

# Jesus the Teacher

UNIT  
1  
LESSON  
8

UNIT 1

## Bible Reference

Selected passages from the Gospels

## To the Teacher

Every teacher has particular strengths and abilities. Jesus, the ultimate teacher, was able to draw upon the strength of God and the wisdom that transcends all ages. Jesus taught his disciples, his larger bands of followers, and even the dying criminal on the cross what the kingdom of God was all about. Jesus hand-picked his students, fully cognizant of their weaknesses. These men (except for Judas Iscariot) would go on as Christ's ambassadors after Jesus' ascension to change the world for the better. What techniques did Jesus use to train his disciples in only three short years? And how did he reach huge crowds with the message of salvation? Jesus used miracles and parables to change hearts and to equip his representatives to carry on after his return to his Father.

## Preparation/Materials

- \* Transparency of the teacher resource sheet
- \* Activity sheet, one per student
- \* Philip Yancey's video series *The Jesus I Never Knew*

## Lesson Highlights

- \* Miracles reflect Jesus' deity and point to a perfect heavenly kingdom.
- \* Jesus taught with authority and compassion.

## Background

Jesus taught with authority, clarity, and genuine love. Those who sat at his feet, crowded into homes, reclined at tables, stood in the temple courts, or leaned against the side of a mountain to hear his voice invariably experienced a close encounter with truth. As long as their hearts were open and responsive, they did not leave disappointed. In fact, more often than not, Jesus' listeners were amazed at what he had to say and at how he said it. It became known far and wide that seeing and listening to Jesus were worth the trip. Jesus seized every opportunity and grasped every teachable moment to make his Father known to all who would hear.

One way in which to establish Jesus' Sonship (his deity) is by paying attention to the miracles Jesus performed. The common Greek word *dunamis*, which means "power" and is the source for our English word *dynamite*, is also sometimes translated as "miracle." Hence, we could say in English that a miracle is dynamic. A miracle is, first of all, an occurrence that involves the suspension or relaxation of the usual physical and/or natural laws by means of supernatural forces. Biblical miracles, on the other hand, sometimes involved the supernatural acceleration of natural laws. Thomas Aquinas noted that some miracles are simply "outside of nature . . . by producing the effects of secondary causes without them." Thus, some of Jesus' miracles were not only outside or above nature but also contrary to nature.

## Lesson Steps



### Bridge

1. Tell the class, “For the next few days, we will be looking at the style of teaching Jesus used, specifically as it pertained to miracles.”
2. Ask, “Why did Jesus use miracles to teach?” (Answers will vary.)



### Scripture Link

1. Read Matthew 14:13–21; Mark 6:32–44; Luke 9:10–17; and John 6:1–13; four parallel accounts of the feeding of the 5,000, at least some of which include unique details. Ask the following questions:
  - Where did this miracle take place? (Bethsaida.)
  - What kind of messiah were the Jews looking for? (Someone who would militarily conquer the Romans.)
  - What kingdom did the Jews want the messiah to rule? (An earthly kingdom.)
2. Read Matthew 15:29–39 and Mark 8:1–11, which both describe the feeding of the 4,000. Ask the following questions:
  - Where did this miracle take place? (On a mountainside along the Sea of Galilee.)
  - What story in the Book of Mark preceded this miracle? (The healing of a deaf and mute man.)
  - What kind of messiah is Jesus? (One who will save people spiritually.)
  - Over what kingdom would Jesus reign? (Over God’s kingdom.)
  - What kind of messiah are you looking for? (Answers will vary.)
3. Using the following information and a transparency of the teacher resource sheet, discuss the five areas over which Jesus exercised his power.
  - Jesus had power over nature, a power he exhibited when he turned water into wine, calmed the tempest, and walked upon the sea (Mark 4:35–41; 6:47–50; John 2:1–11).
  - Demonstrations of his power over the demonic world include Jesus’ curing a demoniac in Mark 1:23–27, as well as another demon-possessed individual whose story is related in both Matthew 12:22, 23 and Mark 5:1–13.
  - Jesus displayed miraculous power over the material realm, as demonstrated in his feeding of 5,000 men, along with women and children (Mark 6:37–44).
  - Jesus was triumphant over physical diseases and infirmities. Examples include his healing of Peter’s wife mother (Mark 1:30, 31), his healing of “every sickness and every disease among the people” (Matthew 9:35), and his restoration of sight to the blind (Matthew 9:27–31).
  - Jesus demonstrated his power over death by raising Jairus’s daughter, the widow’s son, and Lazarus from the dead (Mark 5:22–24, 35–43; Luke 7:11–17; John 11:34–46).



## Student Activities

1. Have each student choose one of Jesus' miracles to present to the class.
2. Have students read their miracle story carefully.
3. Have students rewrite the account of the miracle in the first person. They may choose anyone from the story who was probably present throughout and pretend to be that person.
4. Make sure that students read the sections in the Bible immediately before and after their miracle to give them a sense of the context. Each student will be responsible to make a presentation covering the following details of the miracle. His or her classmates will then try to guess which biblical character the student is impersonating. Guidelines for student presentations:
  - State which apostles were present.
  - State the main points of the story.
  - State the nature of the miracle.
  - State the purpose of the miracle.
  - State Jesus' method of performing the miracle.
  - Reveal the onlookers' response(s) to the miracle.
5. Have students take notes on each of the miracles as it is presented.
6. Conclude the lesson by watching Philip Yancey's section on miracles from the DVD *The Jesus I Never Knew*.

## Enrichment

- \* Have students use the activity sheet to incorporate their miracle script into a podcast, using Garageband.
- \* Jesus often taught from a boat on the Sea of Galilee. Ask the students to read the article about an ancient boat that was found in the Sea of Galilee. Offer extra credit to any student who would like to construct a wooden boat model to show the class.

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

### Instructions for the Podcast

1. Use Garageband. Go to <http://www.apple.com/support/garageband/>.
2. Retrieve headphones, if needed. Exercise caution because the headphones are extremely fragile. Wipe them down with a Clorox Wipe when finished.
3. Introduce yourself and the class you are in. Begin with something interesting and catchy to capture the listeners' attention.
4. Provide a written transcript of the podcast. The teacher must approve it.
5. Use music and/or sound effects. You may use a few slides. The slides should be inserted last. They should relate to the cultural and historical elements of the miracle that Jesus performed.
6. You must fill out the rubric before you can say that you are finished.

### Rubric

Was the content placed in the podcast relevant and useful?	Yes	No
Were the technical qualities done in an outstanding manner?	Yes	No
Did the students turn in a transcript of the miracle(s)?	Yes	No
Did the podcast obey copyright laws for audio and pictures?	Yes	No
Was the length too long or too short?	Yes	No
Did the podcast keep you interested? Was it exciting? Boring?	Yes	No
Did the podcast run smoothly (the introduction, story, and conclusion)?	Yes	No
Did the podcast identify the speaker(s)?	Yes	No
Did the podcast address the historical and cultural significance of the miracle?	Yes	No

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SAMPLE

## **Miracles: Observations of Philip Yancey from *The Jesus I Never Knew***

- About 36 miracles are recorded in the Books of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. These miracles were performed mainly in Galilee and the surrounding areas.
- Jesus did not do miracles to prove himself (even though he could have, such as in the desert with Satan).
- Following his miracles, Jesus often told people to “tell no one.”
- Sometimes people drew away from Jesus, as the disciples did in the boat.
- People in Jesus’ day believed in miracles more easily than we do today. The Pharisees and other religious leaders often tried to disprove the miracles, including the resurrection.
- Most healing miracles came about because Jesus had compassion; often Jesus felt badly for the suffering one.
- Unusual faith impressed Jesus the most.
- Jesus also performed miracles to show his authority. He wanted the people to know that the Father was in him and he in the Father.
- Jesus’ miracles show us what the Earth will be like one day—a preview of the future when misery will be no more.
- Jesus never performed miracles of retaliation.

SAMPLE

# Apathy versus Passion

UNIT  
5  
LESSON  
1

## Bible Reference

Philippians 3:12–21

## To the Teacher

In order to learn, students have to be stretched beyond their comfort zones through abstract thought about the deeper things of God and the desire to grow spiritually. Many students have become accustomed to repeating predictable, pat answers—which in turn earn them a figurative pat on the back from the teacher—and then continuing to ease their way through yet another lesson that doesn't call for out-of-the-box thinking or for facing difficult dilemmas. Because of a lack of education in this area, few students are eager to practice the Christian life in private. The intent of this lesson is to work through the head knowledge and help students make the transition to heart knowledge (internalized values, prompting action). The challenge of this lesson is to help students connect Aron Ralston's physical experience to their own spiritual experience. By examining the drastic action Ralston took in order to save his life, students can begin to examine their own lives and identify the challenges they have faced or are currently confronting in their spiritual growth.

## Preparation/Materials

- \* Activity sheet, one per student
- \* Journal, one per student

## Background

In May of 2003, Aron Ralston, an experienced climber, was climbing by himself, as he usually did. Only this time things went

terribly wrong when his arm became wedged underneath a rock. After being trapped in that spot for several days, Ralston made the choice to amputate his own arm with a pocket knife—a horrendous experience he miraculously survived. Now a sought-after public speaker, he continues to climb—even achieving the record of being the first person to climb all of Colorado's 14,000-foot peaks, solo, in the wintertime (beginning in 1997 and finishing in 2005).

Ralston's story of physical survival can easily be compared to spiritual survival in a difficult world. When complacency sets in, it is easy to pull back and let life happen to us or to stagnate in terms of our spiritual development. If we aren't careful, we may end up stuck, facing not growth but the question of spiritual survival. The goal of this lesson is to help students recognize that we are unwise trying to do life alone; that we must, with God's help, find our way out from under the rocks that have pinned us down; and that we need to make life-changing decisions in order not only to survive but to be freed and enabled to accomplish great things. Encourage students to remember that although the Lord is ultimately responsible for the change that takes place within of us, we are each accountable for our own decisions and actions—and that our number one priority must be to seek God, not our own comforts and desires.

Spiritual disciplines are designed to lead us toward freedom, directing us away from the boulders and through the difficulties in our lives. Spiritual disciplines are an integral part of our spiritual life and an intimate relationship with Jesus and others.

## Lesson Steps



### Bridge

1. Ask students the following questions.
  - What comes to your mind when you think of the phrase “getting stuck”? (Answers may include an inability to go anywhere or to move ahead, being stopped, or being delayed.)
  - Have you ever been stuck to something—or had something stuck to you? (Answers may include having their tongue stuck to a cold pole, having their sweater stuck on a nail, having a piece of cellophane stuck to their finger, or having their clothing stick to them due to static electricity.)
  - What did you do when you were stuck? (Answers may include that they tried to get out of the situation, asked for help, yelled in anger or pain, or quickly remedied the problem.)
2. Tell students a little bit about the story you will read together as a class. Give them some background about Aron Ralston or ask whether any of the students already know his story. Then distribute the activity sheet.
3. Have a couple of the students take turns reading the story aloud.
4. Have students answer the reflection questions individually.

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**Mountain climbing,** canoeing, climbing, and hiking are some of Aron Ralston's favorite hobbies. Unlike the casual outdoorsman, however, Ralston takes his sports to the extreme, spending much of his outdoor time alone. This avid climber had great ambitions to become the first person to scale all of Colorado's "fourteeners" (mountains that are at least 14,000 feet above sea level) in one season. Having ample climbing experience and a thirst for adventure, he embarked upon his mission.

In May of 2003, Ralston was canyoneering (climbing through canyons using a variety of different methods) in Blue John Canyon near Moab, Utah. He was climbing by himself, as usual, when an 800–1,000-pound boulder fell upon his right arm, crushing it and leaving the climber trapped, injured, and alone. Ralston tried several methods to move the rock, all of which failed. No amount of chipping, shoving, pulling, or kicking would budge the barrier to his survival. Three days later, his food and water supply having run out, he realized that his life was in terrible danger. Gritting his teeth in resolution, Ralston took out his

camcorder, told his family his story, and went on to videotape the process of his final decision: to amputate his own arm.

Whatever bones had not already been crushed by the boulder, Ralston had to break with a chalkstone before performing the inevitable surgery. Then, with a dull pocketknife, he sawed through his tendons, nerves, and muscles until the arm was completely amputated. The amputation process took two days, during which time Ralston resorted to drinking his own urine in order to stay hydrated. Once free, he crawled out of the canyon, rappelled more than 60 feet down with only one arm, and hiked out of the desert toward his car. A couple of hikers found him, just as a rescue helicopter caught sight of them. Ralston was rushed to the hospital, treated, and reunited him with his family.

Today, Aron Ralston is an accomplished speaker and writer. His book *Between a Rock and a Hard Place* is an incredible account of his six-day survival story. He also continues to climb, thanks to a custom prosthetic arm. And in 2005 he accomplished the task (began in 1997) of climbing all of the fourteeners in Colorado.

THE STORY OF ARON RALSTON

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**Questions for Reflection**

1. How did Aron end up in his predicament? He was alone and was trapped by a rock.
2. What led him to cut off his arm? He had no other way to free himself.
3. What would you have done? Why? Answers will vary.
4. What does his action tell you about his character? He was determined, courageous, and rational.
5. What piece of advice would you give for his future escapades? Answers will vary.

“I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus”  
(Philippians 3:14).

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5. Group the students in twos or threes, and have them share their answers.
6. Gather the class back together and ask the groups to share their answers. Listen to their comments at this point without adding your own. Allow students to share new ideas or main points they have picked up from the group discussions.

### Scripture Link

1. Explain that our spiritual life is often similar to Aron Ralston’s plight on the mountain. He was stuck for several days, without food or water and in extreme pain. At this critical point he made the decision that the only way to survive was to cut off his arm—a part of his body that was significant to his climbing career.
2. Ask students the following questions.
  - Have you ever found yourself wondering whether attending church, a Christian school, or youth group is all there is to Christianity?
  - Do you ever feel stuck in your journey of faith?
  - Do you ever feel indifferent about spiritual things? Does that worry you?
  - Have you ever tried to reenergize your faith, only to find yourself stuck once again? Explain.
3. Together, read Philippians 3:12–21. Emphasize verse 14: “I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.”
4. Discuss the following points with students.

- Even Paul (or particularly Paul) had tough times and had to press on through them.
  - Paul never reached perfection as a Christian, but he refused to give up.
  - Paul encouraged believers to keep on working through their faith, even when they felt out of sorts or were caught up in the world's pleasures.
  - Paul, like Aron Ralston, found his strength, which came from Jesus, in facing down his weaknesses.
5. Ask, "What kinds of boulders could be keeping Christians today from growing spiritually?" (Answers will vary but may include time constraints, personal problems, lack of interest, ignorance, or a lack of education in truth.)



## Student Activities

1. Ask, "How do we begin to work our way out from under the boulders in our own lives? What will 'pressing on' entail for you?" (Spiritual disciplines offer the tools, like Aron Ralston's tools to extricate himself from his situation. Spiritual disciplines help us not only to survive but to *thrive* in our spiritual lives. God uses our desire to know him, through the practice of spiritual disciplines, to strengthen us and help us make wise decisions when we find ourselves stagnant or trapped in terms of our faith.)
2. Ask students to identify what the term *discipline* means to them. (It may remind them of punishment or of rigorous practice.) Help students see past the negative connotations this word may carry, and show them that spiritual disciplines are not about punishment but about growth. (This is a good place to introduce the use of the word *practices* rather than *disciplines*.)
3. Have students take out a sheet of paper and list practices they think might help a Christian grow. Call upon students to share their responses. If time allows, write their suggestions on the board, perhaps adding a few that have not been mentioned. (Answers may include meditation, solitude, and silence, as well as the more obvious choices of prayer, Bible reading, Christian service, and the like.)
4. Highlight a few of the main points on the board. Ask students to choose two or three practices they may not have considered or may not be as comfortable with and record them in their journal. Write the following questions on the board, and allow five minutes for students to respond to them in the journal.
  - How do you think you're doing spiritually?
  - In what ways do you hope to grow during this unit?
  - Are you looking forward to change in these areas, or are you hesitant about it?
5. Pray with students.

## Enrichment

- \* **Art.** Have students create a collage depicting the innate human desire to survive.
- \* **Social studies.** Have students research other survival stories and write a short essay on how these accounts may pertain to the lesson material.

# How Constantine Changed the Church

UNIT  
6  
LESSON  
17

## Bible Reference

Matthew 22:15–22; Acts 5:29

## To the Teacher

This lesson continues to explore Constantine's enormous impact on the church. As the state conferred upon the church certain financial, material, and legal advantages, it also left it with a new set of problems. Of course, the issue of the relationship between church and state remains a live concern. The first part of this lesson introduces students to the problem and gives them an opportunity to consider the issues involved.

The second part of the lesson traces some changes that were taking place, both in terms of worship and of church life. Buildings were becoming more splendid, and worship was tending toward increased pomp and liturgy. One group that rebelled against the wealth and complacency of the church was the hermits, who withdrew from the world, preferring to meditate and live ascetic lives. These monastics will be covered in greater detail in a later lesson.

## Preparation/Materials

- \* Activity sheets 1 and 2, one each per student
- \* Art books or prints depicting basilicas and early Christians mosaics (optional)
- \* Glue
- \* Colored paper or small colored tile chips for mosaics

## Lesson Highlights

- \* Constantine's favor gave the church immense advantages, but in the process it lost some of its integrity, as well as its freedom to make and enforce its own decisions.
- \* Christianity gradually evolved from a religion on a par with others in the empire to the official state religion.
- \* The church's wealth and prestige were mirrored by changes in its worship services.
- \* Changes in the church's understanding of baptism and penance led many to postpone baptism until late in life.
- \* The relationship between church and state is still a complicated issue in North America.

## Background

The effects of Constantine's conversion and championing of the Christian church can hardly be overestimated. Christian influences on Roman law and government; increases in church membership and financial resources; widespread discussion of doctrinal issues; and increased interaction among churches and their leaders throughout the empire were some of the benefits of Constantine's conversion.

But favored status came with a stiff price. Along with state aid came state control. The precedent set by Constantine's civil enforcement of the decision of the Council of Nicaea (Lesson 18) would embroil church and state in an ongoing struggle for supremacy that would encompass the next several hundred years.

## Lesson Steps



### Bridge

1. Explain or elicit from students the meaning of the phrase “separation of church and state.”
2. Discuss the relationship between church and state in Iran, an Islamic country in which church leaders also rule in civic affairs. Japan before and during World War II provides a similar example. Shinto was the state religion, and the emperor was considered to be a god. Standard ceremonies were mandated at all shrines for national festivals and other state occasions. During World War II kamikaze pilots who died for their country were celebrated as martyrs for their religion. To be a Christian in this setting was to be un-Japanese.
3. Explain that in this lesson and the next students will learn about the close working relationship between the state and the church that formed after Constantine became emperor.



### Scripture Link

1. Have students turn in their Bibles to Matthew 22:15–22, and read the passage together as a class.
2. Ask students, “What did Jesus mean when he said, ‘Give to Caesar what is Caesar’s, and to God what is God’s?’” (He meant that we should honor the governing authority over us, so long as its mandates don’t interfere with God’s commands.)
3. Have students turn to Acts 5, and ask a student to read verses 27–29 aloud.
4. Ask students, “In what circumstances might you find it necessary to disobey a human law in favor of remaining obedient to God?” (Answers will vary.)



### Student Activities

1. Read “Imperial Favor,” “Favor for a Price,” and the sidebar “From Outlaw Religion to State Religion” on pages 198–201 in the student text.

#### IMPERIAL FAVOR

Constantine had given Christians complete freedom of worship, but his favor didn’t stop there. He generously supported the church, funding new church buildings throughout the empire and erecting shrines to martyrs. He bequeathed to the church official buildings and even palaces for its use. He also passed a law conferring upon the church the property of anyone who died without an heir. Constantine’s generosity was making the church wealthy.

Under Constantine the church developed an enormous influence in public life. Christians filled high government positions, and bishops wielded increasing power as advisors to the emperor. One result was that Constantine created laws that favored Christians.

- Sundays and Christian festivals were pronounced to be holidays.
- Divorce was made more difficult.
- Prisoners were not to be starved to death, and they were entitled access to sunlight once a day. Clergy members were allowed to visit the prisons.
- Gladiatorial fights and crucifixions were outlawed.
- The killing of babies was declared illegal.
- Breaking up the families of slaves was prohibited.
- Slaves could be set free on the basis of their reading a prepared statement before a member of the clergy.

This new freedom also gave the church unlimited opportunity to teach and preach the gospel. Christians wondered whether this was the time when the whole world was to be converted.

Constantine's favor brought immense advantages to the church.

### **FAVOR FOR A PRICE**

But these advantages did not come without a price. Constantine, the emperor, made it clear that the bishops did not rule over him. To the contrary, he forced them to accompany him to the battlefield to ensure that God's power was on his side.

Constantine also concerned himself personally with church affairs. Because his main interest was his empire's peace and unity, he disliked disagreements within the church and did all he could to help resolve these issues.

Sometimes the church asked him to intervene. Beginning in 313, for example, the churches in Africa asked Constantine to help them settle a dispute. A difference of opinion had led to two sets of rival bishops in many cities. Constantine placed the problem before bishops meeting in both Italy and France, who jointly ruled against one of the African bishops, Donatus. When his followers refused to accept the verdict, Constantine sent his soldiers to enforce the decision.

The interests of the church and the state had become intertwined. One hand washed the other. Constantine expected the church to bless his policies and wars, and the church looked to Constantine to advance its cause.

### **FROM OUTLAW RELIGION TO STATE RELIGION**

Constantine's edict in 313 gave Christians equality with other religions, all of which were now legal within the empire.

But Constantine soon made it clear that he favored the Christian faith above paganism. That change made it possible for people who had sacrificed to the gods only as a patriotic duty to renounce this practice. Traditional paganism retained some degree of strength in many parts of the empire, however.

Gradually, as Christians gained power, laws unfavorable to the older religions were passed. In 319, for example, Constantine outlawed several magical practices. "Ceremonies of a bygone perversion," he decreed, could no longer be openly conducted.

By the time Constantius, Constantine's son, became emperor (337–361), Christians outnumbered non-Christians in some parts of the empire. At this point Christians began doing the persecuting, while urging the emperor to outlaw paganism altogether. Not all Christians agreed with this move, but in 356 Constantius passed a decree forbidding pagan sacrifices and threatening capital punishment for disobedience. Many pagans resisted the law, and Constantius refrained from strongly enforcing it.

In 380 Emperor Theodosius made Christianity the mandated religion within the empire with this edict: "It is Our Will that all peoples we rule shall practice that

religion that Peter the Apostle transmitted to the Romans. We shall believe in the single Deity of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.”

Now paganism had become illegal. The power of the state had switched sides. Religion was still the foundation of the empire, but now the favored religion was Christianity. By the beginning of the fourth century, Christianity had evolved from an outlaw religion to a state religion.

Sad to say, Christians thought they had the right to use violence against pagans. Most were only too happy to have the state enforce their wishes.

2. Have pairs or small groups of students list positive and the negative consequences of Constantine’s favor toward the Christian religion.
3. Discuss student lists. Many of the positives were important—for example, giving Christians the influence to help make society more humane. But the price was high, and as time went on it would only become higher.
4. Discuss the following topics:
  - Summarize Christianity’s evolution into the official, state religion. Point out that when Constantine assumed power, he had no desire to impose Christianity upon the empire. His edict gave the Christian faith equality with other religions, so his reign started out promoting freedom of worship. But from 313 to 381 Christianity gradually gained power, became the majority religion, and finally exerted enough influence to emerge as the official and solely sanctioned, state religion.
  - Also note that from 313 to 381 Christianity suffered certain setbacks. Emperor Julian (361–363), for example, sought to restore the glory of paganism, organizing a pagan priesthood similar to that existing within the church and mandating massive sacrifices of hundreds of animals at a time. But the people mocked his ceremonies. Julian also tried to impede the advance of Christianity by ridiculing it. Although he didn’t order persecutions, some local officials did.
  - The misuse of power in the name of God during the centuries to follow kept (and still keeps) some people out of the church.
5. Distribute activity sheet 1. Help students grapple with the question of the appropriate relationship between church and state. Read the directions on the activity sheet, and assign one or more of the suggested laws to groups or pairs of students. Have spokespersons from the groups present their findings to the class for discussion.

Alternatively, students can individually complete the activity sheet by writing their responses. Then have students with opposing opinions on an issue conduct debates.
6. Use topics such as the following for a closing discussion (or for student writing):
  - Do you think governments should promote all religions equally, no religions at all, or one or more religions but not others?
  - Is it possible to force someone to become a Christian? (No. Christianity is a matter of heart, and only the Holy Spirit can regenerate hearts.)

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

**Imagine this scenario:**

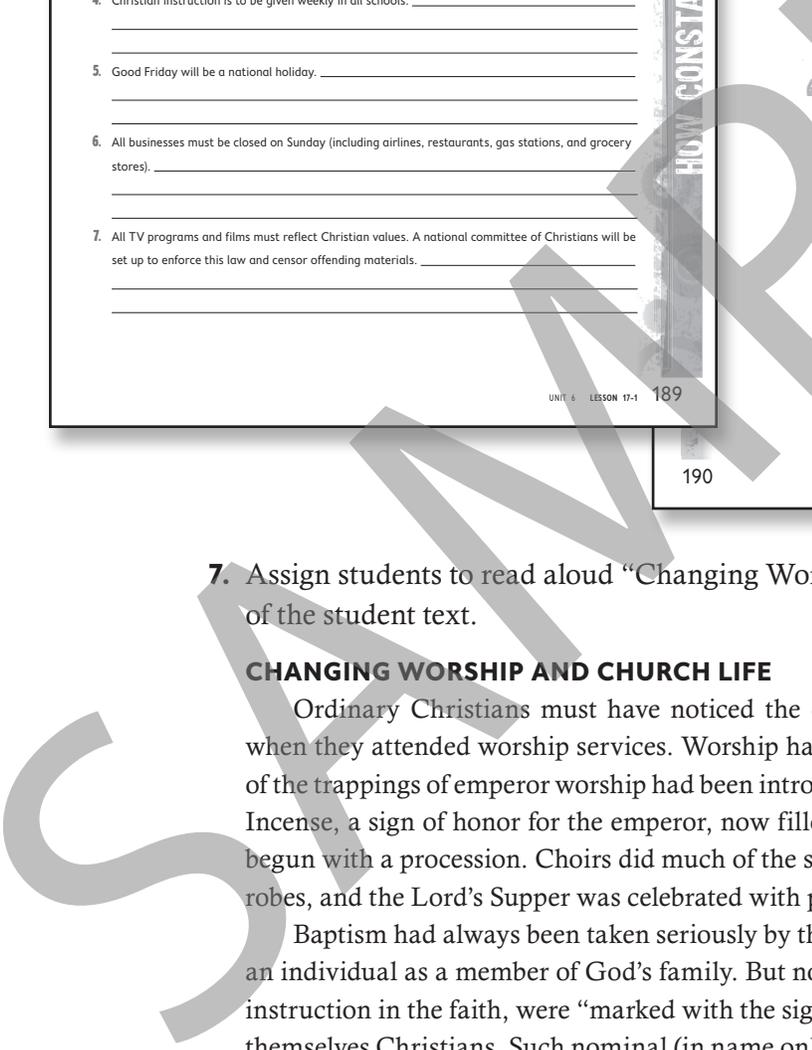
Your country is called a Christian nation. At least 65 percent of the people are Christians. Being in the majority, they have elected a Christian legislature and are able to pass the laws they want. Read each of the following laws. Should a Christian majority pass it or not? Give the reason for your opinion.

1. The Prime Minister/President and Vice President shall be Christians and be members of a church. **All answers will vary.**
2. Judges on all levels of the judicial system must be Christians.
3. All schools in the country must begin each day with prayer to God.
4. Christian instruction is to be given weekly in all schools.
5. Good Friday will be a national holiday.
6. All businesses must be closed on Sunday (including airlines, restaurants, gas stations, and grocery stores).
7. All TV programs and films must reflect Christian values. A national committee of Christians will be set up to enforce this law and censor offending materials.

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HOW CONSTANTINE CHANGED THE CHURCH

8. A new tax will be assessed that takes two percent of each person's income for support of Christian churches and clergy.
9. All abortions will be banned. Doctors performing abortions will receive a 10-year prison sentence.
10. Each company must have a justice committee to approve all company policies. The main job of the committee will be to make sure that the push for greater profits does not lead to injustice to workers, either in our country or in other countries.


  
 “Give to Caesar what is Caesar’s,  
 and to God what is God’s”  
 (Matthew 22:21b)

UNIT 6

7. Assign students to read aloud “Changing Worship and Church Life” on page 202 of the student text.

**CHANGING WORSHIP AND CHURCH LIFE**

Ordinary Christians must have noticed the emperor’s influence on the church when they attended worship services. Worship had become more splendid, and some of the trappings of emperor worship had been introduced into the liturgy of the church. Incense, a sign of honor for the emperor, now filled the sanctuary, and services were begun with a procession. Choirs did much of the singing, clergy members wore grand robes, and the Lord’s Supper was celebrated with pomp and pageantry.

Baptism had always been taken seriously by the church as the sacrament marking an individual as a member of God’s family. But now many people received only basic instruction in the faith, were “marked with the sign of the cross,” and then considered themselves Christians. Such nominal (in name only) Christians put off being baptized until they were very old or were about to die. Constantine himself, for example, was baptized upon his deathbed.

But why? The church at that time taught that all sins (up to the point of baptism) were forgiven at baptism. If a person died after baptism, how could his or her sins later be forgiven? The church had made provision for that: It allowed a person to do penance (perform acts of atonement) for sin, but only once in the course of a lifetime. It made sense, then, for people to wait as long as possible to make a commitment. After

all, no one wanted to die with unforgiven sins. This no-win situation was partly the church's fault: It was allowing a person to be considered a Christian and yet to escape the responsibility of Christian living.

Other changes were evident in the church buildings, which had become much larger and much more elaborate and ornamental. The church in Dura-Europos, the oldest church building archaeologists have discovered, was simple and unassuming. In contrast, many of the churches built under Constantine and later emperors were large basilicas (named for their basic rectangular plan).

Inside were polished marble and rich tapestries. In many churches the walls were covered with mosaics (art using very small pieces of colored stone or glass). Usually the mosaics depicted Christian symbols or scenes from the Bible.

Another development was the construction of churches at places where martyrs had been buried or at other "holy" sites. The idea was that worshiping in these places had a special, almost magical, effect.

Constantine's mother, Helena, who had made a pilgrimage to Palestine, developed an avid interest in the places connected with the events of Jesus' life and persuaded her son to build churches in Bethlehem and Jerusalem. The Church of the Nativity was placed over the cave where Jesus was believed to have been born and the Church of the Holy Sepulcher over the site of Jesus' supposed tomb.

Constantine's conversion had an enormous impact upon the church, which had to struggle with the question of how to be obedient within this new environment. How could Christians remain faithful to Jesus Christ, their humble servant Lord, in a church marked by wealth and power?

8. Distribute activity sheet 2, and have students complete it individually.

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

 **Changing** Worship and Church Life

- List at least four ways that worship services changed under Constantine. More pomp in services; use of incense, processions, choirs; luxurious clothing for clergy; elaborate Lord's Supper rituals.
- How did the idea of baptism change from that of the early church? Since the church taught that at baptism all sins were forgiven, and penance was a one-time thing, many people put off being baptized until they were on their deathbeds.
- In what way was this idea of baptism unbiblical? Answers may vary. Baptism symbolizes the washing away of sin and the inclusion of a believer in God's family, but it isn't a magical rite that does away with sin. Sin continues to mar Christians' lives, but God forgives us in Christ when we repent.
- Why did worshiping at holy places become popular? People thought that the saints had special influence with God, so worshiping in these places held special meaning.



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9. Check student answers on both activity sheets.
10. In collaboration with the art teacher, you might want to have students create mosaics, possibly of Christian symbols or of biblical phrases/scenes. Or have students create cartoons connected to some of the abuses of power related in the lesson (consider, for example, the relationship of the bishops to Constantine).

## Enrichment

- \* Take a closer look at current church and state relations. Collect and discuss articles from newspapers or magazines dealing directly or indirectly with the topic. If appropriate, have students write their responses in letters to the editor.
- \* **Art.** Study the architecture of the basilica. Show slides or art prints of famous basilicas (consult an art teacher for sources). Students could also sketch the basic floor plan of a basilica.
- \* Research the function and architecture of the baptistery, which was a separate building near the basilica.
- \* Research the practice of penance during the third and fourth centuries. Use sources on the resource list at the beginning of the unit for more information.