



High School Prayer Guide, Grades 9-12* Week 2

Day 8

Sharing the Good News of Jesus

Isaiah 52:7 How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of those who bring good news, who proclaim peace, who bring good tidings, who proclaim salvation, who say to Zion, "Your God reigns!"

Acts 8:35 Then Philip began with that very passage of Scripture and told him the good news about Jesus.

Luke 24:27; 32 And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself... They asked each other, "Were not our hearts burning within us while he talked with us on the road and opened the Scriptures to us?"

Romans 10:14-15 How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? And how can they preach unless they are sent? As it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!"

Have you invited Jesus to be Lord of your life? Have you believed His claims? If so, you and I have something in common. We have the privilege and awesome command to share the good news (Gospel) of Christ with those who do not know God.

When we do so, it is important to major in the majors. We need to be able to tell our friends (and even enemies!) who Jesus is and why we believe in Him. As these passages suggest, the best way to do so is through the Scriptures.

Studying God's Word

Today's lesson puts the burden of proof on you! Do you know how to show someone the Good News of salvation (witness)? To get saved, it is important a person understand some very important truths. Using a Bible and possibly a concordance to assist you, find verses that show us these truths. You can never get enough practice witnessing! Plus, rehearsing the Good News of Christ often reenergizes our relationship with Him, reminding us of the richness of what He has given.

God has created us all and has a wonderful plan for our lives.

We are sinners. Sin separates us from God and causes both spiritual and physical death and puts us in debt to God. Because God is holy, He cannot dwell with sin. Without a punishment or payment for sin, we will be separated from God forever and suffer eternally in hell.

Jesus satisfied the punishment for all our sins with His own life. God accepted him as the perfect sacrifice, even though we were never able to pay the price for our salvation or “be good enough” on our own.

Jesus is fully God and fully man. As such, he rose from the dead, demonstrating his power over sin, death, and the devil.

We have to choose to surrender to God’s way of salvation by believing in Jesus as Lord and God and confessing our faith in Him to others.

Once we do so, God gives us new life, calls us His children, and transforms us daily so that we are not only saved eternally, but live holy lives before Him.

If we know Jesus when we die, we will spend eternity with God in heaven.

Practicing Prayer

- Ask God to cause you to burn with passion for the Gospel. Ask that He’d bring you opportunities to share the Good News, and that you would be bold enough to do it (Acts 4:8-13; Proverbs 28:1)!
- Ask Him to give you the wisdom to win souls for His kingdom (Proverbs 11:30).
- Pray you would make the most of every opportunity, and be ready in season and out of season to share God’s story (2 Timothy 4:2; Colossians 4:5).
- Pray specifically for those who do not know the Lord. Lift them up by name and ask God if there is something you can do today to be a good witness to them.
- Consider writing out your own testimony so you will have practice sharing your personal experience of coming to know the Lord.

Day 9

Families Under Attack

God designed families to be a tremendous source of blessing. He intended the family to be a place where we learn to love Him and each other. But for some reason, the enemy (Satan) finds it effective to attack families. Perhaps this works so well because when we are hurt over family issues, it is easy to hold on to what the Bible calls a “root of bitterness” (Hebrews 12:15). It also says when we become bitter, many people are affected and can become “defiled” (Hebrews 12:15). Oftentimes the enemy “defiles” our families by causing us to be quarrelsome and unforgiving. Satan uses our resentment to drive a wedge between us and our loved ones.

If anyone had a reason to be bitter and resentful toward his family, it was Joseph. We learn of his troubles in the book of Genesis. However, with God’s help, he refuses to let his hurt define him.

As the saying goes, there are two sides to every story. Jealousy and pride (the kind that makes us stubborn, insensitive, and unreasonable) don’t tend to promote harmony at home. Maybe

Joseph could have shared his dreams with a little more humility. Perhaps he flaunted the fact he was his father's favorite (Genesis 37:3). With that said, nothing justified his brothers' treatment toward him. Their jealousy was so intense, they wanted to kill him (37:20)! Instead, they sold him into slavery and then lied about it (37:28). They actually told their father he was dead (chapter 37:31-33). Make no mistake: this was one dysfunctional family! In fact, some of Joseph's brothers were so violent their own father feared them, and two were cursed by God (49:3-7)!

Becoming a slave was one hardship among many; Joseph's problems were far from over. He suffered many injustices because of his brother's hatred (Genesis 37:4). Nonetheless, he did not look for revenge. Instead, he acted righteously (blamelessly) before God, and God gave him favor (blessed him) everywhere he went (39:2-5; 40:1-22).

Eventually, God established Joseph as second in command of all Egypt. His brothers were forced to come to him to buy food in a time of famine. Humbled, they finally admitted their wicked actions (Genesis 42:21-22). Joseph was forced to deal with the pain of his past (42:24; 43:30; 45:1-3). But once again, God blessed him with the ability and grace to forgive. His family was restored. He saw his father again. The house of Israel (Joseph's family) was saved from starvation in a desperate time (Genesis 45:1-15; 46:29-30).

Joseph's story teaches that whatever tragedies we have endured as a result of family issues, God can comfort us and bring us to a point of renewal. We may not be able to control how our families respond to God, but we can choose our response to God Himself.

Practicing Prayer

- Today, pray God would show you any ways you may be harboring bitterness toward members of your family.
- Ask Him to help you forgive, as Jesus did (Luke 23:34).
- Ask God to replace this bitterness with love, in spite of any pain you may feel, and help you walk in the light so you will not stumble (1 John 2:9-11).
- Ask God to give you the same spirit as Joseph, who was able to see the bigger picture – that God was working all things together for His good, and rest in this comfort (Genesis 45:5-8; Romans 8:28).

Day 10

Listen Up!

Have you ever just needed to “let it all out”? Maybe you had a bad day and wanted to tell someone after a breakup or argument with a friend. Perhaps the opposite was true – you had good news and texted your 25 closest friends to share your happiness when you made the basketball team or got into your top-pick college. Either way, you wanted your voice to be heard!

Well, it's my turn to say something, so perk up your ears!

We can't have revival (i.e. God can't change our world) if we don't listen!

One more time to make sure you get it: I believe God can only move so far if we don't listen, first to Him, and then to each other.

The Scriptures are filled with stories of people who *didn't* heed warnings and suffered the consequences:

- Achan helped himself to treasures that rightfully belonged to God and was stoned to death (6:18-19; 7:1; 20-26).
- Rehoboam did not listen to his father's royal advisor, forfeiting the loyalty of the people and inciting "continual warfare" between himself and Jeroboam (1 Kings 12:16; 14:30). This disrupted the peace that had prevailed during the reign of his father, King Solomon, and split the kingdom.
- Moses disobeyed God when he was told to speak to the rock so the Israelites could drink. Instead, he hit it with his stick and was barred from entering the promised land, even though he spent years leading the people through the desert to get there (Numbers 20:7-12).

These examples show us that hearing and doing (listening and obedience) go hand in hand. We have to act righteously according to what we have heard. This means that revival (God changing our world) involves making right choices.

But don't think God wants you to listen only to prevent the unpleasant outcome of sin. True listening also gives us a greater blessing. It moves us from duty (which involves acting right) to devotion (acting right because we love God and others). Listening is an awesome skill because it lets us experience the gift of good relationships. God wants the unity between us to flow without restriction or restraint. He wants us to know true peace and joy!

Let's listen to our parents when they discipline us, our pastors and teachers when they instruct us, and our friends when they're hurting. We don't have to do all the talking – God has gifted others and wants us to appreciate their gifts as well.

While we're at it, if we haven't obeyed or honored our parents, let's tell them and get it out of our systems. If we've exasperated our children (this one's for all you grownups out there), let's admit it and apologize. If we've offended a friend, let's make it right. Let's listen to God so He can show us where we haven't been listening to each other.

The 411? God is a God of relationships and has gone to great lengths to be our friend. Don't forfeit what He fought for because you're not paying attention.

Searching Your Heart

Ask yourselves these questions and jot down your answers in a notebook or journal.

- How do you feel when someone truly listens to you?
- How do you feel when you listen with love, compassion, and an open heart to someone else?
What about when you don't?

Practicing Prayer

- Ask God to make you “quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to become angry” (James 1:19).
- Pray He would give you “ears to hear” what He has to say (Matthew 11:15).
- Understand that your listening affects what He is able to do in your life (Matthew 13:15).
- Pray that the Lord would help you to dwell in unity and godly relationships with those around you (Psalm 133:1).

Day 11

Moving On: When Enough is Enough

As we saw on Day 9 in the story of Joseph, God is normally in the business of salvaging relationships. But occasionally, God sees fit that a tie be broken for the greater good. Sometimes enough is enough and there’s no more we can give.

Samuel was a man who had a divine call to move on. He had served the people of Israel since he was a young boy, later becoming a prophet and a judge. But the people were discontented with the system of government God had put in place. When they asked Him for a king, He gave in to their demands.

Samuel humbly surrenders to God’s will (1 Samuel 8:22). His time as a judge is over, but he continues on as Israel’s prophet, communicating God’s words to his countrymen. As such, God tells Samuel to warn the people that having a king won’t be the joyride they’re anticipating (1 Samuel 8:9-20).

True to His word, it’s not.

It doesn’t take long for Saul to start making bad decisions as king (1 Samuel 10:24). After reigning only two years, he violates the standards God has established (10:8-12). As time goes by, his actions continue to demonstrate a willful, rebellious attitude. He doesn’t care about pleasing God or serving the people as much as he wants to get his own way. When Samuel confronts him, he makes excuses instead of showing true sorrow. God sees through Saul’s lies and takes away his kingdom (1 Samuel 15:23).

Notice that God does not beg or plead with Saul to change. As the Bible tells us, “God is not mocked” (Galatians 6:7). He knew Saul’s heart and decided he was out of chances. For the good of the kingdom, He cut him off. Once Samuel had spoken the words of God to Saul, but from this time on, the Bible tells us, “...Samuel went no more to see Saul until the day of his death. Nevertheless Samuel mourned for Saul...” (1 Samuel 15:35).

Even though Saul had disobeyed God and deserved to pay the consequences, Samuel still cared about his fate. His sorrow shows a genuine compassion and concern. But truth is truth. It was time to move on to the new beginning God had already chosen for the kingdom – the day when Israel would be ruled by King David, a “man after His own heart” (1 Samuel 13:14; Psalm 51).

Maybe there’s someone like Saul in your life – someone who says they mean well, but doesn’t have your best interests in mind. Perhaps a boyfriend has cheated on you, or a girlfriend has lied, or a friend has gossiped behind your back. Perhaps someone is causing you to sin or

threatening God's call on your life. If someone has had an ongoing, destructive influence on you, it may be time for new scenery.

This is a serious matter, because continuing a harmful relationship could affect not just you, but others as well. Remember how Samuel mourned? I don't think he wanted to cut off the relationship with Saul. But it would not make sense for a bad king to continue to serve. And it did not make sense for God to continue to speak to a king who refused to listen.

If you find yourself in a situation with someone who is out of line, be careful to pray about it and seek godly advice from a trusted parent or leader. You may need to do what you can to restore the relationship within appropriate boundaries.

But listen for the voice of God to speak to you. If it is time to move on, He will tell you. Then it is up to you to act. Maybe you will need to break up with a boyfriend or girlfriend or make new friends. None of this will be easy, but if you ask Him, He will give you strength.

Remember – God may not bring you your brand new day until you break ties with the past. Like Samuel, you may have to say goodbye in order to welcome the future.

In the case of Israel, God's future included Jesus – the King of all kings – who descended from David's line. And because of Him, you and I can have fellowship with God today.

What will your future be?

Practicing Prayer

- Today, ask God to show you any ways you are letting the past have an unwholesome hold on you. Ask Him to reveal any attitudes or relationships you need to let go of. Remember – often God chooses to restore relationships. If you think you need to end a relationship, pray about it first and talk to a trusted adult, preferably a parent or a Christian, for guidance.
- Ask God to help you have a compassionate heart for people that have harmed you, as Samuel did.
- Pray He opens your eyes to new possibilities for your future.
- Not everyone will be able to relate to this type of situation. If you are blessed enough to have many positive relationships, pray for friends that may be struggling in this area.

Day 12

The Agony of Addiction

In the past few months, I have become increasingly aware of people around me who have struggled with addictions to drugs and alcohol. I can't tell you their stories; they're not mine to share. What I can do is make a few observations about the nature of addiction and point out what God's Word has said all along.

Addiction touches us all. Maybe no one in your immediate family has struggled with substance abuse, but take a closer look. You probably have friends or relatives whose lives have been turned upside down by drugs and alcohol. And make no mistake. Even if substance abuse is not the problem, many people wrestle intensely with issues of self-control. Some can't seem to stop

having sex, no matter how many people they hurt and who hurts them. Others can't seem to stop eating. Whatever the issue, if it becomes invasive and overpowering, we need God to free us and teach us to do things His way. "For He Himself is our peace," Paul tells us (Ephesians 2:14). Christ can fill the empty, painful places in our lives with His love. So often this is part of His way of fixing things.

I wish there were much less to fix. Not because I am a goody-goody, but because there are always beautiful faces behind the tragedies. You may not think addiction is a big deal until you feel the aching in the lives of the broken or watch someone you love spiral down in a pattern of self-destruction.

But you need to. You need to be disturbed by every awful story you hear. Addiction takes captive the body and mind. It robs people of years that would be better spent having sleepovers, going camping, and making the kind of friends who will still be around in ten years.

One solid way to avoid addiction is to avoid exposure to the substances that cause it. As teenagers and even young adults, it doesn't make sense to put yourselves in situations where drugs and alcohol are being used. As with any source of temptation, the Bible is very clear: "Resist the devil and he will flee from you" (James 4:7b). God promises to help us in temptation if we make up our minds to do things His way: "No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it" (1 Corinthians 10:13).

Finally, know if you have made mistakes in this area, God is faithful to restore you. You have to take the first step. Be sure to confide in several trusted adults if you are experiencing problems and seek professional help. Know that the blood of Jesus was shed for you, and He wants you to come to Him, just as you are (1 John 1:7-9).

Studying God's Word

Before praying today, spend some time understanding the Bible's take on substance abuse.

- Read Proverbs 23:29-35. What does the Bible have to say about alcohol?
- Also read Galatians 5:22-23. In this passage, Paul says one of the fruits of the Spirit is self-control. How does abusing substances impact a person's self-control?
- If we put these passages together, what conclusions can we make?

Practicing Prayer

- Pray that you and your friends would honor your bodies as temples of the Holy Spirit and protect you from the horrors of substance abuse (1 Corinthians 6:19).
- Ask God to restore those who are bound by the chains of addiction (Joel 2:25-29). Pray specifically for miraculous, speedy recoveries and mercy to destroy all strongholds of the devil in their lives.
- Pray God would grant His generous spirit to those overcoming the guilt and shame of addiction. Ask Him to transform them to help those who are still struggling (Psalm 51:12-13). Ask Him to supernaturally help them stop the cycles of failure and defeat - no matter what the addiction (keep in mind what was discussed at the beginning of this lesson - some addictions fly under the radar because they are socially acceptable).
- Praise God for the way He accepts and changes people. He has done it many times. Expect to see more and more of it! (John 21:25).

Day 13

Of Deserts and Deliverance

Once in awhile we are in the desert. Our lives feel dry and empty. Maybe we have done wrong and feel isolated in our sin. Perhaps others have harmed us and we see no end to the pain in sight. We may feel pursued by enemies of our soul - those who want us to disobey God or attack us without cause, even though we are doing our best to be obedient.

For many years, the Psalms were my primary focus in Scripture. I was emotional over many situations in my life, and I had good reasons. I am sure you do, too, if you find yourself in a place where you feel you can't hear God. Though you hunger and thirst for His presence, you can't seem to find it. You are in a desert.

Fortunately for all of us, God is not intimidated by the depth of our feelings. After all, He created us! And everyone has hard times, whether they are just learning about the Lord or have been following Him since childhood. None of us are exempt from troubles.

Since trials will inevitably come, it is important to know how to turn to Christ and His strength when they do. When we call on God, He responds (Jeremiah 33:3). When we choose to praise and worship Him, we are encouraged and God often begins to act on our behalf.

Studying God's Word

Read Psalm 9:1-20.

The psalmist, King David, begins by praising God. He makes a decision to lift God up even though he still needs what the Bible calls "deliverance" (9:1, 13). Deliverance basically means that God rescues us. He saves us from whatever is harassing or intimidating us. In verse 9, David tells us, "The Lord is a refuge for the oppressed, a stronghold in times of trouble." God is a safe haven - a place of shelter. We can come to Him with our concerns and even our grief.

Be sure to note: God takes care of David. He doesn't forsake the king in his hardship (9:10). He causes his enemies to "turn back" and "ruin(s)" them (3-6). Because of this, David can be glad. He can believe God is good in the middle of his struggles (2). Like David, you can have this same kind of faith if you have put your trust in God.

Practicing Prayer

- Thank God He is always with you if you are a Christian.
- Sing to Him and worship Him, or if you are not sure how to do that, make a list of ways He has helped you.
- Share a testimony of what God has done for you with a friend.
- If you are going through a difficult time right now, it will probably be helpful to share your struggle with someone you trust. If you feel especially depressed, don't hesitate to reach out to a concerned adult and let them know what's really going on.
- Rest in the fact that God is "near to the brokenhearted" (Psalm 34:18; 147:3; 2 Corinthians 1:4).

Day 14

God's Design for Sex

Something happened when God created man and woman. He also created marriage, and gave Adam and Eve to each other as the first husband and wife (Genesis 2:18-24).

We've come a long way from the Garden. Love has gotten a bad rap and it's kind of hard to find. The ideas and attitudes that parade themselves around as "love" are often thinly disguised caricatures of the real deal. Sadly, we have a tendency in our culture to mistake love for lust.

God did not create lust, but He did invent healthy attraction. He made us with the ability to love in such a way that only death would separate us from our spouse. He created marriage to be a relationship that would surpass even the ties to our own father and mother (Genesis 2:24).

Love has been described as mysterious, but God's will regarding our sexuality is no mystery at all. He makes it plain as day:

Ephesians 5:3 But among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity, or of greed, because these are improper for God's holy people.

1 Thessalonians 4:3 It is God's will that you should be sanctified: that you should avoid sexual immorality.

So what is sexual immorality? Many people are shocked to discover that the Bible tells us it involves what we think and say, the way we look at members of the opposite sex, and the intentions of our hearts:

Ephesians 5:4 Nor should there be obscenity, foolish talk or coarse joking, which are out of place, but rather thanksgiving.

Matthew 5:27-28 (Jesus speaking) "You have heard that it was said, 'Do not commit adultery.' But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart."

Hmm. Sounds like Jesus has some pretty high standards. But if God created marriage as the only appropriate context for sex, He did it for our benefit. He did it so it would be something that will bless us (if He chooses to send someone for us to marry) under the right circumstances.

In the meantime, we need to become more aware of the false beliefs we have about sex. After all, the consequences of not doing so are serious.

Applying the Word

Read and consider the following passages.

- Proverbs 5:1-23. What are some of the consequences of adultery listed here? List some of the words used to describe the downfall of those who fall prey to adultery.

- Song of Solomon 8:4; 6-7. How do these verses portray love? Basing your answer on these verses, should we take our sexuality lightly? Why or why not?
- 1 Thessalonians 4:1-8. What 3-letter word is used in this passage to describe sexual immorality?

Practicing Prayer

- Today, pray that God would renew your mind and reveal to you any false ideas you have learned about His design for sex (Romans 12:1-2).
- Repent of any sexual sin God uncovers in your life (2 Samuel 12:13; Psalm 51).
- Ask God to teach you His ideas about love and marriage. Read Ephesians 5:22-32 and consider asking a mentor to discuss it with you, as some of the ideas about marriage here may be difficult to understand (Titus 2:4-5; Proverbs 5:1;7). Draw from your mentor's knowledge of relationships and the wisdom God has given them.

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Scripture quotations are from the New International Version and New King James Version of the Bible.

Influences from other sources have been noted; however, with exception to the Holy Bible, no other sources have been specifically referenced, quoted, or examined in the preparation of this text.