

The Agenda: ***8 Lessons from Luke 4*** **Leaders Guide**



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***The Agenda: 8 Lessons from Luke 4* is available**
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***The Agenda: 8 Lessons from Luke 4* Commentary**
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**Produced by
Baptist Center for Ethics
in Partnership with**

Christian Mission Concerns

American Baptist Churches-USA
Baptist General Association of Virginia
Baptist General Convention of Texas
Cooperative Baptist Fellowship

North American Baptist Fellowship
of the Baptist World Alliance
School of Religion at Belmont University
Lott Cary Foreign Mission Convention
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The Power of the Spirit

Leaders Guide

Theme: Jesus struggled with which power option to use in his mission.

Text: Luke 4:1-15

Before You Lead

- ▶ Read the Preface and Introduction to this lesson series from the Students Guide. Also read Luke 4:1-15 and “The Power of the Spirit.” Then read the following suggestions.
- ▶ The following column from EthicsDaily.com can provide additional information for the suggested introductory comments:

“Why Injustice Happens,” (www.ethicsdaily.com/article_detail.cfm?AID=7807).

As You Lead

Introduce the Lesson

- ▶ Guide adults to begin thinking about power, its uses and abuses by relating some thoughts from Amy Butler, senior pastor of Calvary Baptist Church in Washington, D.C.

“I live at a curious crossroads of faith and politics,” Butler writes. Her church “is located almost exactly between the Capitol building and the White House.

“The challenges of living at this juncture have not eluded me. In fact, compulsions to speak out on political issues have kept me up at night because, friends, I am a good Baptist, thoroughly enamored with ideas like priesthood of the believer, autonomy of the local church and separation of church and state.”

Butler notes that “Jesus, whom I claim to follow, was quite an outspoken critic on political issues and institutions. He spoke out vehemently and agitated forcefully against those in power. Being in this city has made me confront it a little more concretely. It seems to me that political ideologies and institutions are just like every other human invention: they can be used for good or for evil (and often are—both). The gospel of Jesus Christ calls us to speak out—vehemently, even—when any person or institution or ideology creates poverty or injustice, perpetuates the spiritual or physical hunger of any soul.

“Our faith,” she says, “is sadly empty if it doesn’t change the institutions and ideologies around us that enslave people” (www.ethicsdaily.com/article_detail.cfm?AID=7807).

- ▶ Suggest that Butler’s observations challenge Baptists to examine the powers available to us and how we use and are tempted to abuse them in our efforts to help extend Jesus’ stated mission “to bring good news to the poor ... proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor” (Lk 4:18-19).

Encourage adults to offer specific examples of the use and abuse of power.

Reinforce the fact that where power exists, there also exists the potential for good and the temptation to misuse and abuse it.

Remind adults that just before Jesus launched his public ministry, he underwent an intense personal struggle in which he was tempted to abuse economic, political and religious power. His responses to these temptations provide Baptists with clear lessons about our values, priorities, vision and agendas.

Explore the Bible

► Read aloud Luke 4:1-2. Point out that Jesus' temptations to power not only marked the beginning of his public ministry but also highlighted the tension that would always exist between his understanding of God's plan and his commitment to it, and the contrasting ideas people had about and for him.

Help frame adults' understanding of Jesus' experience by reviewing the information about temptation and trial from the opening paragraphs of The Biblical Witness in the Students Guide.

Supplement that information with the following observations, as time permits:

- Only Matthew and Luke record the temptations of Jesus. Mark has only a reference to Jesus being tempted and to the fact that Jesus was "with the wild beasts" and ministered by angels (Mk 1:13)—curiously, two references that the other two synoptic gospels do not record.

- Each of the three temptations of Jesus is also a paradigmatic example of our own personal and communal temptations and trials. The temptations/trials of Jesus are the temptations/trials of the church.
- Temptation/trial seems to come directly from the devil. However, the three synoptic gospels refer to the agency of the Spirit in leading Jesus to the desert, and Luke even says he was "full of" the Holy Spirit.
- We know of these temptations from Jesus himself. Nobody was with him to record them as they happened. We know from the gospels what Jesus told his disciples. If he told his disciples about his own temptations, we should also need to recognize our own fragility and propensity toward sin.
- These three were not the only temptations Jesus faced. Hebrews 4:15 refers to Jesus as "one who in every respect has been tested as we are, yet without sin." Jesus can understand every temptation we face because he faced them too.
- Temptation/trial is not sin.

Then ask:

- *What is significant about the 40 days that Jesus spent in the wilderness?*
- *What is significant about the fact that these temptations of Jesus apparently occurred immediately following his baptism?*

► Ask a volunteer to read aloud Luke 4:3-4 and lead adults to discuss it by asking:

- *Who do you think the devil understood Jesus to be? How did that affect how he spoke to Jesus?*
- *What did the temptation of bread represent?*
- *In what way was it a double temptation for Jesus?*
- *What did Jesus' response to this temptation demonstrate?*

Stress that Jesus refused to abuse his unique relationship with God to serve his own needs, and he refused to use popularity to entice people to follow him. Then ask:

- *Do Baptists have a unique relationship with God that we might be tempted to abuse? How?*

► Read aloud Luke 4:5-8 and note Jesus' rejection of the temptation to political power. Challenge adults to examine what all this involved for Jesus by asking such questions as:

- *In what ways did the devil lie to Jesus in order to lure him with political power?*
- *What would have happened if Jesus had worshiped the devil?*
- *What did Jesus' refusal of political power reveal about how he intended to carry out his mission?*
- *What does Jesus' response to this temptation to power say to Baptists today?*

► Ask someone to read aloud Luke 4:9-12. Then ask:

- *What did the temptation at the pinnacle of the temple represent?*
- *What did Jesus' response to this temptation reveal?*
- *How did Jesus' view of the kingdom and messiahship differ from those of the Jewish people?*
- *What resulted from Jesus' inner struggles over power?*

Note that in Jesus' responses to each of the three temptations in the wilderness, he quoted from Deuteronomy. Ask adults to suggest why this was significant.

Remind adults that people have suffered from the abuse of religious power throughout history. For example, Israel's problems at the hands of false prophets are well-documented, especially in the writings of Jeremiah.

In Apostolic age, several false prophets tried to lure the public with their lies. Acts 5:36-37 refers to Theudas and Judas the Galilean. Acts 21:38 refers to an Egyptian who stirred up a revolt and led four thousand assassins into the wilderness. According to 2nd century Christian traditions, Simon the Magician or Simon of Gitta, mentioned in Acts 8:9, was also a false messiah who died when he tried to prove he could ascend into heaven. His trick did not work, and he fell to his death.

Then ask:

- *Is religious power abused today? How?*
- *Have Baptists succumbed to the temptation to abuse religious power? In what ways?*

► Read aloud Luke 4:14-15. Note that following Jesus' temptations in the wilderness to economic, political and religious power, he cemented the nature of his work in a common setting, the synagogue, and moved forward in the power of the Spirit. He also sealed his destiny: the cross. As the writers of the Students Guide point out, Jesus chose "the road of full and absolute surrender to the will of God. It was the road of impartial service. It was the way of death to achieve resurrection."

Apply Biblical Truth

► Suggest that in order to participate most effectively in God's plan, goodwill Baptists must:

- like Jesus, engage in reflection about our future by discerning the biblical witness;
- consider the cultural, social and global challenges we face; and
- commit to work together.

Acknowledge that years of disagreements and in-fighting have left many Baptists vulnerable to temptations to become distracted, abuse and misuse power and become other than what God intends.

Challenge adults to find in Jesus' response to temptation a model for firmly establishing the nature of our work as God's people. His example calls us to realize that life is about more than us and our wants and perceived needs.

God has called us to worship and serve God alone. Anything that pulls us away from this commitment is wrong.

► Close with prayer, asking God to grant discernment to goodwill Baptists everywhere in choosing between good and best, between what is morally acceptable and what is God's best for everyone. Ask for God's guidance as Baptists move forward as Jesus did, in the power of the Spirit.

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Community at the Core Leaders Guide

Theme: Jesus provided a text for his mission statement in the context of the faith community.

Text: Luke 4:16-17

Before You Lead

► Read Luke 4:16-17, Luke 5:11, 27 and “Community at the Core” from the Students Guide. Then read the following suggestions.

► Plan to introduce the concept of community by using the illustration of Koinonia Partners, as described below. You may obtain more information at www.koinoniapartners.org.

As You Lead

Introduce the Lesson

► Begin by affirming the centrality of community to Christianity. Stress that a faith community that follows Jesus, honors worship and reveres the sacred text demonstrates commitment to divine purposes and creates an environment in which God and God’s people can work. Jesus chose to announce his mission statement first to his hometown faith community.

Illustrate the concept of Christian community by summarizing the following information about the Koinonia community:

In 1942, two Baptist couples, Clarence and Florence Jordan and Martin and Mabel England, founded an intentional Christian farm community, Koinonia, as a “demonstration plot for the Kingdom of God” (www.koinoniapartners.org). They intended to set up a community of believers modeled after the first Christian communities described in the book of Acts.

His undergraduate degree in agriculture equipped Jordan to use his knowledge of scientific farming “to seek to conserve the soil, God’s holy earth.” His extensive theological education and his experience as an ordained Baptist minister motivated him to help the poor.

He and England, also an ordained minister and professor, envisioned an interracial community where blacks and whites lived and worked together as partners. Theirs was a radical discipleship aimed at confronting racism, militarism and materialism and committed to:

- treating everyone with dignity and justice;
- choosing love over violence;
- sharing all possessions and living simply;
- being stewards of the land and its natural resources.

Other families soon joined the Jordans and Englands on their rural Sumter County, Georgia, farm. Visitors often came “to serve an apprenticeship in developing community life on the teachings and principles of Jesus.” In addition to working together on the farm, the families and visitors ate together and studied the Bible together.

Not everyone was pleased with the community and its purpose. It was, after all, a huge deviation from the prevailing racism and segregation of the rural South. Some people

tried to destroy the farm and scare off its residents, but Jordan, England and the other members of the Koinonia community remained committed to nonviolence and racial equality. Firebombs, bullets, KKK rallies, death threats, property damage, excommunication from churches and economic boycotts of the farm's products brought the community much suffering, but not defeat.

By the late 1960s, the threats of violence had subsided. Only the Jordans and another family remained on the farm as residents. Jordan had long been concerned about the poor quality of housing available to the farm's neighbors, who were primarily black sharecroppers and tenant farmers. So when Millard Fuller approached him at this time with an idea, Jordan jumped at the opportunity to join him in building decent, affordable homes. Habitat for Humanity was the result. Koinonia Farm changed its name to Koinonia Partners and launched several other innovative partnership projects in addition to the housing program.

Although Jordan died in 1969, Koinonia's spirit continued to spread with the founding of Jubilee Partners, a community that welcomes refugees from war-torn countries; New Hope House, which assists families with loved ones on death row and advocates for the abolition of the death penalty; and The Prison & Jail Project, an antiracist, grassroots organization that monitors courtrooms, prisons and jails in southwest Georgia.

In its 60+ years, Koinonia has been actively involved in civil rights, prison ministry, racial reconciliation, peace activism, early childhood education, youth and teen outreach, affordable housing, language training, sustainable agriculture, economic development, home repair and other causes.

According to its Web site, "Today, Koinonia remains committed to treating all human beings with dignity and justice, choosing love over violence, sharing according to need, not greed, and stewardship of the land." It aims to continue its mission "to apply Jesus' teachings on compassion, partnership, community, reconciliation, and stewardship of our resources to the social and economic realities we face today."

Explore the Bible

► Lead adults to consider the role of the faith community in their lives and families by asking:

- *Why is the faith community important?*
- *What purposes does the faith community serve?*

Reinforce the role of Jesus' first faith community, the synagogue, in his early life. Remind adults of its role in passing along the faith, customs, rituals and traditions of his Jewish ancestors. Note that as an observant Jew, Jesus regularly attended the synagogue on the sabbath, and his experiences there helped contribute to his self-understanding, God's plan for him and his vision for his ministry.

Acknowledge that Jesus' hometown synagogue was a natural place for him to announce his mission statement. Jesus returned to his original community of Nazareth to make his first public statement on the most honored day of the week, the sabbath. He first required those who had known him the longest and perhaps thought they knew him the best to make a decision about him.

► State that among Clarence Jordan's contributions to Baptist life were his now-classic translations of the stories

of Jesus known as *The Cotton Patch Gospels*. In them, Jordan recasts gospel accounts into the language and culture of the mid-20th century South. The faraway places of scripture become, in his creative translations, Gainesville and Valdosta, Georgia; Selma and Birmingham, Alabama; and Washington, D.C.—locations critical to the Civil Rights struggle through which he lived.

Jordan once wrote, “While there have been many excellent translations of the Scriptures into modern English, they still have left us stranded in some faraway land in the long-distant past. We need to have the good news come to us not only in our own tongue but in our own time. We want to be participants in the faith, not merely spectators.”

Read the following from *The Cotton Patch Gospel* to encourage adults to hear scripture in new ways:

“So when the Confuser got through giving him the works, he left him for a while. Then Jesus, spiritually invigorated, returned to south Georgia, and the news of him spread through the whole area. He was speaking in their churches, and the people respected him. But he went to Valdosta, where he had grown up, and as he was in the habit of doing, he went to church on Sunday. They invited him to preach, so he got up to read the scripture ...”

► Read aloud Luke 4:16-17. Using information from the Students Guide, remind adults of specific things Jesus learned over the course of his life attending the synagogue (the Shema, the Decalogue, the prophets, the Psalms, etc.).

Lead adults to discuss this important step in Jesus’ life by asking such questions as:

- *Why do you think Jesus chose to announce his mission statement in this way?*
- *How did Jesus show his regard for the faith community?*
- *How did Jesus connect himself to the Hebrew prophetic tradition? Why was it important that he do so?*
- *In what ways was Jesus connected to the prophet Isaiah?*

► Stress that from the beginning, Jesus rooted his mission to the world in scripture that denounced oppression of the poor. He affirmed a moral vision and was committed to justice, righteousness and peace.

Note that later, in telling the parable of the Good Samaritan, Jesus would expound on what it meant to “love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself” (Lk 10:27). He fleshed out and enlarged the meaning of the Shema when he said, “This is the greatest and first commandment. And a second is like it: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets” (Matt 22:38-40).

► Remind adults that after Jesus launched his public ministry, he continued to affirm the importance and value of the faith community by creating among his disciples a relationship model for people of faith (see Lk 5).

Then ask:

- *What characterizes dynamic faith communities?*

- *What kinds of things must faith communities do regularly in order to remain vibrant and purposeful?*
- *What hinders the work of faith communities?*
- *How has the work of the Baptist faith community been jeopardized or thwarted?*
- *How does today's Baptist faith community reflect the values and priorities Jesus initially announced in his mission statement? How do we fail to reflect and carry them out?*

Apply Biblical Truth

► Using Doers of the Word from the Students Guide, remind adults of the legacy of Baptists and how we seek to work cooperatively in order to live out Jesus' mission.

Stress that, like those who first heard Jesus announce his mission statement, we must make a decision about Jesus and determine what he has called us to do.

Acknowledge that much diversity exists under the Baptist umbrella. Yet Baptists hold in common many religious traditions that create a solid foundation from which we can work together. By worshiping, studying and praying together and engaging in opportunities for fellowship, we can firmly establish a course of common life that helps fulfill God's purposes.

► Recall the example from the Koinonia community, and suggest that Baptists will best do the witness and work to which God has called us from the strength of community that respects each person and works to build bridges

across boundaries created by race, ethnicity, culture, economics and other differences. By working together in equal partnership, we can reclaim the best of Baptist traditions that call for peace, justice and freedom from oppression.

► Close by reading aloud Jesus' prayer from John 17:9-11.

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First Things First Leaders Guide

Theme: Jesus' moral agenda welled up from the Spirit of the Lord.

Text: Luke 4:18

Before You Lead

- ▶ Read Luke 4:18 and “First Things First” from the Students Guide. Then read the following suggestions.
- ▶ As time permits in your preparation, refer to other scriptures in which the phrase “the Spirit of the Lord” appears and use those contexts to illumine the meaning here. See numerous references in Hebrew scripture, such as Judges 3:10, 6:34, 11:29, 13:25, 14:6, 15:14; 1 Samuel 10:6, 16:13-14; Isaiah 11:2, 61:1, 63:14; Ezekiel 11:5, 37:1, 37:14; Micah 3:8. Also note references in Acts, such as 8:39, and 2 Corinthians, such as 3:17-18.

Also note other scriptural references where individuals were anointed, such as Leviticus 8:12; Numbers 3:3; 1 Samuel 10:1, 15:17, 16:13; 2 Samuel 2:4, 5:3; 1 Kings 1:39, 5:1; 2 Kings 11:12, 23:30; 1 Chronicles 29:22; Isaiah 61:1; Mark 6:13, 14:18; Luke 7:46; John 11:2, 12:3; Acts 4:27, 10:38.

Use these references to further inform understanding of Jesus being “anointed.”

- ▶ Ahead of time, enlist someone from your group to be prepared to summarize the story of Arkansas Congressman Brooks Hays from the Introduction in the Students Guide.

- ▶ Obtain a large flip chart and markers, or ensure that there is a dry-erase board or other writing surface in your meeting area.

As You Lead

Introduce the Lesson

- ▶ Introduce Arkansas Congressman Brooks Hays and note how his faith affected his stance on race relations. Suggest that his unwillingness to compromise his commitment on this moral issue ultimately cost him his seat in Congress.

Ask the individual you previously enlisted to provide details of Hays' story.

- ▶ Suggest that those who are anointed by God's Spirit find, as Jesus did, that their lives are turned away from themselves and toward those living on the margins of community. The same Spirit of the Lord that anointed Jesus calls us to speak up for the voiceless, protect the vulnerable and defend the victims of injustice. Jesus' moral agenda welled up from the Spirit of the Lord; so should that of his followers.

Explore the Bible

- ▶ Acknowledge that scripture offers few details about Jesus' early years. From Luke's gospel we learn that Jesus

“grew and became strong, filled with wisdom; and the favor of God was upon him” (2:40). Luke also records that at his baptism, Jesus received the Holy Spirit from God (3:21-22).

Point out that it was from this same Spirit that Jesus derived his moral agenda. After he successfully withstood the devil’s temptations to abuse his power, he met with his hometown faith community to announce God’s anointing upon him for his unique role in God’s plan. That day, Jesus declared not only that the Holy Spirit was the source of his power but also that the poor, prisoners of war and politics, those in ill health and the oppressed were his chief concerns.

► Ask a volunteer to read aloud Luke 4:18. Then guide adults to discuss it and what it meant to those who first heard it.

Use questions such as the following to frame your comments and/or guide discussion:

- *What did Jesus mean by “the Spirit of the Lord”? Was this a phrase with which his listeners would have been familiar? How did they understand it?*
- *What figures from Hebrew scripture would Jesus’ listeners recall as having been anointed with “the Spirit of the Lord”?*
- *What did “the Spirit of the Lord” enable God’s servants to do?*
- *What would Jesus’ listeners logically expect from him as a result of his being anointed with “the Spirit of the Lord”?*

- *What did Jesus mean when he said the Spirit of the Lord “anointed” him?*
- *What did Jesus mean by “good news”? What did he not mean?*
- *How did Jesus’ pronouncement about “good news” shape his priorities and ministry?*
- *Who were “the poor” in Jesus’ day? How would they have understood Jesus’ promise of “good news” for them?*
- *What did Jesus mean by “release to the captives”?*
- *What kind of blindness was Jesus referring to?*
- *Who were the oppressed in Jesus’ day, and how would they have understood his promise of liberty?*

► Suggest that Christians today sometimes narrowly define Jesus’ “good news” proclamation in only spiritual terms. Stress that Jesus was and is committed to bringing good news not only to those without full spiritual power and insight, but also, and just as importantly, to those living with physical and social disease and distress who live on society’s margins.

Challenge adults to scan Luke’s gospel to find occasions where Jesus fellowshiped and formed community with those the religious establishment had ignored: the poor, sick, possessed, sinners, outcasts, women, etc. Allow a few minutes for them to locate and verbally recall such occasions from Jesus’ ministry.

► Stress that Jesus' good news message had both spiritual and physical components, and as his followers, we must be committed to both aspects of the message too.

Note how the poor figure prominently in Luke's record of Jesus' teachings (see 14:13, 21; 16:20, 22; 18:22; 21:3).

Apply Biblical Truth

► On a board or chart, print *Good News* in large letters. Beneath it, draw four columns and label them: *the poor*; *captives*; *the blind*; *the oppressed*.

► Ask a volunteer to read aloud Luke 4:18. Then ask adults to apply its meaning to their lives and world today by filling in the columns on the board or chart. Consider guiding them through a thought process such as this:

- *Consider our Baptist church, and most Baptist churches you know about. Do we have "good news" for those beyond our walls?*
- *To what degree do we allow our own comforts and material excesses affect our level of commitment to them?*
- *Are we guilty of allowing our desire for popular and political affirmation to pull us away from Jesus' stated moral agenda and those he has called us to serve?*

Challenge adults to define the "good news" Baptist have for our world today. Write their ideas on the chart or board.

Next, ask them to identify more specifically the poor, captives, the blind and the oppressed. Write the examples they identify in the columns on the chart.

► Close by reading aloud Luke 4:18 from Clarence Jordan's *Cotton Patch Gospel*:

"The Lord's Spirit is on me;
He has ordained me to break the good news to the poor people.
He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the oppressed,
And sight for the blind,
To help those who have been grievously insulted to find dignity;
To proclaim the Lord's new era."

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God's Acceptable Economy Leaders Guide

Theme: Jesus prioritized the moral agenda of economic justice.

Text: Luke 4:19

Before You Lead

► Read Luke 4:19 and “God’s Acceptable Economy” from the Students Guide. Also read Leviticus 25:1-24; Deuteronomy 15:1-18 and Luke 14:7-14, 16-24. Then read the following suggestions.

► You may find additional illustrative material from the following online articles at EthicsDaily.com:

“Henlee Barnette: Giant in the Land,” (www.ethicsdaily.com/article_detail.cfm?AID=4878);

“Henlee Barnette: Teacher, Friend, Encourager,” (www.ethicsdaily.com/article_detail.cfm?AID=7493);

“Ethics Pioneer Henlee Barnett Dies,” www.ethicsdaily.com/article_detail.cfm?AID=4876);

“Henlee Barnette Remembered as ‘Unashamed Baptist Radical,’” http://www.ethicsdaily.com/article_detail.cfm?AID=4901;

“A Legacy,” (www.ethicsdaily.com/article_detail.cfm?AID=4962);

“Law Professor Pushes Tax Reform in Alabama,” (www.ethicsdaily.com/article_detail.cfm?AID=2424);

“Budgets and Taxes as Moral Issues” (www.ethicsdaily.com/article_detail.cfm?AID=7205);

Believing or Not Believing the Bible,” (www.ethicsdaily.com/article_detail.cfm?AID=7288).

As You Lead

Introduce the Lesson

► Using information from the Introduction in the Students Guide, recall for adults the call for economic justice from Martin Luther King, Jr., and his planned Poor People’s Campaign, which unfortunately was never completely implemented following his murder.

Connect King to the late Baptist ethicist, author and preacher Henlee Barnette by summarizing the following information.

As professor of Christian ethics at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Barnette invited King in 1961 to deliver a lecture series and speak in his classes. While King’s presence on campus drew strong support from some, others, many of them church leaders, were openly critical. Both men were strong advocates for peace, justice, racial equality and freedom from economic oppression.

An activist who called for Christian integrity in thought and action, Barnette was perhaps best known for courageous and prophetic stands for civil rights and against the Vietnam War. He also spent years ministering in Louisville’s

blighted Haymarket district of flophouses, tenements and bordellos, where he earned the nickname “Bishop of the Haymarket.” He served first as an unpaid evangelist and later as pastor of the Union Gospel Mission on Jefferson Street.

Like King, Barnette’s vocal calls for change often put him at odds with those in leadership; in Barnette’s case, school administrators. When asked once whether he regretted the trouble he had caused the various administrators with whom he worked, he replied negatively, saying, “I felt I was doing God’s will.”

Speaking at Barnette’s funeral in 2004, Terry Brown, an African American who had met Barnette as a middle school student of Barnette’s wife, called him “a-least-of-these kind of man” and a “man of integrity.” Brown also recalled Barnette’s usual reply to those who complained that his role in inviting Martin Luther King, Jr., to speak at Southern Seminary cost the school hundreds of dollars in contributions: “Money well spent.”

► Acknowledge that taking stands such as those held by King and Barnette proved costly. Within months of beginning his most ambitious project, the Poor People’s Campaign, King was assassinated in Memphis, Tennessee, where he had gone to fight for the economic rights of sanitation workers. Barnette, at age 65, was retired by school administrators who were weary of his ethical forthrightness. Though he was brought back later by a friendlier administration, his return was short-lived, due to the fundamentalist takeover within the Southern Baptist Convention.

Stress that at the outset of his public ministry, Jesus also chose to stand alongside the poor, an unwavering commitment that proved costly for him as well. Jesus taught and

modeled the fact that economic justice must figure into the moral decisions of people of faith.

Explore the Bible

► Remind adults that Luke’s account of Jesus on the sabbath in his hometown synagogue occurs immediately after the baptism and temptation narratives. Matthew and Mark locate the synagogue announcement account much later in their gospels.

Suggest that for Luke, it was important to portray Jesus immediately as someone who knew who he was and what his ministry was all about and who also had expectations of his followers and his church. As the Students Guide writer notes, “The issue for Luke was not chronology, but program and priority. For Luke, Jesus has a program that must be understood and priorities that must be embraced and emulated by his followers.”

► After reading aloud Luke 4:19, provide adults with context for Jesus’ pronouncement by noting that it was based on Leviticus 25:1-24 and Deuteronomy 15:1-18. Within these scriptures we find deeper understandings about the year of Jubilee and the concept of the sabbatical year on which Jubilee is built.

Using information from the Students Guide to guide explanation, read aloud selected verses from the Leviticus and Deuteronomy passages that help interpret Jubilee and sabbatical year.

Stress that Jesus’ pronouncement of “the year of the Lord’s favor” meant that the time had come to liberate the impoverished and oppressed.”

► Lead adults to discuss what Jesus said and its implications for his listeners by asking questions such as these:

- *What did Jesus mean when he announced that “the year of the Lord’s favor” had come?*
- *What was the purpose of the sabbatical year and the year of jubilee? Where did they have their roots?*
- *Given his understanding of the Leviticus and Deuteronomy passages, how do you think Jesus viewed the land and its produce?*
- *What expectations did Jesus have of those to whom the land is entrusted?*

► Ask a volunteer to read aloud Luke 14:7-14. Then ask:

- *Who was of special concern to Jesus? How did he demonstrate this?*
- *How did Jesus affirm the dignity and worth of individuals in spite of their economic circumstances?*
- *What does this parable teach us about God’s economic system? How is God’s economy different from other economic systems?*

As time permits, call attention to a similar parable Jesus used to illustrate this truth by referring to Luke 14:16-24.

Apply Biblical Truth

► Point out that while there is no historical evidence that Jubilee, “the year of God’s favor,” was ever fully implemented in ancient Israel, Hebrew leaders and prophets and later Jesus all sought to challenge and eliminate the abuse of economic power and were committed to moving people from poverty and economic enslavement.

► Using information from Doers of the Word in the Students Guide, challenge adults with the questions it presents for Baptist Christians. Call attention to the specific actions indicated there to which we can and should commit.

► Further challenge adults to move beyond right thinking to right actions by applying the following principles of *agape* love identified by Ron Sisk in a tribute to the late Henlee Barnette. Sisk notes that:

- *Agape* is defined as “to will and to work for the well-being of the other.”
- *Agape* is more than thinking or writing or talking about convictions on issues. One thing it means is caring “for those on the margins in specific, concrete ways.”
- *Agape* applies to all of life’s situations. Nothing is off limits or beyond the reach of Christian ethics.
- *Agape* involves solid biblical underpinnings and embraces other available information to inform Christian decision-making.
- *Agape* involves getting intensely personal with people and the details of everyday life.

- *Agape* relies on the leading and power of God's spirit in making wise and God-honoring decisions.
- *Agape* is courageous. It often means taking unpopular stands and swimming against the tide of prevailing opinion.

► Close by calling attention to these concluding comments from the Students Guide:

“To be faithful, Baptist Christians must boldly preach the whole gospel, which includes dealing with present needs and conditions, not simply focus on the future in heaven. The pursuit of economic justice must figure prominently into our moral decisions. . . . Will those who come behind us find us faithful to the plight of the poor, the captives, the broken-hearted, the oppressed and the prisoners? To what extent will Baptists working together leave a Jubilee legacy that says we were committed to moving people from the enslavement of poverty through better educational opportunities, improved health care and secure employment?”

Can You Hear Me Now? Leaders Guide

Theme: Jesus questioned if the faith community understood his mission.

Text: Luke 4:20-22

Before You Lead

► Read Luke 4:20-22 and “Can You Hear Me Now” from the Students Guide. Then read the following suggestions.

► The following column from EthicsDaily.com includes additional thoughts you may find helpful in introducing this lesson:

“A Christ-Haunted Culture,” (www.ethicsdaily.com/article_detail.cfm?AID=7535).

As You Lead

Introduce the Lesson

► Guide adults to begin thinking about the practical application of Jesus' mission statement by referring to the following thoughts from pastor and EthicsDaily.com columnist Jim Evans.

Evans recalled that Southern US novelist Flannery O'Conner once said: “By and large, people in the South still conceive of humanity in theological terms. While the South

is hardly Christ-centered, it is most certainly Christ-haunted.”

He went on to explore what O’Connor meant by that startling image. After all, he notes, “The heart of the Christian faith is the incarnation—the belief that God became fully human in Jesus of Nazareth. Being fully human, he lived and died, after which he was raised bodily from the grave. Christians believe that with the risen Christ in their midst, they constitute the body of Christ in the world” (ethicsdaily.com/article_detail.cfm?AID=7535).

Being the body of Christ, however, is more than “just theological name dropping. We can paste a ‘Christian’ label on almost anything. But just because the outside of the box says Christian does not mean that Jesus is on the inside,” Evans reminds us.

The fact is, he says, “we forget a good many things in a Christ-haunted world. We forget about loving our enemy, or even just our neighbor. We forget about forgiveness seven times 70. We forget about the second mile, the other cheek, and peace on earth. We forget about judge not and do unto others.

“We also forget about the least of these. We forget about them a lot. This is the most telling clue of all that ours is a Christ-haunted culture. When we forget about the least of these our brothers and sisters, Christ is not embodied in our lives. At least that’s what Jesus said.

“The only way to end this haunting is through a proper incarnation—a fleshing out of our theology, both private and public. It requires not only bearing Jesus’ name, but also his words and his way. Only to the extent that we are willing to do this will Christ be embodied in our world.”

► Allow adults opportunity to respond to Evans’s challenges to the body of Christ. Ask:

- *Are Baptist Christians guilty at times of being a “Christ-haunted culture”?*

Stress that following Christ involves more than simply hearing his message and mission and giving intellectual assent to it. Faithful discipleship involves deliberate, loving actions.

► Remind adults of the role of prophets in the life of ancient Israel, and point out that Jesus placed himself alongside Hebrew prophets by calling people to right actions. When Jesus spoke, he did so to change people’s hearts, minds *and* actions—in fact, the entire orientation and purpose of their lives. He taught people orally, but he also showed them by how he lived how he expected his followers to live. In spite of the extent to which Jesus went to bring about God’s kingdom, he questioned whether people really understood his mission.

Lead adults to consider further the idea of hearing that results in action by asking questions such as these:

- *Who is someone you consider to be a modern-day prophet and why?*
- *What is this person’s message and to whom is it directed?*
- *Has this person been effective in producing the desired results through his or her message? Why or why not?*

- *What affects how different people hear and respond to various messages? How does this affect their subsequent actions or inaction?*

Explore the Bible

► Ask someone to read aloud Luke 4:20-22. Note the shift between Jesus' reading from Isaiah and his first words: "he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant, and sat down."

Suggest that this careful note by Luke reminds us that Jesus respected and followed the practice of synagogue worship. He knew the customs and traditions and did not ignore them.

Devote considerable time in leading adults to discuss the significance of what Jesus said and its impact on those who heard him. Guide thoughts and discussion with questions such as these:

- *Who likely was in attendance in this situation where Jesus read from the scroll?*
- *How did their background and prior experiences affect their understanding of and response to what Jesus said?*
- *What was the response of those who heard Jesus' message?*
- *What do you think Jesus expected them to say and do as a result of what he had said?*
- *Why do you think Jesus received this kind of response?*

- *What did Jesus mean when he said "Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing"? How did his listeners understand this?*
- *What did Jesus say that the people liked? Did they fully understand what he said and how it would change their lives?*
- *What do you think was implied by their question as to Jesus' identity as Joseph's son?*

► Stress the implications of what Jesus said as recorded in verse 21. Review the seven things the Students Guide notes that Jesus meant by his proclamation. Then ask:

- *Suppose you were a worshiper at the synagogue that day when Jesus made this proclamation. How would you have understood what he said? What would your personal response or reaction have been?*

Apply Biblical Truth

► Call attention to the quote from Harry Emerson Fosdick from *Doers of the Word* in the Students Guide. Affirm the truth that discipleship involves more than hearing Jesus' message and agreeing with it intellectually. It changes the way we live—our values, priorities and purpose.

► Close with the following thoughts from Brett Younger, senior pastor of Broadway Baptist Church, Fort Worth, Texas, from his sermon "A Billion Hungry Neighbors":

"James writes, 'What good is it if a person claims to have faith but doesn't do anything?' ... Faith does something or it isn't faith. Genuine commitment shows itself. ... Grace

overflows from our hearts into our actions or we have to wonder if grace has really made it to our hearts. Faith is often misunderstood as agreement with certain ideas, but we've all known obnoxious, selfish people who believe the right things. We don't usually become better people by learning more facts. We become better by acting with compassion. What we don't always see is that not only do the poor need the gifts of wealthy churchgoers, but wealthy churchgoers desperately need to give, because if we don't give, we'll never be who we're meant to be. ... We need the people who need us."

We'll never be who we're supposed to be, he says, until we help care for those who need us, those who live on the margins. Following Jesus' agenda means that "the least of these" become most important to us. We demonstrate our full hearing and understanding of Jesus' message when we live as though they are, adjusting our lifestyles, values and priorities so that we can help them have what they need.

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Accepting the Prophetic Voice Leaders Guide

Theme: Jesus knew how difficult it was for people of faith to hear the prophetic voice.

Text: Luke 4:23-24

Before You Lead

► Read 2 Samuel 12:1-15, Micah 2:1-5, Amos 2:6-8, Luke 4:23-24 and "Accepting the Prophetic Voice" from the Students Guide. Then read the following suggestions.

► For additional information and interesting facts about Silas Rand, see:

library.acadiau.ca/archives/research/virtual_displays/rand/biography.html; and

www.biographi.ca/EN/ShowBio.asp?Bioid=39908

As You Lead

Introduce the Lesson

► Illustrate the difficulty people have with hearing and responding to the prophetic voice by reviewing the life and ministry of Silas Tertius Rand. Use information from the Students Guide, the Web sites above and the following facts.

In 1833 at the age of 23, Silas Rand, a native of Cornwallis, Nova Scotia, became a Christian and determined to devote his life to God. The following year he was ordained a Baptist minister and went on to serve as a pastor of several Baptist churches.

Passionate about missions, Rand had the opportunity to go to Burma as a foreign missionary but chose instead to remain in the Maritime colonies and work as a missionary among the First Nations People of Nova Scotia, known as the Micmac. In 1849 he established the Micmac Missionary Society after enlisting support from fellow Baptists and other Protestant evangelicals.

Rand was fascinated by the customs, folklore and language of the Micmac and regarded the people highly, in spite of living in an age of deeply-embedded racial prejudices. He swam against the tide of culture in his commitment to viewing all people as valuable and made in God's image. He spoke out against injustices against the Micmac and others who "have the audacity to wear the skin which the great Creator gave them."

He consistently called on his fellow Baptists, other Christians and the government to improve the living conditions and educational and employment opportunities for the Micmac. While Baptists initially supported him financially, they ignored his calls for personal involvement, and financial support later dropped considerably.

Rand's determined devotion to seeking justice, equality and opportunities for the Micmac often placed him in the center of controversy and also resulted in major sacrifices for him and his family. Nonetheless, his association with the Micmac people was life-long, and he spent his life pleading

for others to join him in improving life for the Micmac people.

► Suggest that Rand's experiences were not unlike many of the Hebrew prophets who were called by God to deliver an unpopular message to people often unwilling to change their attitudes and actions.

Explore the Bible

► Lead adults to review the tradition of the Hebrew prophets. Use the following facts about Hebrew prophets to form questions or relay information that will guide further discussion and insight into the scriptures you will examine.

Hebrew prophets:

- Concerned themselves with proclaiming God's word to their specific historical situation and with what had to happen if the people did not repent and return to God.
- Were deeply troubled by those who suffered and were oppressed.
- Were moved to speak and act because of God's anger over the people's sin and rebellion.
- Were committed to opening blind eyes and deaf ears to see and hear God's message.
- Spoke and acted largely with no regard for the consequences of their harsh words of rebuke and judgment. The fact that they even survived and their messages were passed on indicates that the He-

brew people indeed heard God's voice through them.

- Differed significantly from court prophets of that time, who kings sometimes expected to tell them only what they wanted to hear (see Balaam and Balak, Num 22-24).
- Were often known for the audacity of their messages and their illustrative behaviors that sometimes accompanied them. For example, Jeremiah wore a wooden yoke to illustrate his message of submission to Babylon. When Hananiah broke it, Jeremiah replaced it with an iron yoke to proclaim an even harsher captivity (See Jer 27:1-28:14).

► Ask adults to recall some of the Hebrew prophets and their messages. Supplement their examples as necessary. Then ask:

- *Who are some Hebrew prophets whose messages were particularly difficult for the people to accept? Why was this so?*

Point out that while the content of the prophets' messages varied depending upon the situations they addressed, they all were called to announce God's judgment on the people because they had failed to live up to their covenant relationship with God.

Remind adults that God required Israel to uphold public justice, take care of the earth, deal justly with each other as neighbors and family members and extend graciousness and justice to those who were oppressed. The prophets could not remain silent when they witnessed the people worshiping God fervently while simultaneously neglecting

and even treating with contempt the needy, being dishonest in business transactions and allowing corrupt legal proceedings.

► Summarize the account of Nathan and King David from 2 Samuel 12:1-5, reading selected verses as time permits. Point out Nathan's courage and the risks he took in confronting the king, the center of political power.

Call attention to and stress this statement from the Students Guide: "Sin and righteousness coexist within the covenant community, and the church is called not only to proclaim God's judgement on injustice but also to receive and acknowledge judgement for its own participation in the conditions that create brokenness."

► Ask a volunteer to read aloud Micah 2:1-5 and lead adults to discuss it by asking such questions as:

- *What kind of power did the prophet Micah confront here?*
- *What were his complaints? What was at stake?*
- *What message did Micah give about the poor and oppressed?*
- *What did he have to say about those in authority and how they used and abused power?*
- *What did Micah risk by speaking to power?*
- *What does Micah's prophetic witness teach us?*

► Read aloud Luke 4:23-24. Note that at the outset of his public ministry, Jesus identified himself as a prophet. In

doing so, he placed himself alongside well-known Hebrew prophets like Isaiah, Elijah and Elisha.

Ask:

- *What do you think the people thought Jesus would do for them that day?*
- *How did Jesus define “prophet”?*
- *What did Jesus mean when he said “no prophet is accepted in the prophet’s hometown”?*

Apply Biblical Truth

► Ask adults to describe injustices today that call out for attention and relief. Guide their thoughts by suggesting they think in terms of abuses of power—economic, social, political—that result in gains for some but injustices for others.

Then ask:

- *Are there prophetic voices today? If so, what are their messages, and how are they received?*
- *Are there messages from the Hebrew prophets and from Jesus that Baptists need to embrace and act upon today? What are they?*
- *What will happen if we fail to heed these prophetic witnesses?*

A God Who Won’t Be Boxed In Leaders Guide

Theme: Jesus warned that God’s unstoppable agenda marched forward even if it was outside the circle of faith.

Text: Luke 4:25-27

Before You Lead

► Read Luke 4:25-27, Luke 9:4-6, 1 Kings 17:1-16, 2 Kings 5:1-14 and “A God Who Won’t Be Boxed In” from the Students Guide. Then read the following suggestions.

► The following article from EthicsDaily.com can provide additional information as you introduce this lesson:

“Walter Rauschenbusch: Theologian of Justice,”
(www.ethicsdaily.com/article_detail.cfm?AID=2738).

As You Lead

Introduce the Lesson

► Use an example from the life of Walter Rauschenbusch to encourage adults to consider ways God works beyond the constraints of our imaginations. Summarize the following information:

The son of German immigrant parents, Walter Rauschenbusch was born in Rochester, New York, in 1861. His father

was a Lutheran pastor who became a Baptist after moving to the United States. Walter was deeply educated in scripture and in classical and biblical languages. During a period of study in Germany, he experienced a call to ministry. Later, during a summer internship at a German-speaking Baptist church in Louisville, Kentucky, he gained a vision of what would be his life's work.

In 1885 he became the pastor of the Second German Baptist Church in New York City's Hell's Kitchen. The area "was aptly named," according to Mercer University professor Richard Wilson. "It was a place where all of the evil of the world seemed to gain social status. Against the 'kingdom of evil' that permeated Hell's Kitchen Rauschenbusch explored the teachings of Jesus about the Kingdom of God as a call for social action and reform," (www.ethicsdaily.com/article_detail.cfm?AID=2738)

It was there that Rauschenbusch's sense of the demands for justice grew, and he developed "a theology for the social gospel." Leighton Williams and Nathaniel Schmidt, also young Baptist ministers, joined him there to live out the call of the kingdom of God.

"They found common cause in the political arena as they cast their lot with mayoral candidate Henry George and his platform of the 'single tax' as a way of establishing a more just society," Wilson notes. Rauschenbusch would later credit George with motivating his commitments to address social problems.

"The merging of pietistic and political concerns in Hell's Kitchen was a breakthrough that continues to shape Christian social ethics. Rauschenbusch became increasingly aggressive in his condemnation of piety that never enters the public sphere," Wilson says.

Rauschenbusch, in his confession "Why I Am a Baptist," wrote: "But religion is not a purely individual matter. Nothing in human life is. We are social beings, and all elements of our life come to their full development only through social interchange."

He called the idea that the spiritual life has nothing to do with secular life "a calamitous heresy."

► Suggest that Rauschenbusch reminds us that as our lives intersect with the lives of others and with our culture and its problems, we have opportunities to help further God's kingdom. Reinforce the theme that God's agenda as announced by Jesus is unstoppable, and God can and will work both inside and outside the faith community to advance the divine plan.

► For additional illustrations, note the examples of Helen Barrett Montgomery and the situation in Cuba as described in the Introduction of the Students Guide.

Affirm the fact that Jesus sometimes worked with the people of faith and at other times he worked around them.

Explore the Bible

► Read aloud Luke 4:25-27 and call attention to Jesus' references to Elijah and Elisha. Point out that Jesus knew these references would be compelling ones to his listeners that day. These men were more than historical figures; they were heroes.

Remind adults, however, that these two prophets caused great distress in Israel with their actions. They were unafraid to offer challenging moral witness to their culture and to those in power.

Stress that Jesus' reference to Elijah and Elisha served to remind the Jews of his day that God had worked both within and outside the chosen people of Israel. For them to acknowledge this fact both historically and in their time was a huge blow to their pride, yet that is what Jesus called them to do.

► Review with adults the story of Elijah and the Gentile widow. Ask volunteers to read aloud key verses from 1 Kings 17:1-16. Note that Elijah had challenged the people for having turned from God. He withdrew from his community and sought aid from one outside Israel who gave generously to him. God provided for both Elijah and the poor widow who helped him.

Then ask:

- *What is especially significant about the fact that Elijah's encounter with the widow came in Sidon?*

► Next, review the account of Elijah's prophetic heir, Elisha. Read aloud selected verses from 2 Kings 5:1-14 to provide the essence of the story of the slave girl and Naaman. Guide adults to think about the implications of this story for Jews and their understanding of how God chooses to work. Ask such questions as these:

- *What was significant or unusual about the exchange between Naaman and the slave girl?*
- *What was the role of the kings in Naaman's healing?*
- *Why do you think Elisha chose to facilitate Naaman's healing the way he did?*

► Ask a volunteer to read aloud Luke 9:4-6. Then ask:

- *What was Jesus' purpose in giving his disciples these instructions? What do they say about how God works?*

Apply Biblical Truth

► Stress that these accounts from scripture remind us that God refuses to be boxed into our preconceived ideas of how and among whom God should act. When we refuse to acknowledge this, we cut ourselves off from opportunities to work with God in many areas.

Lead adults to apply this truth to Baptist Christians by asking them to respond to the questions below. Supplement dialogue and discussion with information from Doers of the Word in the Students Guide.

- *How receptive are Baptists to the idea that God can and does work not only outside the Baptist circle but beyond the circle of the larger Christian community?*
- *Is this concept one that Baptist churches generally teach or acknowledge? If not, why not?*
- *Do you think Baptists have been guilty of failing to acknowledge this truth because it might be an unpopular message?*
- *When did it first occur to you that God sometimes chooses to work beyond the faith community to accomplish the divine plan?*

- *Are there partnerships Baptists have deliberately avoided or neglected to pursue that could extend God's work?*
- *Are there relationships in which Baptist are engaged that tend to limit or prevent God's work rather than extend it?*
- *Are there situations in which Baptists need to "shake the dust" from our feet and move on to other, more productive and constructive relationships?*

► Close by reading aloud the prayer of confession found at the end of the lesson in the Students Guide.

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Marching Forward Through Opposition Leaders Guide

Theme: Jesus faced threats for his prophetic voice and moved forward with courage.

Text: Luke 4:28-30

Before You Lead

► Read Luke 4:28-30, 31-44; Luke 6:22-23, 26; Luke 9:51-55 and "Marching Forward Through Opposition" from the Students Guide. Then read the following suggestions.

► The following online article can provide you with additional insight and illustrations in introducing this lesson:

"Learning from Baptist History: The Migration of Baptist Women to Other Denominations," (www.ethicsdaily.com/article_detail.cfm?AID=8481).

To read "Letter from a Birmingham Jail" by Martin Luther King, Jr., go to: www.nobelprizes.com/nobel/peace/MLK-jail.html.

As You Lead

Introduce the Lesson

► Begin by summarizing the following information:

Over 200 years ago, Mary Callender, the daughter of Baptist pastor and historian John Callender, responded to God’s call to preach. In order to do so, however, she had to leave the denomination in which she had been taught and nurtured throughout her life. At the age of 30, she united with the Society of Friends. After settling into Quaker life, she began preaching in Newport, Rhode Island.

Historical accounts report that, in spite of little success and an inability to attract much of a crowd, Mary would stand in the streets and call people to repentance. Some people would even shut their doors and windows because they thought she was crazy or hallucinating.

“Mary’s decision to preach the gospel cost her dearly,” says Baptist historian Pamela Durso. “She had to leave her Baptist roots, preach under difficult circumstances, and endure being ridiculed by those around her. Despite the opposition she experienced, however, Mary remained faithful to her calling” (www.ethicsdaily.com/article_detail.cfm?AID=8481).

While Mary paid a personal price, Durso notes, the wider Baptist family has paid a price too. “Chances are, if Mary were alive today, she would once again choose to leave her Baptist roots, in search of a more affirming denomination. Baptists have lost and continue to lose too many Marys—women reared and trained in Baptist churches, educated in Baptist colleges and seminaries, and now are serving in other denominations.”

Baptists, Durso concludes, “have for far too long not understood the cost that we have paid and will continue to pay because we have allowed so many women to walk away with scarcely a word being said.”

► Next, note the example from the life of Martin Luther King, Jr., from the Introduction in the Students Guide. Read aloud this quote from King: “The ultimate measure of a man is not where he stands in moments of comfort and convenience, but where he stands at times of challenge and controversy.”

King also said, “The hope of a secure and livable world lies with disciplined nonconformists who are dedicated to justice, peace and brotherhood.”

► Apply the lesson’s theme to these examples from Baptist history. Stress that the prophetic voice always encounters opposition, regardless of who embodies it or what its message is. Jesus courageously marched forward through opposition in spite of facing threats.

Explore the Bible

► Before reading aloud Luke 4:28-30, explain that these verses deal with the second reaction to Jesus’ message in the synagogue, when listeners understood his moral mission that the poor will hear good news and the rich will hear woes.

Then, lead adults to consider the reasons behind the people’s change of heart by asking such questions as these:

- *Why do you think Jesus’ listeners had a change of heart following their initial response to his message? What did he say that they didn’t like?*
- *How do you interpret and understand Jesus’ moral mission? What does being a follower of Jesus mean to you?*

- *How do you interpret their reaction of “rage” (v 28)? What do you think they intended to do as a result?*
- *Do you think Jesus felt threatened? What was Jesus’ response to the people’s negative reaction?*
- *Did this experience deter Jesus and thwart his mission and ministry?*
- *Where did Jesus go from here, and what did he do?*

► Point out that in spite of the negative response and outright hostility of those in his hometown to his call and mission, Jesus moved forward to fulfill the divine plan.

Read aloud Luke 4:31-44 to illustrate.

► Ask a volunteer to read aloud Luke 6:22-23, 26. Point out that Jesus was well aware of the reactions people would have to his teachings because they flew in the face of conventional expectations. Then ask:

- *What did Jesus tell his followers to expect? How did he tell them to respond?*

► Using information from “Marching Forward” in the Students Guide, place the events recorded in Luke 9:51-56 within the broader context of Jesus’ ministry. Read aloud the verses; then stress the following:

- Jesus’ mission was to bring about the pardon, freedom and restoration promised in the “year of the Lord’s favor.”

- Once those in Jesus’ hometown and beyond began to understand that God planned to pour out his grace on others, not just them, they began to reject Jesus and his message.
- Opposition to his ministry—even serious physical threats—did not discourage Jesus.
- Just as Jesus faced opposition at the very beginning of his ministry, he also faced it as he moved toward its end.
- Jesus’ disciples were understandably angry when the Samaritans refused to accept Jesus. They wanted to “command fire to come down from heaven” to consume them (v 54). But Jesus would have no part of that kind of response. His was a ministry of salvation and reconciliation, not destruction.
- Following the refusal of those in the Samaritan village to receive Jesus, he and his disciples “went on to another village” (v 56), responding as he had taught them earlier about shaking the dust from their feet and moving on.

Apply Biblical Truth

► Suggest that like those who first heard Jesus’ message, we often reject it when we fully understand its demands. As the Students Guide writer notes, “When justice for others has implications for the vehicles we drive, the kind of people we welcome to worship or the way we spend our money, we resist.”

Challenge adults to consider silently their level of commitment to Jesus' stated agenda. Read aloud the following questions and ask them to reflect on them:

- *Which parts of Jesus' message have I ignored, shoved aside or deliberately rejected or rebelled against?*
- *What would a genuine renewal of commitment to peace, justice, righteousness and goodness in spite of opposition look like in my life? How would my life demonstrate this deeper level of commitment?*

► Using the information in Doers of the Word in the Students Guide, offer the example of Nannie Helen Burroughs as someone who continued the prophetic witness and work of Christ in spite of opposition.

► Challenge adults to commit to a new way of being Baptist Christians and working together to pursue Jesus' agenda. Review truths from this lesson series and remind them that:

- The larger Baptist family has access to tremendous wealth, power and influence. Jesus' example shows us how to refuse the temptations to abuse economic, political and religious power and rely on the power of God's spirit to carry out Jesus' mission.
- Baptists form a large community that can work effectively together. To do so, we must make a decision about Jesus and determine what he has called us to do as his followers. While we are a diverse people, we hold in common many religious

traditions that create a solid foundation from which we can work. By worshiping, studying and praying together and engaging in opportunities for fellowship, we can firmly establish a course of common life that helps fulfill God's purposes.

- Baptists will follow Jesus faithfully and completely only when we take up his agenda to carry good news to the world's marginalized, displaced, impoverished and imprisoned people.
- Baptists must renew our commitment to economic justice and always challenge abuses of economic power.
- Baptists will demonstrate that we hear and truly understand Jesus' mission by our actions, not merely our words.
- Baptists will demonstrate that we hear and understand the prophetic voice of Jesus and other faithful prophets when we use moral discernment and act on behalf of those who are marginalized and oppressed.
- Baptists must learn better how to work both within and outside the faith community to advance Jesus' mission.
- Baptists must fully embrace the "good news" message of Jesus and understand completely what being his follower involves. Only then can we move forward with courage in spite of opposition.

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