

Principles for **Life**

Christian Education for People with Intellectual Disabilities

published in cooperation with:



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Special Touch Ministry, Inc.

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For additional copies of this curriculum please contact:
Special Touch Ministry, Inc.
P.O. Box 25, Waupaca, WI 54981
715-258-2713
ministry@specialtouch.org
www.specialtouch.org

THE PURPOSE

Many Christian education programs need to evaluate their discipleship strategy. It is important that everyone who attends the church not only hears and receives the gospel message, but also grows spiritually. Part of being a disciple of Christ is to learn His Word so that we are able to obey it. As the leader, you are responsible to present the entire Word of God to your students.

That means that every Christian education program is responsible for the evangelism and discipleship of all its students. The best way to accomplish this task is to develop a plan for systematically studying all of God's Word. The Bible, from Genesis to Revelation, needs to be carefully studied. Classes can be established to teach all people at their cognitive level. Whether simple or complex, you need to see that everyone is being disciplined.

THE PLAN

You will find it necessary to plan your Christian education in a specific time and place to meet the needs of your students. You will need to determine how every person, at their cognitive level, can receive training. You may need to consider people's work schedules, transportation needs, and the space in your facility. Classes may be in rooms or parts of rooms, outside or in homes, or other spaces you may be able to arrange.

For each "group" you will need to have a teacher who has a solid Christian testimony, believes the basic doctrines of Scripture, and is willing to learn and teach what God's Word says. If you have only one teacher, then you may invite all ages to sit in one class together as you prayerfully prepare more teachers to teach. You may only have three qualified teachers, and so you will arrange for a class at each cognitive level. You may have more teachers and soon be able to divide students into several groups, to present the lesson in a manner easily understood by every person. Your ability to expand classes to meet more specific cognitive levels will depend on the number of teachers you have. Be aware that some students with physical disabilities and no cognitive delay may need to be challenged at a higher spiritual level.

THE MATERIALS

Twenty weekly lessons will cover parts of the Old Testament and twenty will relate to the New Testament, as well as eight extra lessons for special occasions. They are not dated because your schedule for teaching may be different from another class' plan. Some lessons may require more than a week to present, if you determine interest is high or the need is great in your class. Thus, you do not need to rush through a lesson to maintain a calendar schedule. There are 52 weeks in a year, so the 4 weeks without lessons are available for you to add your own plans for special events, holiday emphasis, or extended coverage of some lessons. You may also choose a topic that is of extra importance to your students and substitute several weeks of training in that specific topic. (Examples: Ten Commandments, Principles in Giving or Stewardship, Holy Spirit, help in making lifetime choices etc.)

The lessons provided in this packet are not the only things you can train students in, but they will provide a way for you to guarantee that you are presenting education in the whole Word of God to everyone in your class. Some students will grasp the lesson concepts in a simple way while others may use the Scripture references to dig far deeper into the lesson.

THE LESSON

Each lesson is designed with the same format. Once you understand how a lesson is structured, you will become comfortable with the style and ready to develop your own ideas to enrich the lesson. The lesson was planned to provide basic biblical content in a systematic manner, with some optional ideas for additional class activities and helps for the teacher. The story section on the left is designed to present the basic flow of the lesson and the outline at the top right is to help the teacher emphasize the key points. These lessons have been prepared to teach students at a low to mild cognitive disability. Therefore, some students with a higher cognitive level may be able to read some of the Scriptures and discuss concepts of the lessons.

Then the teacher is given one idea per lesson for a possible class activity. It is clear that this idea is only a suggestion. You may not have the supplies, space, or the level of students in your class to use this idea. You may have a far better idea. Use it! The suggested activities are only a means to help you enrich your teaching and apply the lessons to your students' lives.

Next, the teachers are given a short word of encouragement or challenge for their personal lives. Teachers are a precious gift given to us, and it is our desire to give them additional help in their positions of responsibility.

The Scripture references or text from the lesson is provided. You may at times choose to read directly from this reference, but this is not always necessary. It will be important for the teacher to have read and studied the passage before attempting to teach the lesson. Remember, we want to train believers in God's Word, not a resource material like these lessons. It will be important that students know the teacher is teaching lessons from the Bible. In an attempt to make the memory verse understandable and repeatable by people of all cognitive levels, we have used various versions of the Bible. We have also used parts of verses or paraphrased them to meet our criteria.

THE COMMAND

It is our desire to see these lessons used as a tool to help you accomplish the command we have all been given: "Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you." (Matthew 28:19-20) Let's teach everyone the entire Word of God.

THE OVERVIEW

Lessons are labeled with three digits to help you organize your materials, and coordinate the correct visuals with each lesson. The first number tells you what year you are using followed by the lesson number, and ending with a letter to determine the group of lessons you are using.

Example: 1-07 — A means year 1, lesson 7, group A or the Old Testament.

Example: 1-05 — B means year 1, lesson 5, group B or the New Testament.

Example: 1-03 — C means year 1, lesson 3, group C or Special Events.

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Joseph was the second in command under the king of Egypt. Every nation had suffered terribly under the dry years that God had warned about and now even God's people in Canaan were in need of food to stay alive. Joseph's father, Jacob, sent ten of his sons to bring food from Egypt. Jacob kept Benjamin, his youngest son, at home. When Joseph's brothers arrived in Egypt, they bowed down to him with their faces to the ground. Joseph recognized them, but he pretended to be a stranger. He asked them many questions about their family.

Joseph accused them of being spies and made them leave Simeon in Egypt until they brought back Benjamin. The brothers were sad since they knew their father did not want to let them take Benjamin. But they knew they would have to agree to this to get the food their families needed. Reuben and the others were afraid that they were being punished because they had sold Joseph into slavery. They were afraid that this leader would not believe them and would punish them for false charges. They felt a bit of what Joseph had struggled with for years. Joseph had servants fill his brothers' bags with food and then place the silver they had brought back in each bag. When the brothers opened their sacks, they discovered the silver in each bag. With great fear, they hurried home to tell their father the terrible news.

Once the food was gone, Jacob had to allow his sons to return to Egypt for more. With sorrow, he let them take Benjamin, for they told him that the Egyptian leader in charge of the food would only see them if they brought their youngest brother. When they arrived in Egypt, Joseph again would not let them know who he was, even when he saw Benjamin. He invited his brothers to a special banquet. His brothers were fearful that they would be trapped as slaves. But Joseph accepted their silver and extra gifts as he returned their brother Simeon. The brothers marveled as the servants seated them in order by age. They still did not know that Joseph was testing them to see if their hearts had changed. Again, Joseph had his brothers' bags filled with food and this time he had his silver cup placed in Benjamin's sack. After they had traveled a short distance, Joseph sent a servant after them with a message. He asked them why they repaid evil for good by stealing his silver cup, and the one with the cup would have to return as his slave. The brothers denied any theft and opened their bags as proof. They were very sad when the cup was found in Benjamin's sack. They returned to plead forgiveness before the official.

Finally, Joseph could not control his emotions. He revealed himself to his brothers. They were shocked to learn that their brother, Joseph, that they had sold into slavery was now a powerful leader and able to rescue their family from the dry years. The brother they betrayed now had power over their lives. Do you suppose they remembered those boyhood dreams that Joseph had of them bowing before him? But Joseph allowed God's love and forgiveness to rule in his life. He had never become bitter from the difficulties, but had instead trusted God's plan for his life. Now he understood that God had allowed all the hard things to happen so he would be in the right place at the right time to save his family, God's chosen people.

TEACHER'S NOTES

- I. A family in search of food.
 - A. Israel (Jacob) sent his sons to Egypt.
 - B. Joseph recognized his brothers.
- II. Brothers suffered from guilt.
 - A. Simeon stayed in exchange.
 - B. Silver found in the food.
- III. Second journey for food.
 - A. Benjamin and extra money returned.
 - B. Silver cup found in a sack.
- IV. Joseph forgave his brothers.
 - A. He revealed his identity.
 - B. The brothers were still afraid.

ACTIVITY

A lesson like today's can cause some to remember things they have never forgiven someone for. The Bible is clear that we need to forgive others. Refer to Ephesians 4:32 and Matthew 6:12-14. Give each student a slip of paper and some quiet time to search their hearts for unforgiveness. They can write this and then destroy the slip as a symbolic way of removing it from their heart. The students may tear up the slips. Explain that God forgives, and they must forgive. It is also important to go to the one who hurt them and tell them they are forgiven, just as Joseph spoke to his brothers. Encourage them to do that also.

TEACHER GROWTH

Today's activity is an example of a symbolic act that helps to explain a principle. Illustrating things we can't see is one way some can understand difficult concepts. Be careful not to make the symbolism or the illustration the focus. The activity we use is merely a way to help focus on God. He is the One who makes it possible for us to forgive, for He first forgave our sin. God's loving nature at work in our character helps us to forgive others.

SCRIPTURE PASSAGES:

Genesis 42:1-45:15

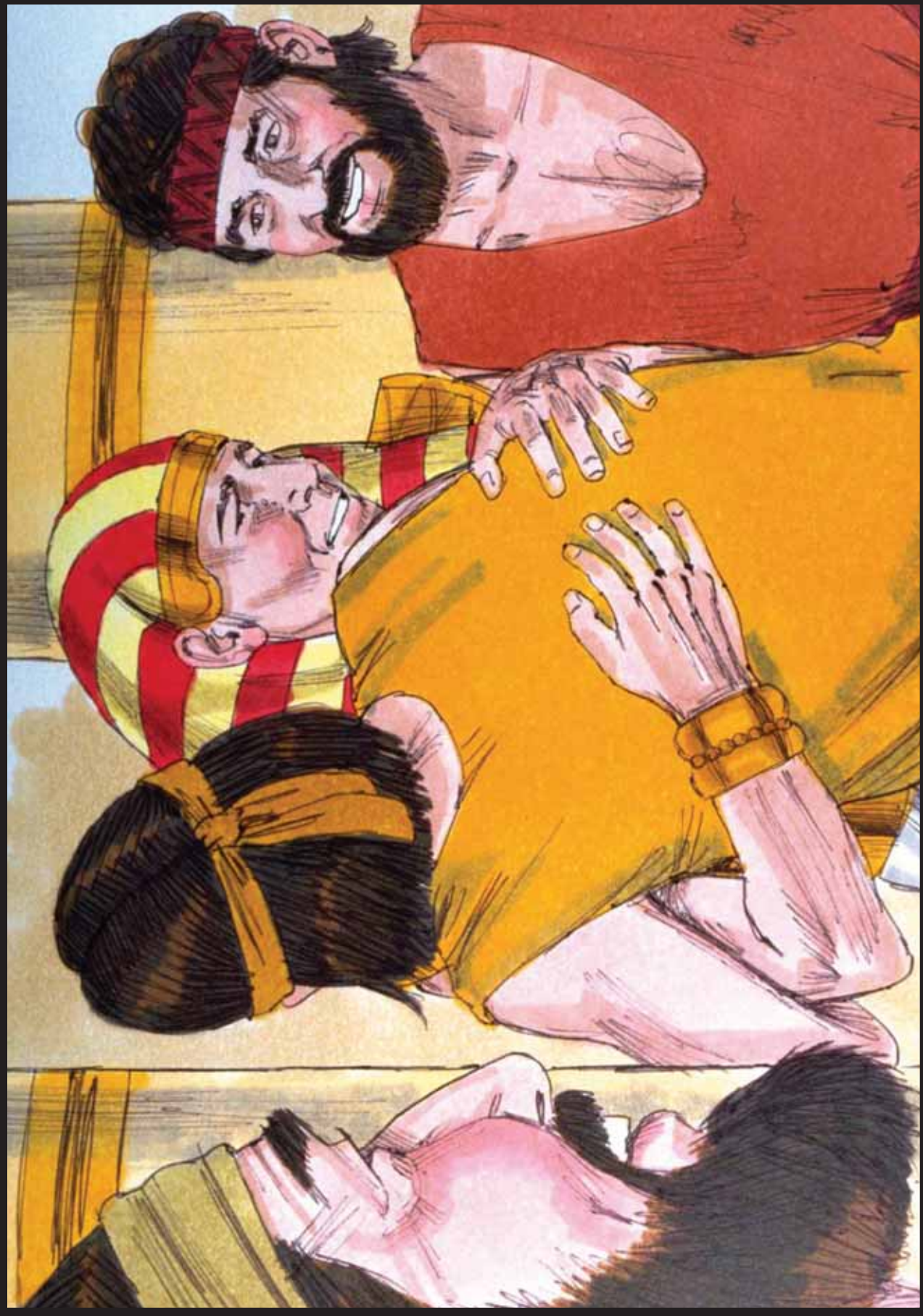
MEMORY VERSE:

Colossians 3:13

"Forgive each other as the Lord forgave you."



Colossians 3:13 "Forgive each other as the Lord forgave you."



Today's lesson begins in the middle of a very sad scene. Nothing is harder in the life of a family than the loss of a loved one, and yet this story is even more dramatic. Everyone in town knew the widow lady who lived alone with her son. After her husband died, she could have been worried about how she could get money for food, but God had blessed her with a fine son. Her son was a strong young man and had been able to work and provide for his mother's needs. But somehow the son had become sick or had suffered an injury, and then he died. The mother was shocked and very sad, but she also had to be worried about how she would survive without a husband or a son to care for her. In those days, women like that would lose their homes and have to beg for food to live.

The day when the young man was placed in a casket and carried to the place outside the city for burial, many people walked along the road to cry with the grieving mother. The Bible says there was a large crowd from the town of Nain walking with the widow. Jesus was nearing the city gate with a large crowd following Him. Many people were in the middle of this sad scene. When Jesus saw the lady crying he felt sorry for her. He told her not to cry. Isn't it wonderful to know that Jesus understands and cares about our feelings?

At that moment, in the middle of His followers trying to enter the city and the mourners with the casket trying to leave the city gate, Jesus stepped right up and touched the coffin. The men who were carrying the coffin stopped immediately. Then Jesus amazed everyone by giving a very simple command. He said, "Young man, I say to you, get up!"

Instantly the crowds saw a miracle of God's power before their own eyes. The young man sat up and began to talk. Jesus must have taken his hand to step out of the coffin that had been set on the ground, and then the Bible says Jesus gave him back to his mother. The people, especially the widow, were amazed at Jesus' power, and they began to praise God. They called Jesus a great prophet and said, "God has come to help his people." There must have been much hugging and dancing and shouting and laughing over a God of such miraculous power who cared so lovingly for people. The Bible says that the news of Jesus raising this young man from the dead was spread throughout the country. What a comfort for us to know God's power and love for people is the same today as it was for the widow of Nain.

TEACHER'S NOTES

- I. A funeral procession.
 - A. Local customs.
 - B. A widow's loss.
- II. Reaction to the loss.
 - A. The crowd from town.
 - B. The compassionate Lord.
- III. Action was taken.
 - A. He stopped the coffin.
 - B. He gave a command.
- IV. Miraculous results.
- V. News about Jesus spreads farther

ACTIVITY

Write today's memory verse on a sheet of paper for every student. See that the verse is written large enough to fill the whole sheet. Now have students tear very tiny scraps of colorful paper, or use the dots from a hole punch of colorful paper, to create mosaic pieces. Have the students glue little mosaic pieces, slightly overlapping along each part of every letter in each word. The finished verse will be mosaic colored block letters that create a nice copy of the verse to hang at home as a reminder of God's help.

TEACHER GROWTH

Storytelling is an ancient art form and a strong way to present the Bible lesson. This story has all the elements needed for a wonderful oral drama. Begin with a colorful look at the main characters. Build to the drama of the emotional scene on the road to the burial site. Reach the climax of a compassionate Jesus who stops the coffin and calls out to the son. Conclude with the incredible miracle of Jesus placing the son back in his mother's arms. Use your voice to create the drama of this powerful story.

SCRIPTURE PASSAGES:

Luke 7:11-17

MEMORY VERSE:

Luke 7:16b

"God has come to help his people."



Luke 7:16b "God has come to help his people."



God introduced a special plan for an incredible gift for the world. The New Testament part of the Bible tells the actual stories of God's gift, His Son, being given. Let's look at the way God has given us the gifts of peace, joy, love, and hope through His Son, Jesus.

Joseph and Mary were people that had a love for God. An angel visited them and told them that they would be part of a special plan. Mary was told that even though she had never been with a man, she was going to give birth to Jesus. Joseph was told that this was a baby given to Mary by God so he should go ahead and take Mary as his wife. God gave both Mary and Joseph the gift of peace in their hearts.

Joseph and Mary then had to go to Bethlehem. They were in a crowded city with no place to stay. Every room was full and there was no place for Mary to give birth. There were no hospitals then. But God gave this little family the gift of peace as they found space in the animal stable and Jesus was born.

While Mary and Joseph were making a soft bed of hay for their new baby, a group of shepherds were out in their fields. Their job that night was to protect their flocks. This was a hard job that had to be done every night, but something happened to make that night special. God sent angels to announce the gift of His Son to the world. The angel told the shepherds good news that would give them the gift of great joy. Suddenly the sky was filled with many angels giving praise to God and telling them of the peace that God had sent through this baby.

The shepherds were amazed and went to see this baby in Bethlehem. When they hurried into the stable to see Jesus they were amazed at this special gift of great joy. These hardworking shepherds who had to work through the long night hours had their hearts filled with the gift of joy. The Bible says that they hurried to tell this news to other people, for the angels had said it was a gift of joy for all people. Everyone was amazed.

In the birth of His Son, Jesus, we see God's gift of love given to the world. The Bible tells us in John 3:16 that the incredible gift of God's love was sent to us through His Son, Jesus. Jesus would later grow to be convicted, though innocent, to die on a cross for our sins, and rise again to bring us lovingly back to God. What a gift of God's love.

There was another gift given in that first Christmas celebration, the gift of hope. God saw how hopeless people were to be lost in a sin-filled world, with only death and hell ahead. He knew He would have to provide a substitute that would pay for the sin of people so that they could have the hope of being in heaven someday. The gift of hope was wrapped up in the body of Jesus that died on the cross to pay for sin.

Christmas is a time we celebrate the greatest gift, Jesus. Thank God for the gifts of peace, joy, love, and hope.

TEACHER'S NOTES

- I. The gift of peace.
 - A. The plan for Mary and Joseph.
 - B. The stable in a crowded city.
- II. The gift of joy.
 - A. The angels' appearance.
 - B. The hearts of shepherds.
- III. The gift of love.
 - A. The promise from the beginning.
 - B. The Savior was sent.
- IV. The gift of hope.
 - A. The restoration of the lost.
 - B. The gifts of Christmas are here.

ACTIVITY

Decorate special little gift boxes using scraps or throw-away items. Use the most common or inexpensive materials to create a beautifully decorated gift. Inside the box place slips of paper with "The gift of peace" on one side and "Jesus" on the other side. Repeat for each of the other four gifts that are covered in the lesson. Help the students marvel again over the way God used ordinary people and lowly things to present the most wonderful gifts to the world.

TEACHER GROWTH

Today's lesson is a perfect example of how a lesson can be tied to objects to make it more memorable. You may choose to unwrap a gift with the title of the four points from the lesson, or place words on a gift that you will reveal one at a time as you work your way through the lesson. Students will forever relate the points of your lesson to the gifts they see in any setting. Thus you have created a trigger for them to remember God's gifts to us.

SCRIPTURE PASSAGES:

Luke 2:1-20

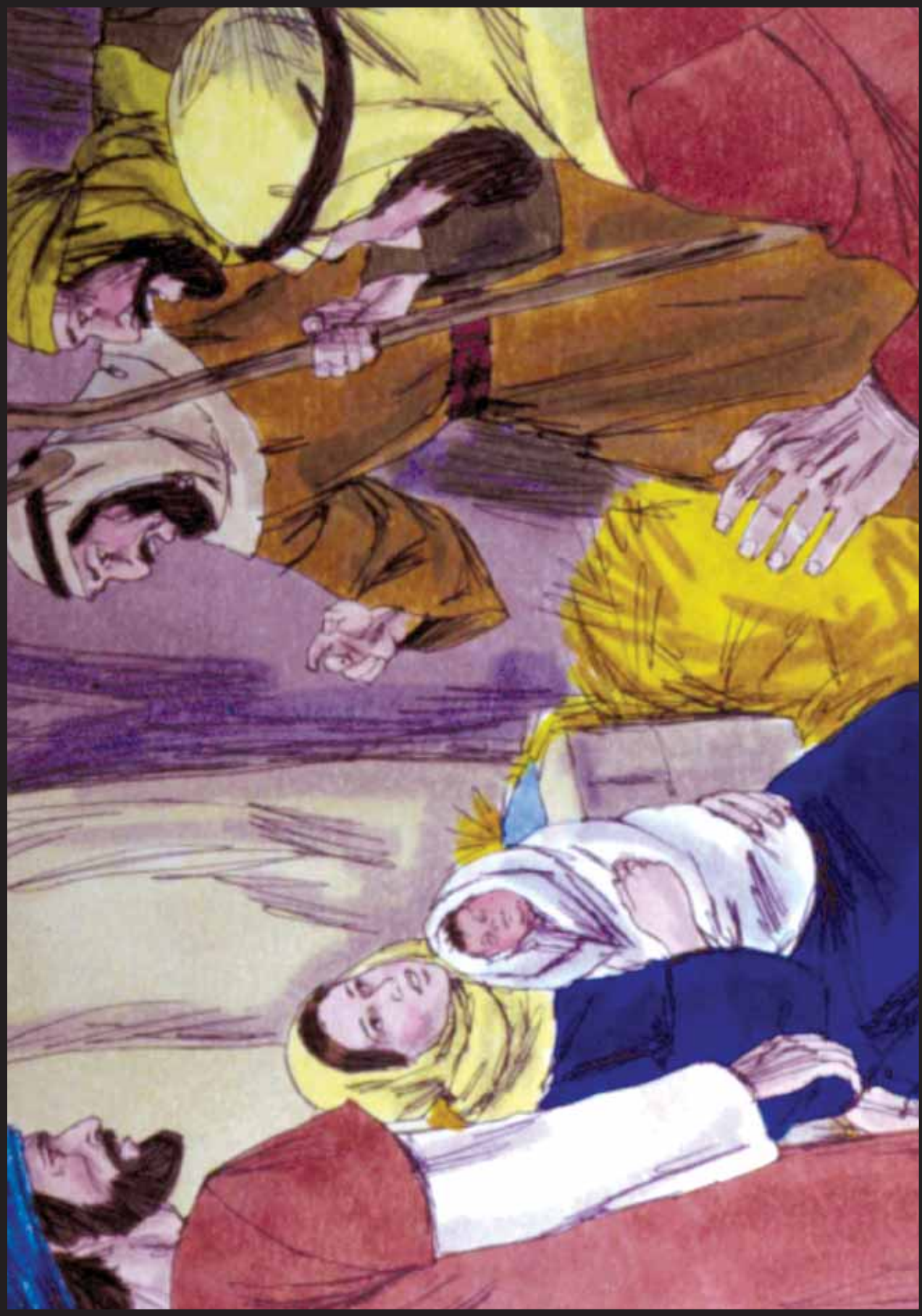
MEMORY VERSE:

Luke 2:10b

"I bring you good news of great joy for all the people."



Luke 2:10b "I bring you good news of great joy for all the people."



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