon used to employ this illustration. Suppose there is a fire on the third floor of a house, and a child is trapped in a room there. A huge, strong man stands on the ground beneath the window where the child's face appears, and he calls "Jump! Drop into my arms."

"It is a part of faith," Spurgeon would say, "to know that there is a man there; still another part of faith to believe him to be a strong man; but the essence of faith lies in trusting him fully and dropping into his arms." Thus it is with us and Jesus.

### **He will hold you up!**

Some at times are like the man that was crossing the ice-frozen Ohio River on his hands and knees, fearful that he was going to break through and drown, when all of a sudden he saw a double team of horses coming pulling a load of iron confidently over the very ice on which he was so hesitantly crawling! Let me tell you: God can take it! He can handle any load you want to give Him!

## ➤ **In Jesus we find peace**

*Psalms 29:11—The Lord will give strength to His people; the Lord will bless His people with peace.*

*Isaiah 26:3—You will keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on You, because he trusts in You.*

*John 14:27—Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.*

*Philippians 4:7—And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.*

*Psalms 55:22—Cast your burden on the Lord, and He shall sustain you; He shall never permit the righteous to be moved.*

*Hebrews 4:9—There remains therefore a rest for the people of God.*

### **Without a knock!**

The following story was told by Olga Kristensen, who spent forty years in China as a missionary:  
"Toward the end of my stay I had nearly 80 refugees at the mission station besides the women living there. One night we heard bandits approaching. There were shots at the end of the street. We all knew that without intervention, murder and disaster were on the way. I went into my closet and prayed to God for a verse to calm myself and the others with me. My tortured soul then found a verse I had often read before, but which now had a real meaning for me—"When you lie down, you will not be afraid; yes, you will lie down and your sleep will be sweet. Do not be afraid of sudden terror, nor of trouble from the wicked when it comes" (Proverbs 3:24–26).

Could I have a better message? I brought it to all the others and told them to go to rest. When I was going to bed I was tempted to lie down with my clothes on, but after a little struggle I undressed and lying down, slept soundly. The next morning the dead were lying outside our premises. There had been fighting and murder, but no one had even gone so far as to knock on our door."

### **The One who rules the past, future, and present!**

Oliver Cromwell's secretary was dispatched to the Continent on some important business. He stayed one night at a seaport town, and tossed on his bed, unable to sleep.

According to an old custom, a servant slept in his room, and on this occasion slept soundly enough. The secretary at length awakened the man who asked how it was that his master could not rest.

"I am so afraid something will go wrong with the embassy," was the reply.

"Master," said the valet, "may I ask a question or two?"

"To be sure."

"Did God rule the world before we were born?"

"Most assuredly He did."

"And will He rule it after we are dead?"

"Certainly He will."

"Then, master, why not let Him rule the present, too?"

The secretary's faith was stirred, peace was the result, and in a few minutes both he and his servant were sound asleep.

## ➤ **He takes care of our needs**

*John 14:13–14—And whatever you ask in My name, that I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son.  
(14) If you ask anything in My name, I will do it.*

*Psalms 37:4—Delight yourself also in the Lord, and He shall give you the desires of your heart.*

*Philippians 4:19—And my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus.*

*Matthew 6:33—But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.*

### **The preacher robin**

Martin Luther once said: "I have one preacher that I love better than any other on Earth; it is my little tame robin, who preaches to me daily. In the evening, he hops onto the windowsill where I put crumbs and takes as much as he desires to satisfy his need. From thence he always hops to a little tree close by and lifts up his voice to God and sings his carols of praise and gratitude, tucks his little head under his wing and goes fast to sleep, and leaves tomorrow to look after itself. He is the best preacher that I have on Earth."

## ➤ **He brings solutions to our problems**

*1 Peter 5:7—Casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you.*

Whatever our problems are, Jesus has the answers. If you'll just put your life in His hands, then He'll take care of and help you to deal with any problem that you have!—He can help you through it and make it easier for you and be the kind of support and comfort and friend that you need. Jesus cares about you and He loves you very much, and He sees and understands the suffering you're going through. His Word says that He cares for you, and that you can cast your cares upon Him. If you give your problems to Jesus, then He'll take care of you, and He'll give you the comfort and solutions you need.

Of course, the Lord does not instantly and automatically dissolve every single one of our problems as soon as we get saved, and this doesn't mean that you'll never have any problems again, but the Lord helps us with our problems and makes them easier to solve, easier to bear, and He does dissolve some of them entirely and completely delivers us from them. However, there are other problems that He knows are good for us for one reason or another, and He helps us to handle these problems, and gives us the grace and the patience and the love to bear them.

It's sort of like having a wise counselor that you go to about your problems. The counselor cannot get rid of all your problems by himself, but he can give you help and counsel and wisdom that you can take back with you and use to your advantage to make things better and easier.

With the Lord, we know a lot of His help is supernatural, He does a lot for us by His supernatural power. But it is a relationship, it is teamwork, and we usually have to do something. We have to cooperate with Him. We have to go by His rules and carry out certain procedures in order for Him to do the work in our lives.

We'll talk more about this subject of how to handle the problems and difficulties and challenges of life in a later class, but for the moment we want to focus on the fact that Jesus is our Good Friend who lovingly wants to help us with whatever problems we face!

## ➤ **He wants us to be happy**

*2 Chronicles 9:7—Happy are your men and happy are these your servants, who stand continually before you and hear your wisdom!*

*Nehemiah 8:10b—The joy of the Lord is your strength.*

*John 10:10b—I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly.*

*John 16:24—Until now you have asked nothing in My name. Ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be full.*

*Psalms 144:15—Happy are the people who are in such a state; happy are the people whose God is the Lord!*

*Psalms 19:8a—The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart.*

*Luke 10:20b—Rejoice because your names are written in Heaven.*

*John 15:10–11—If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love, just as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love. (11) These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may remain in you, and that your joy may be full.*

*Psalms 100:1–2—Make a joyful shout to the Lord, all you lands! (2) Serve the Lord with gladness; come before His presence with singing.*

## ➤ **He works things out for our benefit**

*Romans 8:28—And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose.*

The Lord loves us and works out the circumstances of life for our benefit, even if we can't always easily recognize things as "good."

### **Bread that looks like a stone**

The Lord's answers to prayer are infinitely perfect, and they will show that often when we were asking for a stone that looked like bread, He was giving us bread that to our short-sightedness looked like a stone (Luke 11:11).

### **The oyster**

An oyster on the ocean floor opened wide its shell to let the water pass over it. As the water flushed through, its gills picked out food, sending it to its stomach. Suddenly a large fish nearby stirred up a cloud of sand and silt with a flip of its tail. Sand! Oh, how the oyster disliked sand. It was so rough and made life so unpleasant and uncomfortable and was such a bother whenever any got inside its shell. Quickly the oyster slammed its shell shut, but it was too late. One hard gritty grain of sand had gotten in and lodged itself between his inner flesh and his shell.

My, how that piece of sand bothered the oyster! But almost immediately, special glands God had given him for coating the inside of his shell began working to coat the irritating grain of sand with a lovely smooth and shiny covering. Year after year the oyster added a few more layers of the coating onto the tiny grain of sand until at last, it had produced a beautiful lustrous pearl of great value.

Sometimes the problems we have are a bit like that grain of sand. They bother us and we wonder why we have the irritation and inconvenience they can be. But the grace of God begins to work a wonder with our problems and weaknesses, if we let Him. We become more humble and yielded, more desperate in prayer, closer to the Lord, wiser, and better able to resist the problems. Like blessings in disguise, the Lord soon takes the rough pieces of sand in our life and turns them into precious pearls of strength and power and they become a hope and inspiration to many.

### **The life-saving fire**

One chilly winter morning, a fishing fleet launched out from a small harbor on the east coast of Newfoundland. In the afternoon there arose a great storm. When night settled, not a single vessel of all the fleet had found its way back into port.

All night long, wives, mothers, children, and sweethearts paced up and down the windswept beach, wringing their hands and calling on God to save their lost loved ones. To add to the horror of the situation, one of their cottages caught fire. Since the men were away, it was impossible to put out the blaze and save it.

When morning broke, to the joy of all, the entire fleet had returned safely to harbor in the bay. But there was one face which was a picture of despair—the wife of the man whose home had been destroyed in the fire.

Meeting her husband as he landed, she cried, "Oh, Honey, we are ruined! Our home and

everything in it was destroyed by fire!"

But the man exclaimed to her surprise, "Thank God for that fire! It was the light of our burning cottage that safely guided the whole fleet into port!"

## ➤ **Through Jesus we receive forgiveness**

*Psalm 103:8–12—The Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in mercy. (9) He will not always strive with us, nor will He keep His anger forever. (10) He has not dealt with us according to our sins, nor punished us according to our iniquities. (11) For as the heavens are high above the earth, so great is His mercy toward those who fear Him; (12) As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us.*

*Psalm 86:5—For You, Lord, are good, and ready to forgive, and abundant in mercy to all those who call upon You.*

*Psalm 130:3–4—If You, Lord, should mark iniquities, O Lord, who could stand? (4) But there is forgiveness with You, that You may be feared.*

*Lamentations 3:22–23—Through the Lord's mercies we are not consumed, because His compassions fail not. (23) They are new every morning; great is Your faithfulness.*

*Ephesians 1:7—In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace.*

*1 John 1:9—If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*

*1 John 2:12—I write to you, little children, because your sins are forgiven you for His name's sake.*

## ➤ **He came to save us and give us eternal life!**

*John 3:16–17—For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. (17) For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved.*

The greatest gift of love that God has given us is Jesus! And Jesus loved us enough to leave His Home in Heaven to come to earth with a mission from His Heavenly Father—to live, love and die for humankind. He left the splendors of Heaven to suffer a cruel death at the hands of cruel men. Why?—That we may be saved. God knows that none of us could be good enough to earn our way to Heaven. It's only Jesus' sacrifice in our place that makes it possible for us to obtain salvation, the blessing of spending eternity in Heaven with the Creator of Love.

(In our next class we'll focus more on salvation and the gift of forgiveness.)

### **Jesus left Heaven for our sake!**

Jesus left the Halls of Heaven for our sakes! Jesus Himself temporarily renounced the rights of His citizenship in Heaven and became a citizen of this world, and though He was rich, for our sakes He became poor that we through His poverty might become rich. He was human—He got tired, He got hungry, He got weary. He was subject to all these things even as we are, yet without sin, that He might be a good High Priest, have compassion upon us, know how we feel, know when we're footsore and weary, know when we've had enough.

God sent Jesus to become a human being in order that He might better reach us with His love and communicate with us on the lowly level of our own human understanding, and have more mercy and patience with us than God Himself. Think of that!

The Bible says, "He knows our frame, He remembers that we are dust," having worn that frame Himself, suffering in it and dying in it for our sakes. He came down to our level that He might take us with Him back up to His. What a miracle!—All for our sakes.

*Hebrews 4:15—For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin.*

*Psalm 103:14—For He knows our frame; He remembers that we are dust.*

## ➤ **His love is unchanging and never-ending**

*Matthew 28:20b—Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.*

*Jude 1:24–25—Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling, and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy, (25) To God our Savior, who alone is wise, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and forever. Amen.*

We have Someone in whom we can rest reassured, eternally secure, knowing that we don't have anything to even worry about! He's going to solve every problem and always meet the need, whatever it is, and keep us safely wherever we are, whatever we're doing! So hold on to the Lord!

*Malachi 3:6a—For I am the Lord, I do not change.*

*Hebrews 13:5b—Be content with such things as you have. For He Himself has said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you."*



*Hebrews 13:8—Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever.*

Praise the Lord! He remains the same—faithful, always trustworthy, always there, always solving every problem, answering every need!

■ **Bible reading of John chapters 14 and 15**

① *Read this after the class.*