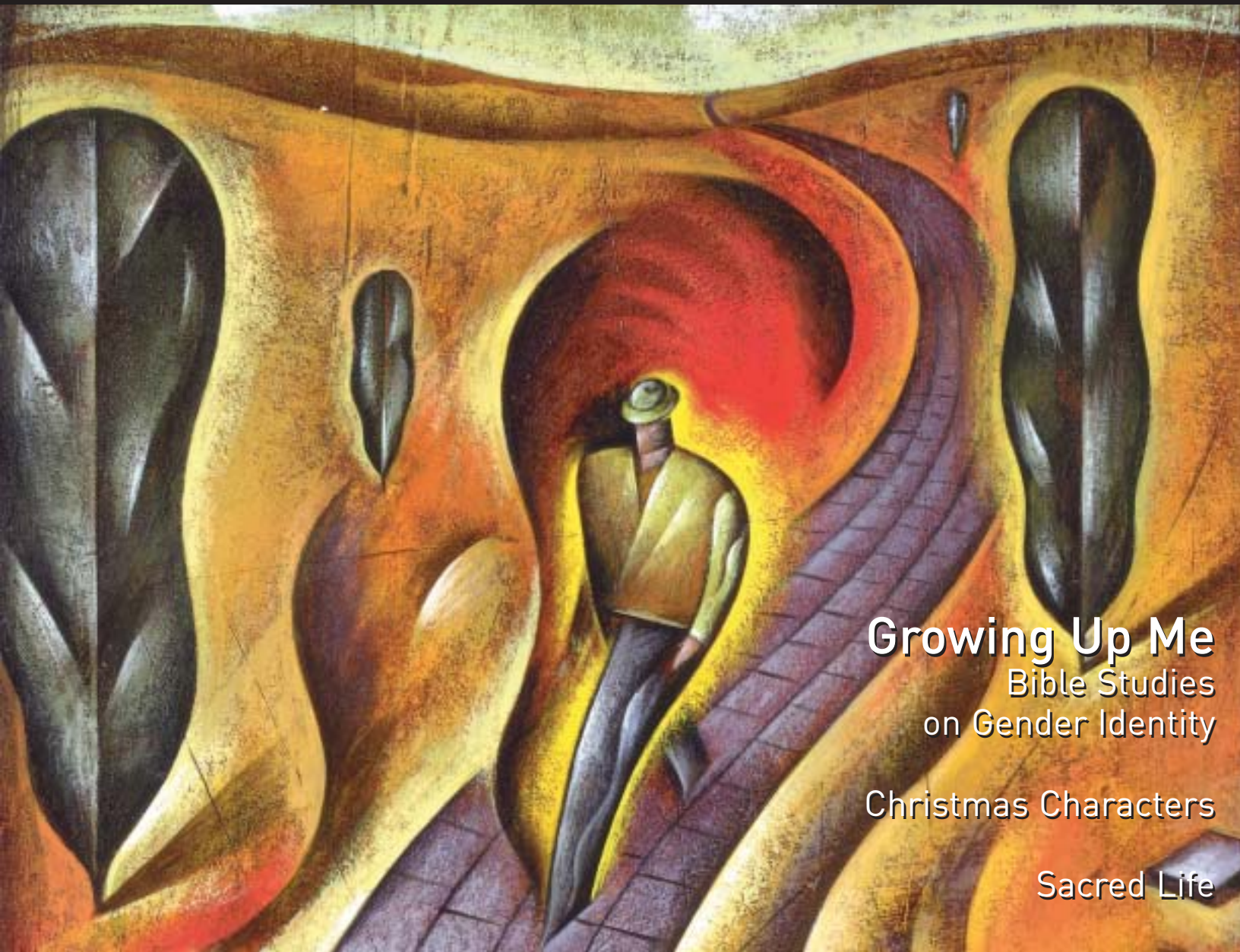


lifetrak

AN ALL-IN ONE BIBLE STUDY RESOURCE FOR YOUNGER YOUTH LEADERS WITH INTERACTIVE CD-ROM

5.2



Growing Up Me
Bible Studies
on Gender Identity

Christmas Characters

Sacred Life

younger youth

lifetrak contents

5.2

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Joseph: Obedient Man

OVERVIEW

LIFE QUESTION:

Why is it important to trust and obey God completely?

BIBLICAL TRUTH:

If you want to be a part of God's plan, you must trust and obey God when He calls you, regardless of your plans or His instructions.

BIBLE PASSAGES:

Matthew 1:18-25; 2:13-23

KEY VERSE: Matthew 1:24

BIBLICAL SETTING:

In the first chapter of Matthew, Joseph's life was interrupted when God chose him to be the earthly father for His Son. Joseph obeyed God completely and took Mary to be his wife. In chapter 2, following the birth of Christ, Joseph obeyed the instructions he received in a dream to flee to Egypt to protect Jesus. After their stay in Egypt, when it was safe to return, Joseph took his family home to Nazareth.

LIFE IMPACT: WE WILL:

- Recognize Joseph's character of obedience and trust.
- Evaluate areas in which we do not trust or obey God.
- Commit to trust and obey God in everything.

LEADERSHIP MEETING

Suggestions and ideas for a weekly leadership meeting:

FOCUS ON THE MISSION

Discuss what your church does for needy families during this season. Talk about ways youth can be more involved in this ministry.

FOCUS ON RELATIONSHIPS

Send a note to students encouraging them to attend every session of Bible study this month. You can print and make copies of the postcard on the CD-ROM file "Card" (01card).

FOCUS ON BIBLE STUDY

Note that activities "Change of Plans" or "Trust Fall" on page 14 can be used during a department time.

Preview all four sessions of this unit. Make sure leaders understand the life impact of each session.

DEVELOPMENTAL LIFE ISSUE: CHARACTER STUDY

Christmas is about the arrival of Christ in our world. When we study this familiar story, He should always be our main focus. However, we can learn some important lessons and apply some vital truths when we study the other characters involved in the story. This unit will turn the spotlight on four characters involved in God's incarnation: Joseph, Mary, the shepherds, and the wise men.

When you hear the name *Joseph* in regard to Christ's birth, what scenes come to your mind? Perhaps you see a concerned man pressing an exasperated innkeeper in Bethlehem to make room for his pregnant wife. Or maybe you think of an attentive husband bending over his wife, while they both look adoringly at a newborn baby in a manger. A third scene might include a frantic man rushing his family through the dark streets of Bethlehem to escape the sword of Herod.

In the Christmas story, we generally focus on Mary, the young virgin God chose to give birth to His Son. The angels, shepherds, and wise men also usually garner some attention. Sadly, Joseph is often forgotten. A closer look at this carpenter from Nazareth, however, reveals a godly man whose faith opened the way for a remarkable demonstration of obedience to God.

In this session, students will glimpse the heart and character of the man God chose to be the earthly father of His Son. By noting Joseph's faith and obedience, teens will understand that they must trust God even when the details of His plan are not clear. They will be challenged to evaluate their level of trust and obedience to God and commit to trust Him in everything. If students are willing to trust God's plan and wisdom, they will be the kind of followers who will bring glory and honor to Him.

Read Matthew 1:18-25. The following will help you understand this passage.

1:18 TERMS OF ENGAGEMENT

Engagement, according to Jewish custom, was far more serious and binding than it is in our day. A Jewish marriage took place in two stages. The betrothal came first, and the marriage ceremony followed, sometimes as long as a year afterward. Most marriages were arranged by the families of the bride and groom, usually without discussing the matter with either the bride or groom. A marriage contract was prepared and secured by the payment of a *dowry*, or *bride price*. The groom or his family paid the dowry to the bride's father. This money served to help the bride's father with the wedding expenses and to provide security for the bride should her husband divorce her. As soon as the marriage contract was made, it was considered binding, meaning the bride and groom were considered legally married. A year or more could pass before they consummated their union. During this period, the married couple's faithfulness was tested. They had little or no social contact with each other during this time.

The phrase, "before they came together" (v. 18) indicates that Mary and Joseph did not have sexual relations during this betrothal period. Moral purity is strongly demanded in Scripture, and sexual abstinence outside of marriage is required. This kind of sexual purity would also include fidelity within the marriage relationship. Joseph's respect for Mary's virginity during this engagement period, along with her faithfulness to Joseph, was an indication that both of them were godly people.

1:18-19 ENGAGEMENT INTERRUPTED

We can only imagine the depth of shock and pain Joseph experienced when he received word of Mary's pregnancy. His own moral standards would insist that he

RESPONSE QUESTIONS

Terms of Engagement:
Do you believe that God randomly chose Joseph to be the earthly father of Jesus? Explain.

Did God randomly choose you? Explain.

Engagement Interrupted:
Recall a time when God's purpose interrupted your plans:

How did you initially feel about the interruption?

How do you feel about it now?

terminate the engagement immediately. He knew that he was not the father and naturally assumed that another man was involved. Joseph, reflecting his godly character and care for Mary, expressed no anger or bitterness. In the face of an obvious breach of their engagement, he was still determined to show love and kindness toward her. He could have shamed her publicly, and at the worst, demanded that she be stoned to death (Deut. 22:23-24). Instead, his plan was to “divorce her secretly.” Inevitably, Joseph knew people would realize the marriage was off and recognize the reason, but Joseph’s decision would delay Mary’s shame and embarrassment for several days and allow her to be protected and most importantly, live.

The Angel’s Message:
In what ways has God revealed His plan for your life?

Were there times when you did not fully understand His purpose and plan? Explain.

Did you obey His instructions? Why or why not?

What is God calling you to do right now?

1:20-21 THE ANGEL’S MESSAGE

Joseph’s mind and heart were changed when an angel appeared to him in a dream and revealed to him the miracle that had taken place in Mary’s body. Even if Joseph had recalled that the prophet Isaiah had foretold such a birth (Isa. 7:14), he probably would never have dreamed that Mary would fill that glorious role or that he would be privileged to nurture the Son of God!

The angel carefully explained to Joseph that Mary had conceived the child “by the Holy Spirit” (v. 20). She would give birth to the child, and Joseph was to name Him “Jesus.” Names in that day and time carried greater significance than today. A person’s name supposedly reflected his or her character. The name *Jesus* is a version of the Hebrew name *Joshua*, which means *Jehovah saves*. The angel proclaimed that the Child would live up to His name because He would “save His people from their sins” (v. 21).

1:22-25 GOD WITH US

No doubt Joseph had attended the synagogue school in Nazareth, where he was

taught the Old Testament Scriptures. Perhaps the angel’s message brought to Joseph’s mind the prophecies from Isaiah that had predicted the miraculous birth of the Messiah. “All this” (v. 22) referred to the facts about the birth of Christ that the angel had revealed to Joseph. Matthew emphasized that the events of Christ’s birth were a fulfillment of the prophetic words of Isaiah found in Isaiah 7:14.

The angel told Joseph that Mary’s child was to be named Jesus, because He would save His people from their sins (v. 21). Yet the prophet Isaiah declared that this Son born to a virgin was to be called “Immanuel” (Isa. 7:14), which means *God with us*. Immanuel was a title or description of the Messiah, rather than a proper name. When Jesus was born and lived as a flesh-and-blood man, He was literally God with us.

The truth that God is present with His people appears repeatedly in the Old Testament in symbols, as well as the direct words of the prophets. Moses built the tabernacle in the wilderness. God’s presence dwelt in the Holy of Holies within that sacred tent. Later, Solomon built the temple in Jerusalem, a larger, permanent version of the tabernacle. All of the furnishings in both of these structures pointed to some characteristic of the coming Messiah. Then, these symbols of God’s presence became reality when He chose to “tabernacle” visibly among us in flesh and blood—Immanuel, God with us.

1:24-25 JOSEPH’S OBEDIENCE

After Joseph awoke from his dream, he immediately obeyed God. He didn’t take two weeks to think about the implications of what God had told him to do. He didn’t consult all his friends about whether taking Mary to be his wife was the right decision. Instead, he trusted God and immediately obeyed. He married Mary, but chose not to have sexual relations with her until after Jesus was born.

prepare / PERSONAL BIBLE STUDY

After the birth, he named the baby boy Jesus, as he had been instructed to do by the angels.

Read Matthew 2:13-23. The following will help you understand this passage.

2:13-18 THE FLIGHT TO EGYPT

Exactly how much time elapsed between the birth of Jesus and the wise men's arrival from the East is not clear. Some believe Jesus could have been as old as two years. Matthew wrote that when these foreign visitors entered "the house, they saw the child with Mary His mother" (2:11). No stable was mentioned, and Jesus was not referred to as a baby. Surely the visit of these wise men confirmed the angels' words to Mary and Joseph (1:20-23), to Zacharias (Luke 1:11-20), and to the shepherds (Luke 2:8-14). Through the appearance of this unusual star, God told these wise men from the East of the Messiah's birth.

However, God also used the wise men's arrival for another reason. The evil King Herod, after his meeting with these wise men, was determined to destroy Jesus. He had told the wise men to go and worship the Child, then return to Jerusalem and tell him exactly where Jesus was so that he could also go and worship Him. God intervened, however, and warned these men in a dream not to return to Herod. Then, in another dream, an angel of the Lord told Joseph to take the Child and His mother and flee to Egypt to escape Herod's sword. Again, Joseph obeyed God, and in the night, he arose and began the long journey from Bethlehem to Egypt. Herod issued a decree that all of the male children age two years and under must be massacred "in and around Bethlehem" (v. 16). Joseph and his family remained in Egypt until Herod died.

2:19-23 THE FAMILY GOES HOME

Because of all of the crises Joseph had encountered since he first learned of Mary's pregnancy, he had learned the importance of simply obeying God and following His directions. Repeatedly God had spoken to Joseph in dreams and had given him careful instructions concerning what he was to do. Joseph revealed his commitment to God and his desire to please Him by obeying Him with diligence, although he may not have understood all the Lord asked of Him.

God spoke to Joseph in a dream and told him it was time to leave Egypt and return to Israel. Herod had died, along with others who apparently had sought to destroy Jesus (v. 20), so it was safe to return home. Once again, Joseph did not hesitate to obey the Lord. No doubt he and Mary were anxious to return to their homeland. At this point, God did not tell Joseph to return to any specific area of Israel. When they drew near to Judea, (where Bethlehem was located) they discovered that Herod's son, Archelaus, ruled in that region. Like his father, Archelaus was an evil and brutal man. Because Jesus' safety would be at risk in that region, God again warned Joseph in a dream not to settle there. Joseph listened to God's instructions and took his family to Nazareth, which was his and Mary's home (Luke 2:4-5).

Old Testament prophecies were fulfilled by Joseph, Mary, and Jesus' sojourn in Egypt, as well as their return to Nazareth. Matthew noted that their stay in Egypt was predicted by the prophet, "Out of Egypt I called my Son" (v. 15). He was also careful to record that their return to Nazareth fulfilled the prophecy that Jesus "will be called a Nazarene" (v. 23).

The Flight to Egypt:
Name some times in your life when God has protected you:

Who has God used to protect you?

The Family Goes Home:
Why is difficult to continually trust and obey God?

What needs to change in your life for you to be completely and fearlessly obedient to God?

encounter / TEACHING PLAN

CHANGE OF PLANS (15 MIN.)

As students arrive, group them into three teams. Give each team paper and pencils or pens and instruct each team to begin planning the following events:

Team 1. Plan the next class fellowship.

Team 2. Plan the next group trip.

Team 3. Plan the next youth retreat.

After a few minutes, go to all the teams and tell them their plans won't work, but stress that you have an idea that will work. Give each group your idea and direct them to get back to work. If team members question why you nixed their ideas and gave them yours, tell them they will just have to trust you. Soon after the teams resume planning, stop them and ask: **How did it feel to have your plans interrupted? Were you frustrated or challenged? Did you trust that my idea was better? Why or why not? Name some other times your plans have been interrupted? How did it make you feel?** Say: Today's lesson is about a person in the Christmas story whose plans were interrupted by God. His display of trust and obedience challenges us to follow God with the same courage and faith.

TRUST FALL (Replacement Option)

Set up the room to do a trust fall and prepare leaders on the proper way to execute trust falls. Instructions on trust falls can be found on CD-ROM file "Trust" (01trust). After several students have participated, debrief the activity. Ask: **Did you find it hard to trust your friends to catch you? Why or why not? Do you ever have difficulty trusting God? Why or why not?** Say: Our lesson today focuses on Joseph, the earthly father of Jesus. We will see how God powerfully used him because he was willing to trust and obey.

SHOCKING NEWS (5 MIN.)

Group students into small teams and give each team a copy of a recent newspaper. Direct each team to search the newspaper

for the most shocking news story it can find. Give teams a few minutes to search, then allow each team to share a brief portion of its chosen story. After teams have shared, call on a student to read Matthew 1:18-19. Use information from "Personal Bible Study" to explain the terms of a Jewish engagement in the time of Joseph and Mary. Ask: **How do you think Joseph felt when he found out Mary was pregnant? How were his plans interrupted by the news? What was his new plan to handle the situation? What did his plan reveal about his feelings for Mary?** (*He showed his care for her by not having her stoned or shamed publicly.*)

CHARACTER OF OBEDIENCE (10 MIN.)

Distribute **handout 1a** and direct students to complete section A of the activity "Heart of Obedience." After students have finished their work, call on a teen to read aloud Matthew 1:20-25. Ask: **How did God communicate His plans with Joseph? How do you think Joseph's feelings changed when he heard this news? How did Joseph respond to the angel's instruction?** (*He trusted God and obeyed.*) Do you think it was difficult for Joseph to obey God's instructions? Why or why not? How does Joseph's obedience show he trusted God? What was the result of Joseph's trust and obedience? Say: Joseph was able to be a part of God's plan to bring salvation to the world because he trusted and obeyed God immediately. Ask: **Do you want to be a part of God's plan to reach the world? Why or why not? Why is your trust in God and your obedience to Him vital to God being able to use you?**

MODERN-DAY STORY (Supplemental Option)

After students complete section A on the handout, group students into small teams and direct each team to prepare a skit that depicts the events of Matthew 1:18-25 from a modern-day perspective. After teams have had time to prepare, allow them to share their skits with the group. Following the skits, proceed with the questions listed above.

SUPPLIES & RESOURCES

CHANGE OF PLANS

- Paper
- Pencils or pens

TRUST FALL (Option)

- Chair or table
- CD-ROM file "Trust" (01trust)

SHOCKING NEWS

- Newspapers

CHARACTER OF OBEDIENCE

- Handout 1a

NO AVERAGE JOE

- Handout 1b

TRUST AND OBEY (Option)

- CD-ROM file "Hymn" (01hymn) or *The Baptist Hymnal*

OBEDIENCE UNDER FIRE (10 MIN.)

Direct students to read silently Matthew 2:13-18 and complete section B of the activity “Heart of Obedience.” After students have completed their work, encourage them to share their responses. Ask: **How did Joseph respond to the angel’s instructions? Did Joseph have reason to be afraid? Why or why not? Did he allow his fear to keep him from obeying? Explain. What was the result of his trust and obedience? Have you ever allowed your fear to keep you from trusting and obeying God? Explain. Why is it difficult to maintain a heart of trust and obedience in frightening situations?**

CONTINUED OBEDIENCE (10 MIN.)

Call on a student to read aloud Matthew 2:19-23 and complete section C of the “Heart of Obedience” activity. After a few minutes, allow students to share their responses. Ask: **How did God continue to instruct Joseph? How did Joseph respond to God’s instructions? What was the result of Joseph’s obedience? How did Joseph display wisdom in this story?**

ALTERNATE ENDING (Supplemental Option)

Group students into small teams and direct them to prepare a skit that shows what could have happened if Joseph had not chosen to obey God. After teams have prepared their skits, allow them to present them to the large group. Following the skits, ask: **What are the possible con-**

sequences if we choose to disobey God rather than obey Him?

NO AVERAGE JOE (10 MIN.)

Direct youth to apply the lesson as they respond to the questions in the activity “No Average Joe” on the handout. Give students time to finish the activity, then encourage them to share what they wrote. Challenge youth to develop a lifestyle of trust and obedience in the Lord. Allow them to read their prayers of commitment from the handout as you close the session. Distribute copies of **handout 1b** as students leave.

TRUST AND OBEY (Replacement Option)

Ask: **Would you consider yourself a person of obedience like Joseph? Why or why not? What does it take to become a person of obedience?** Provide the words to the hymn “Trust and Obey” (No. 447, *The Baptist Hymnal*) or print the words from CD-ROM file “Hymn” (01hymn). Direct students to read the verses to this hymn and circle or underline phrases in the song that indicate actions each of them need to take to be a person of obedience. Encourage students to share the key phrases. After they have shared, direct each student to write an additional verse to this hymn as a prayer of commitment to be a person of obedience. Allow students to read their verses as the closing prayer. Distribute **handout 1b** as students leave.

NOTES:

continue / AFTER THE SESSION

- Print copies of CD-ROM file “Template” (01temp) for a trust-and-obey journal. Make enough for each student to have several copies of the template. Remind youth that if they want to recognize and track changes in their life, it is useful to keep a journal to record daily progress.
- Use the template to create a journal for yourself. Evaluate your own heart of obedience. Make a fresh commitment to trust and obey God in everything.



Matthew 1:18-25; 2:13-23

Joseph: Obedient Man

Heart of Obedience

Use the chart below to record the instructions Joseph received from God, his response to the instructions, and the results of his response.

SCRIPTURE	INSTRUCTION	RESPONSE	EFFECT
A. Matthew 1:20-25			
B. Matthew 2:13-18			
C. Matthew 2:19-23			

No Average Joe

Consider what you have learned about Joseph in this lesson.

In what ways are you most like Joseph?

In what ways are you least like Joseph?

What characteristic of Joseph's life do you most need to apply to your life?

List areas of your life in which you need to be obedient to the Lord.

Write a prayer in the space below expressing your desire to be a person of obedience:



in-class handout

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Joseph: Obedient Man



Use the Scripture and questions listed to help you continue to develop a heart of obedience.

MONDAY:

Think about the areas in which you have refused to obey God. Why are you choosing disobedience?

Read 1 John 5:1-4.

What should motivate you keep be obedient to God's commands?

Pray and ask God to help you love and obey Him.

TUESDAY:

What one thing will you do today to help you be a person of obedience?

Read Psalm 119:2. This is a great verse to memorize as you seek to be more obedient.

WEDNESDAY:

Read Deuteronomy 6:3.

What is the promise for people who obey God?

Write at least one way you will obey God today.

THURSDAY:

Read Romans 6:15-23. What is the message of this Scripture?

Who or what is in control of your life today?

FRIDAY:

Read Jonah 1:1-3. Did Jonah obey God? Explain.

Read Jonah 1:4-17.

What happened to him because of his disobedience?

In Jonah 2:1-2, what did Jonah do?

Is there something about which you need to cry out to God?

Pray now and ask God to forgive you and put you back on the right path.

SATURDAY:

Grade your obedience for this week.

A B C D F

Why did you give yourself that grade?

What will you do differently next week to improve your grade?

Life Question:

Why is it important to trust and obey God completely?

Bible Passages:

Matthew 1:18-25; 2:13-23

Key Verse:

Matthew 1:24

Biblical Truth:

If you want to be a part of God's plan, you must trust and obey God when He calls you, regardless of your plans or His instructions.

take-home handout

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