

Letters About Focus

Lesson Aim: To know keeping our focus on Jesus throughout our lives is the key to a life that pleases God as explained in the letters in the Bible.

PROPHETS AND PROMISES PART 1

THE WORSHIP, THE WORD, & THE WAY

THE WORSHIP

Who God is: The Spirit Who Teaches Us

THE WORD

New Testament Letters: Hebrews 12:1-3; Philippians 3:12-16

GOT TIME? Letter: Romans 8:5

What He has done: God gave His apostles the teachings about focusing on God.

Key Verse: Hebrews 12:2

THE WAY

Christ Connection: Deuteronomy 11:18-20

BIBLE MEMORY VERSE

"Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind."

"Love your neighbor as yourself." Matthew 22:37, 39b

For your own encouragement this week, read 2 Timothy 4:7-8. Please join us in praying this week's Teacher's Prayer: "Thank you Lord, for being the author and perfecter of our faith. Strengthen the children so they can run the race You have set before them. Amen."

PREPARE

Highlight in your Bible:

- ☐ Hebrews 12:1-3
- ☐ Philippians 3:12-16
- ☐ Deuteronomy 11:18-20

Read:

- ☐ Teacher's Guide
- ☐ At-A-Glance

MAILBAG

Create a list of today's New Testament letter scripture references, fold it and place it in the Teacher's Bible. Place the Teacher's Bible, Pen Pal Letter, pencils, slips of paper, and one finish line (roll of crepe paper, banner paper, toilet paper, etc.) in any bag.

TEACHER TIP

Complete THE WORSHIP, THE WORD, and THE WAY. If time allows, choose a Got Time? activity or create your own activity to illustrate the Bible Story, the Aim, or the Bible Memory Verse.

PRESET

THE WELCOME

- ☐ Getting Started— Floor tape or chalk, free-standing cross, four blindfolds

THE WORSHIP

- ☐ Scripture Reading—Matthew 6:31-33
- ☐ Bible Memory Verse Song—"Yahweh: Love The Lord Your God"
- ☐ Other related music
- ☐ Worship Illustration or Storybook Lesson 27

THE WORD and THE WAY

- ☐ Golden Bowl—pencils & note cards
- ☐ Bibles, highlighters
- ☐ Mailbag
- ☐ Daily Way Lesson 27
- ☐ Treasure Treat—Today's New Testament Postcard with a stamp or sticker of eyes, glasses or binoculars

GOT TIME?

Donuts, drinks, napkins, plates, cups, a cross, favorite items children typically enjoy, rolls of toilet paper or crepe paper, pens, backpacks or bags, sturdy gold paper, markers, crayons, scissors, glue, shiny craft supplies, wide ribbon, hole punch, "New Testament Overture" song and player, 27 sheets of paper, marker, clothesline or thin cord, 27 clothespins or paperclips, Unit 5 Bible Memory Verse song, player and poster

Resources: The additional resources referred to in this lesson and supplemental materials are available at www.childrensministrywarehouse.net. To be a resource yourself, click on the Teacher's Blog tab to share your ideas with teachers worldwide.



1. THE WELCOME

(10 minutes)

Getting Started

To spark anticipation, encourage arriving children to meet and greet one another with today's

Meet & Greet Question: What is a prize you would like to win?

GAME: RACE TO THE CROSS

PURPOSE: Children will compete in a relay race which will help them discover how life following Jesus can be compared to running a race.

SUPPLIES: Floor tape or chalk, free-standing cross, blindfolds

PREPARE: Stand the cross in the center of the play area. Use floor tape or chalk to create four start lines equidistant from the cross.

SAY> Let's have a race to see which team can get to the cross the fastest. But be careful! This race has an extra challenge!

DIRECTIONS:

1. Form four teams of equal number.
2. Have children on each team stand in pairs.
3. Each team stands in pairs behind a start line.
4. Give a blindfold to the first pair on each team.
5. On your signal, one child in each pair puts on the blindfold.
6. The other child in each pair leads his or her blindfolded teammate to the cross.
7. Blindfolded child must gently touch the cross before being lead back to the start line.
8. Pairs switch places and repeat before handing the blindfold to the next pair in line and then going to the end of the team line and sitting down.
9. The goal is to be the first team to complete the relay race with each child having a turn as the blindfolded child and the leading child.

ASK> Was it harder to find your way to the cross when you couldn't see where you were going? (Respond.)

SAY> Today we will read what some New Testament letters say about focusing on Jesus. The letters say that following Jesus is similar to finishing a race. Let's find out more about that!

***Teacher Tips:**

Small groups can play with two teams instead of four.

Limited Space? All children are on the same team. Play the game twice; timing it each time. Challenge the children to get a faster time on the second round of play. Or play the game as a marbles race: players (with and without blindfolds) shoot the marble toward a smaller cross or a piece of tape marking a finish line in the shape of a cross.



2. THE WORSHIP

(15 minutes)

Worship Theme: The Spirit Who Teaches Us

Today we worship the Spirit who teaches us to focus on Jesus. The Holy Spirit can help us keep our thoughts focused on Jesus everywhere, every day. As we sing, pray and give our offering, let's ask the Holy Spirit to help us keep our thoughts on Jesus, on His love for us, on our friendship with Him, and on who God is and what He has done for us all. (Sing: "Open the Eyes of My Heart" while collecting the offering.)

Worship Elements:

Designate a special corner or area for worship.

Select songs that focus on Jesus.

Scripture Reading: Matthew 6:31-33

Lead a prayer to bless the offering: collect offering

Perform Worship Illustration or read Storybook:

Prophets & Promises Unit 5, Lesson 27

Unit 5 Song Suggestions:

- Unit 5 Bible Memory Verse Song: "Yahweh: Love The Lord Your God" www.childrensministrywarehouse.net
- "Praise The Lord O My Soul" www.childrensministrywarehouse.net
- "New Testament Overture" www.childrensministrywarehouse.net
- "As The Deer"
- "I Love You Lord"
- "How Great Is Our God"
- "Hallelujah (Your Love Is Amazing)"
- "In The Secret"
- "Friend Of God"
- "We Want To See Jesus Lifted High"
- "Open The Eyes Of My Heart Lord"

Unit 5 Song Collection Suggestion:

- Songs 4 Worship Kids, Volume 1—Awesome God
- Worship Jamz—(Volumes 1, 2, 3)
- Hillsong Kids

BIBLE MEMORY VERSE SONG

"Yahweh: Love The Lord Your God"

Matthew 22:37, 39b (NIV)



You shall love the Lord your God
with all your heart,
with all your soul,
with all your mind.

Love your neighbor as yourself,
the best commandments you'll find.

Yahweh!

I know I can go to...Yahweh!

She can, he can go to...Yahweh!

Weekends we can go to...Yahweh every day!

(Repeat two times going faster each time.)

*Sheet music and recordings available at
www.childrensministrywarehouse.net.*



3. THE WORD




(5 minutes)

Paul and the writer of Hebrews write about focusing on Jesus

Transition: As you move from worship to instruction, change rooms or locations within a room to help redirect the children's focus to the Bible story. During this transition time, have each child write their name on a card and place it in the Golden Bowl.

Before we read God's Word, let's go over our Class Covenant. A covenant is an agreement. Just as God made a covenant with His people, I ask each of you to make this covenant promise with me today. Listen as I read our Class Covenant. (Read Class Covenant.)

CLASS COVENANT

I will keep my  on my teacher,
my  in control,
my  on God's Word;
knowing God is my goal.

BIBLE TIMELINE

The New Testament letters were written from circa 37 A.D. to 95 A.D. The Bible Timeline Review activities will resume in Prophets & Promises, Lesson 32 when we complete our ten-week study of the New Testament letters.

(Teacher holds up mailbag.) Last time we found letters about peace in our mailbag. We learned that God can give us peace of mind even when our problems don't go away. Today we will learn about how we can keep our focus on Jesus.

It is wonderful to follow Jesus, but it is not always easy. It means choosing every day to do things God's way instead of your own way. The writer of the letter to the Hebrews knew that believers need encouragement to keep following Jesus. The letter explains that following Jesus is similar to finishing a race.



Let's play Find It First! Bring out your Bible; keep it right in front of you. (Hand out spare Bibles.) Today's New Testament letters are in the mailbag. (Teacher opens mailbag and removes Bible, opens Bible and takes out list of today's New Testament letter scripture references: Hebrews 12:1-3 and Philippians 3:12-16.) Let's see who can Find It First! Look for Hebrews 12:1-3. Ready? Set? Go! (Children race through the pages to find it first. The winner helps others find it.) Let's highlight our Key Verse: Hebrews 12:2.

Before we read, let's stand and ask God to open our eyes, ears, hearts and minds to His Word today. Who'd like to pray that for us? (Child prays aloud.) Be seated.

Let's read our first letter about following Jesus. (Read Hebrews 12:1-3.)

In his letter to the Philippians, Paul also compared following Jesus to a race. Let's check it out! (Read Philippians 3:12-16.)



4. THE WAY

(13 minutes)

We can focus on Jesus

(Print the following text on a sheet of paper. Fold the paper and place it in an envelope to create the Pen Pal Letter. Take out Pen Pal Letter from mailbag, open the envelope. Remove the letter and read.)

Hey Pals,

Do you like to race for a prize? What's the most amazing prize you can imagine? (Respond.) **Following Jesus is like being in a race in which every finisher receives the best prize they could ever imagine! What do you think our prize in heaven will be?** (Respond.) **To understand Paul's words to the Philippians let's run a race right now.** (Reach into the mailbag and remove the finish line.)

Directions:

1. Have two volunteers stand far apart and hold opposite ends of the finish line.
2. Choose two volunteers to be runners who stand side-by-side as far from the finish line as possible.
3. The first runner keeps his or her eyes on the finish line.
4. The second runner's body faces the finish line, but his or her face keeps turning to looking behind.
5. Have runners complete the race by crossing through the finish line.

What happened to the two runners in this race? (First runner ran more quickly and with less stumbling to the finish line because of his or her focus.) **How is this race like following Jesus?** (Respond.)

Just as we must keep our eyes on the finish line in a race so that we don't fall or wander off track, we must keep our eyes on Jesus as we follow Him. Instead of looking back at our mistakes or focusing on things that we think are more important than God, Paul tells the Philippians to forget the past and strain towards the prize in heaven.

(Reach into the mailbag and give children the slips of paper and pencils.) **Draw or write down something wrong that you have done, or something you treat as more important than God. Then, as your teacher passes behind you with a trash bag, crumple up your paper and toss it over your shoulder into the bag. After you toss it behind you, leave it behind and focus on Jesus instead.**

CHRIST CONNECTION

Connecting the Old Testament, the New Testament and Us

It is much easier to know what Jesus wants us to do if we know a lot about Him. The Bible is the best way we can know who Jesus is and what He has done. 1,500 years before the letter to the Hebrews was written, Moses taught the Hebrews about focusing on God's Word, the Bible. As you read it, think about your favorite way to focus on God.



FIND IT FIRST > Everyone place your Bibles closed on your laps. Let's see who can Find It First! Let's find Deuteronomy 11:18-20. Ready? Set? Go! Find it and highlight it. (Read Deuteronomy 11:18-20.)

The life of a believer is like an exciting race toward heaven. The letter to the Hebrews says that God has already marked out a race for each one of us. Isn't that amazing? We don't need to have a strong body or be a fast runner to be in this race. It says that in this race, we just need to "fix our eyes on Jesus." That means just keep our hearts and minds focused on Him and what He wants us to do. Close your eyes and picture your life as a race. During this race you are focusing on Jesus and doing what He wants you to do. Jesus is at the finish line cheering for you. The prize is being with Jesus in heaven. Now open your eyes.

Believe and Be Focused!

Your Pen Pal

THE WAY *continued...*

GOLDEN BOWL

Revelation 5:8

The Golden Bowl contains names of classmates, a local church leader and a child in another nation.

The Bible says that our prayers are like sweet smelling incense in the golden bowls at God's throne. So I'm going to lift each one of you up to God's throne out loud as you pray for each person silently. Then we'll pray out loud the Lord's Prayer. (Matthew 6:9-13.) Let's pray.

Lord God, we lift up to Your throne the name of each child here. We trust You to watch over us and our needs, the ones we say out loud and the ones hidden in our hearts.

First, we lift up to You ____, ____, ____ (read names in Golden Bowl).

Now, we pray the prayer Your Son taught us.

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be Your name. Your Kingdom come, Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. Forgive us our sins, as we forgive those who sin against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one. For Yours is the Kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.

FINAL FIVE MINUTES

When only 5 minutes remain, begin this segment.

TREASURE TREAT



Today your Treasure Treat is a New Testament Postcard. I'm giving you this stamp or sticker of eyes, glasses or binoculars to remind you to focus on Jesus. (Place stamp or sticker in the corner box on the back of the postcard.) Take it home and create a special mailbox or mailbag where you can collect the remaining postcards. On your postcard, list where to find today's New Testament letters in the Bible. You'll find the scriptures listed in the Daily Way. Read these scriptures again to help you answer the postcard question.

DAILY WAY CHALLENGE



Did anyone bring in their completed Daily Way from last time? (Praise or reward those who returned Daily Way; collect in basket.) Take home this week's Daily Way. (Distribute Lesson 27 Daily Way 5-day Bible study.) Complete this at home and let God speak to you through His own words in the Bible. Return it and place it in our class basket. When we fill the basket, we'll celebrate with a class surprise!

OFFERING OF ART



Until it is time to be dismissed, make an Offering of Art. For your offering, draw a picture of yourself running a race with a crowd cheering for you.

The Offering of Art can be finished at home or given as an offering to the teacher for display.

PRAYER REQUESTS



As children work on their Offering of Art, ask how you can pray for them this week. Write individual requests in your teacher's prayer notebook.

BIBLE MEMORY VERSE SONG



Play the Unit 5 Bible Memory Verse Song or "The New Testament Overture" in the background as children wait to be dismissed.



5. GOT TIME?

If time remains, choose from the connected activities below.



SNACK, GAME, DISCUSSION AND CRAFT

SNACK: FOCUS FOOD SNACK

PURPOSE: Children will eat a snack while personally connecting to the story.

SUPPLIES: Donuts (or any snack with a hole in the center), drinks, napkins, plates, cups

DIRECTIONS:

1. Serve the snack and drink.
2. **ASK>** If you look through a small hole, like in the center of this donut, what do you see? (Children look through hole and describe what they see.) **You can't see everything around you. Instead, you can only focus on what is right in front of you! God wants us to focus on Jesus. That means instead of looking back at our mistakes or focusing on things around us that we treat as more important than God, we should keep our thoughts focused on Jesus.**
3. Child prays to thank God for the snack.
4. Ask the Snack Discussion Question: **"What is one thing about Jesus you can focus on?"**

GAME: BREAK FREE!

PURPOSE: For children to know there is relief in serving God when they are not burdened by sin.

SUPPLIES: A cross and favorite items children typically enjoy (toys, candy, music CD, games, etc.), rolls of toilet paper or crepe paper, pens, backpacks or bags

PREPARE: Place the cross on the opposite side of the play area.

ASK> The letter to the Hebrews say that our sin (wrongdoing) can tangle us up and distract us from focusing on Jesus and what He wants us to do. Even good things can distract us if we treat them as more important than Jesus. (Show favorite items that represent distractions.) **Let's see what happens when we tangle ourselves up in our distractions or our wrongdoing. Let's have the cross stand for Jesus.**

DIRECTIONS:

1. Divide children into teams of four.
2. Give each team a roll of toilet paper and a backpack.
3. Each team chooses a runner. The runner puts on the backpack. The team fills the backpack with the favorite items.
4. The team wraps the runner with the entire roll of paper.
5. Ask the runners to walk five steps toward the cross without tearing the paper.
6. **SAY>** Break free and run the race to Jesus!
7. Runners tear off the paper, drop the backpacks and run to touch the cross.

ASK> How did you feel trying to race while tangled up and carrying a heavy load of distractions? (It was difficult or uncomfortable.) **What happened when you were freed from everything?** (It was much easier to run.) **That race was a picture how it is throughout our lives as we follow Jesus. When we keep focusing on Him and keep thinking about what He would like us to do, the race is much better than when we get tangled up in wrongdoing or distractions!**

GOT TIME? *continued...*

CRAFT: CARE PACKAGE—GOLD MEDAL FOLLOWERS

PURPOSE: For children to encourage other believers to keep their eyes on Jesus.

SUPPLIES: Sturdy gold paper (or gold cardboard or craft foam), markers, crayons, scissors, glue, shiny craft supplies (foil, craft jewels, glitter, sequins, shiny stickers, etc.), wide ribbon, hole punch

PREPARE: Cut paper into circles that are approximately 3-inches in diameter. Punch a hole in the top of each circle. Cut ribbon into 35-inch lengths. Preprint on circles or write where children can see to copy:

Fix Your Eyes on Jesus. Hebrews 12:2

Choose other believers to be the recipients of the medals. If possible, arrange for the recipients to visit the class. Or, have children hand out medals after a church service. Or, give them to teachers or students in a nearby class.

ASK> Today we learned what the New Testament letters say about focus. Who should you focus on? (Jesus.) We must keep our eyes on Jesus as we follow Him. Just as Paul encouraged the Philippians to forget the past and strain towards the prize in heaven, we can encourage believers today to keep racing toward Jesus.

SAY> Let's make a medal we can give to other believers to congratulate them for doing a good job following Jesus and to encourage them to keep on following Him. (Share information about the care package recipient(s) with the children. Allow them to ask questions so they truly understand where and to whom their gift will be delivered.)

DIRECTIONS:

1. Copy the verse from Hebrews 12:2 onto the circle. (Preprint verse on circles for younger children.)
2. Decorate the circles to look like medals using the shiny decorations.
3. Thread a ribbon through the hole and knot the ends together.
4. If you have time, make more medals.
5. Deliver the gifts!

***Teacher Tips:** Allow the children to make two medals, one to keep and one to give away. Encourage children to put the medals around the recipients' necks and explain why they are awarding that person.

***Options:** Children may use gold paint on the medals at the beginning of the lesson time, and then complete the decorating at the end of the lesson. Or, sculpt the medals from craft clay or dough.

GOT TIME? *continued...*

DISCUSSION: GOT TIME? LETTER—ROMANS 8:5

PURPOSE: Children learn of a third letter about focusing on Jesus from the New Testament.

SUPPLIES: Bible opened to Romans 8:5

SAY> The Bible says that ever since Adam and Eve chose to sin in the Garden of Eden, we have each been born with a sinful nature. That means every person will sin at some point because we are born with a desire or a wish to sin. The Bible helps us choose not to sin. The writer of the letter to the Hebrews says we should “fix our eyes on Jesus.” Paul says the same thing in a different way when he writes about having our “minds set on what the Spirit desires.” Let’s check it out. (Read Romans 8:5).

ASK> What do you think Paul meant? (Respond.) When we believe in Jesus, the Holy Spirit lives in our heart. Though we may wish to sin, when we set our minds on what the Holy Spirit wants us to do, we can choose to do what is right in God’s eyes. That is good news for the Romans and for us, too!

GAME: “NEW TESTAMENT OVERTURE” BOOKS ON A LINE

PURPOSE: Children learn the books of the New Testament.

SUPPLIES: 27 sheets of paper, marker, clothesline or thin cord, 27 clothespins or paperclips, “New Testament Overture” song and player, Bible

SUPPLIES: Write the name of each book of the New Testament on a separate sheet of paper. Mix the papers so the books are not in order. Hang the clothesline in the play area at a low height so the children can reach.

DIRECTIONS:

1. Play the “New Testament Overture” song two times. Encourage the children to sing along as they become familiar with the words.
2. Challenge the children to place the New Testament books in order by hanging the sheets of paper in correct order on the clothesline with the clothespins.
3. To help the children, play the song while they work. Leave the Bible open to a list of the books of the Bible for their reference as needed. OR Leave the Bible open to the table of contents for their reference as needed.
4. As children learn the correct order of the books, try it without the aid of the list in the Bible or music.

“New Testament Overture”

Sheet music and recordings available at www.childrensministrywarehouse.net

Psalm 119:105 and the books of the New Testament sung to the tune of The William Tell Overture: Allegro Vivace

Thy Word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path!
Thy Word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path!

Go to Matthew, to Mark, go to Luke and John. Go to Acts and the letter to the Romans.
Go to First, go to Second Corinthians, to Galatians and Ephesians!

Philippians and Colossians, First and Second Thessalonians,
First and Second Timothy, then Titus and Philemon!

Go to Hebrews and go to James. Go to First, go to Second Peter.
Go to First, Second, Third John. Go to Jude, then go to Revelation!

GOT TIME? *continued...*



BIBLE MEMORY VERSE ACTIVITIES:

GAME: LOVE ALL AROUND

PURPOSE: Children learn the Unit 5 Bible Memory Verse.

SUPPLIES: Unit 5 Bible Memory Verse song, player and poster

SAY> Our Bible Memory Verse tells us to love God with all of our heart, soul and mind. What does that mean to you? (Respond.) Our Bible Memory Verse also tells us to love our neighbor as ourselves. Who are our neighbors? (All the people around us.)

DIRECTIONS:

1. Children sit in a circle.
2. Recite or sing the Bible Memory Verse one time together.
3. Say the first word of the verse: **"Love..."**
4. The child on your right says the next word: **"the..."**
5. The next child on the right says the next word: **"Lord..."**
6. Continue going around the circle, each child saying the next word of the Bible Memory Verse in turn until the entire verse has been said.
7. As time allows, play again going faster each time.

GAME: RACE TO REPEAT

PURPOSE: Children learn the Unit 5 Bible Memory Verse.

SUPPLIES: Unit 5 Bible Memory Verse poster, Bible

DIRECTIONS:

1. Practice saying the Unit 5 Bible Memory Verse together once.
2. Divide the children into two equal teams.
3. Teams sit shoulder-to-shoulder in two lines, facing each other with several feet of space between the two lines.
4. Give a number to each child on each team beginning with the number 1.
5. Place a Bible in the center of the space between the two teams.
6. Call out a number.
7. The child from each team with that number races to be the first to touch the Bible.
8. The child who touches the Bible first earns point for his or her team by saying the Bible Memory Verse correctly. (Children may use the Bible Memory Verse poster as a reference.)
9. Continue playing by calling a different number in each round until all children have had a turn.