8

A Chain of Grace

Key References: Acts 21:1-16; *The Acts of the Apostles,* chap. 37, pp. 389-398; *The Bible Story* (1994), vol. 10, pp. 106-110; Our Beliefs, nos. 17, 21, 14















powertext

"Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms" (1 Peter 4:10).

Sabbath

DO Do this week's activity on page 61.

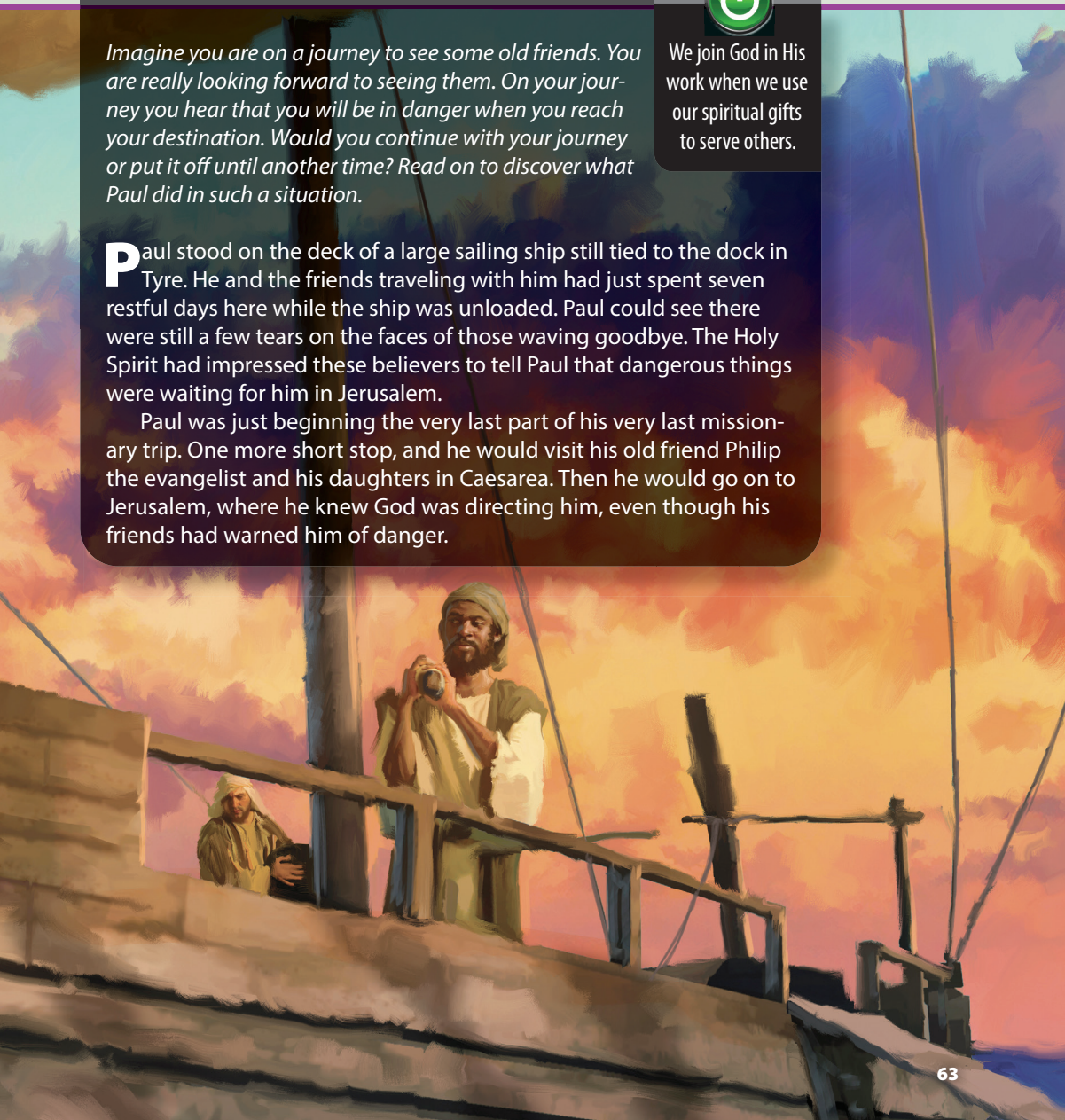
powerPoint

We join God in His work when we use our spiritual gifts to serve others.

Imagine you are on a journey to see some old friends. You are really looking forward to seeing them. On your journey you hear that you will be in danger when you reach your destination. Would you continue with your journey or put it off until another time? Read on to discover what Paul did in such a situation.

Paul stood on the deck of a large sailing ship still tied to the dock in Tyre. He and the friends traveling with him had just spent seven restful days here while the ship was unloaded. Paul could see there were still a few tears on the faces of those waving goodbye. The Holy Spirit had impressed these believers to tell Paul that dangerous things were waiting for him in Jerusalem.

Paul was just beginning the very last part of his very last missionary trip. One more short stop, and he would visit his old friend Philip the evangelist and his daughters in Caesarea. Then he would go on to Jerusalem, where he knew God was directing him, even though his friends had warned him of danger.



8

Sunday

READ Read Ephesians 4:11-13 and this week's story, "A Chain of Grace."

LIST List the gifts you think God has given you on slips of paper and start a paper chain.

LEARN Begin to memorize the power text, 1 Peter 4:10.

PRAY Ask God to show you ways to use your gifts to serve Him.

Monday

READ Read Acts 21:1-6.

THINK What gifts did the disciples in Tyre use to serve Paul?

REFLECT How could you use your gifts if someone like Paul came to your town? Add your answers as links in your chain.

PRAY Ask God to keep you aware of the Holy Spirit leading you.

Tuesday

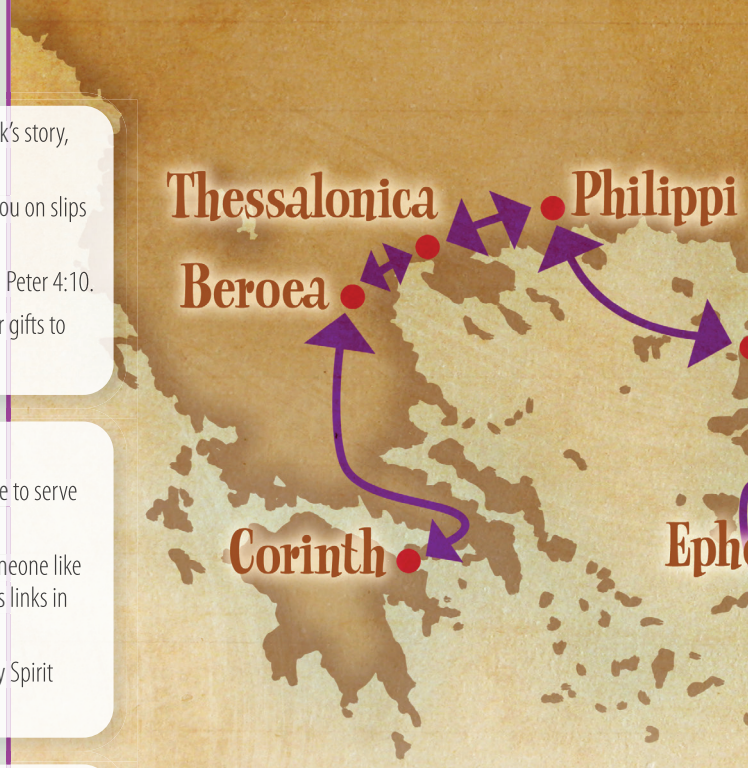
READ Read Acts 21:7-14.

THINK What gifts are prominently displayed in this passage?

PLAN Think of a way to use the gift of hospitality to serve someone this week.

REFLECT Have you ever listened to the voice of the Holy Spirit that guides us in making decisions? How can you be more in tune with God's will for your life?

PRAY Ask God to show you opportunities to serve others today.



On the three missionary trips that Paul had taken, many people had come to believe in Jesus, the Messiah. Paul had once been mistaken for Mercury, the chief speaker for the Greek gods. Actually, Paul had been the chief speaker for Jesus. But he was not the only one God was using to build the early church. Many people with many different gifts were joining God in His work to bring the gospel of grace and the truth about Jesus to everyone.

For instance, Philip, the friend Paul was on his way to visit, was one of the seven God had chosen to help the 12 apostles with their work. As more and more people in Jerusalem started to believe in Jesus, helpers were needed to make sure that everyone was taken care of and had enough to eat. The apostles, such as Peter, James, and John, were busy preaching and teaching. Philip and others used their gifts as administrators to make sure everything

was managed well. Once Philip had been sent by God's Spirit to an Ethiopian officer who was reading while he crossed the desert. Philip had explained the Scripture and then baptized the man. Now Philip's daughters preached and prophesied and helped the church as well. They were a family dedicated to God. Paul was looking forward to enjoying their hospitality for a few days.

and will be turned over to the Gentiles for trial and execution."

Paul's friends realized that this was another warning to Paul about what was to happen in Jerusalem. They did not want him to keep going. They begged him not to go.

"You're breaking my heart," Paul responded. "I believe God is sending me to Jerusalem. I am thankful that He is



At Philip's home Paul and those traveling with him enjoyed rest and freedom among friends. Then one day a visitor arrived. His name was Agabus. He also was led by God's Spirit.

Agabus entered Philip's house and walked over to where Paul sat. He picked up Paul's belt. Seating himself, Agabus wrapped the belt around both his own hands and feet and then looked up at Paul. "This is a message from the Holy Spirit. The owner of this belt will have his hands and feet shackled by the Jews in Jerusalem

Wednesday

READ Read Acts 21:15, 16.

THINK Why do you think the gift of hospitality was so often displayed in Paul's day? Do you think it is used as often today? Why or why not?

ACT Take the first step in practicing hospitality (for example, call or invite someone to do something with you).

PRAY Ask God for courage to use your gifts.

Thursday

COMPARE Compare Ephesians 4:11, 12 and 1 Corinthians 12:28-31. How alike or different are the spiritual gifts described?

THINK What spiritual gifts from this list do you think you have? Add them to your chain.

REFLECT In your Bible study journal, discuss with God any questions you have about using your gifts to serve others.

CREATE Make something that expresses praise to God for His gifts.

PRAY Thank God for the gifts He has given you.

Friday

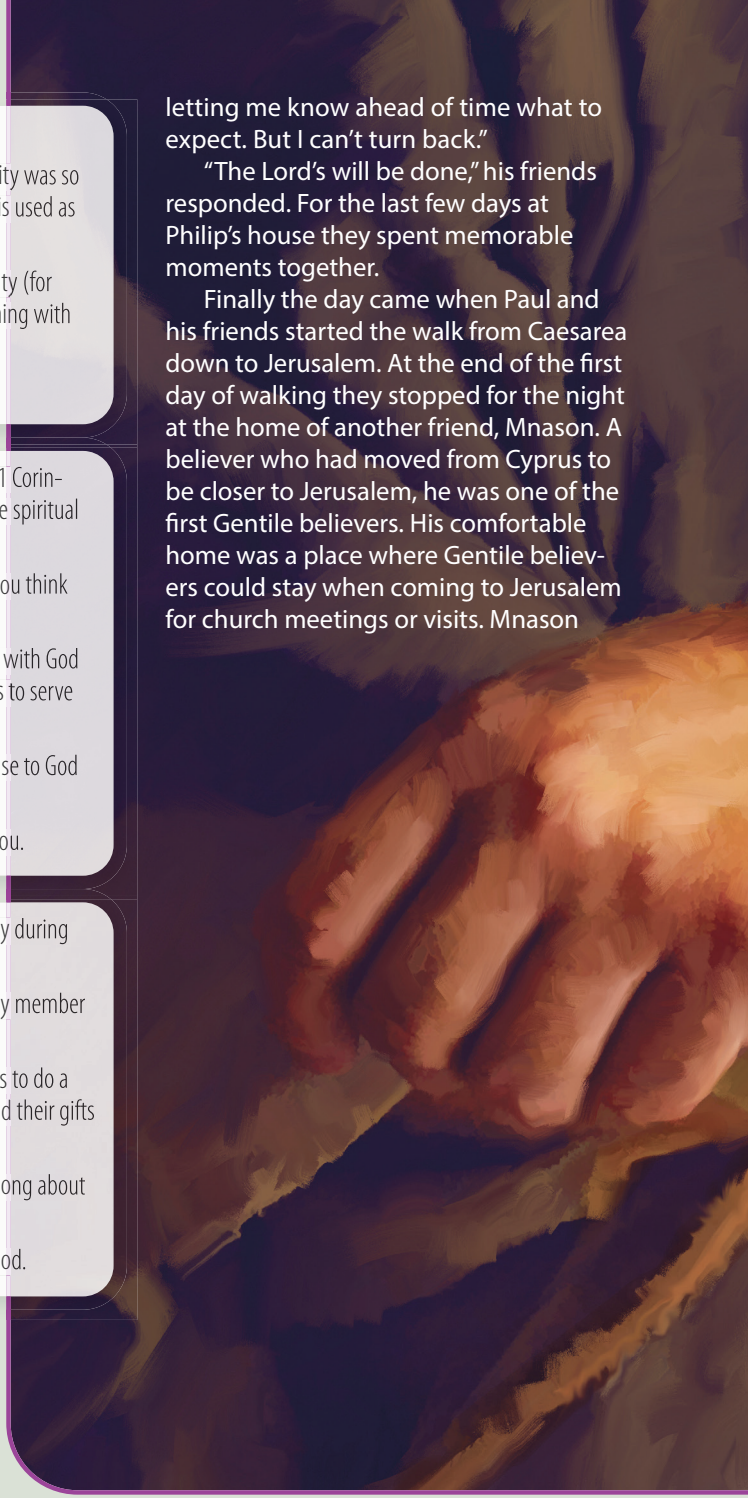
READ Read 1 Corinthians 13 with your family during worship.

DISCUSS Discuss the various gifts each family member has. Share your chain.

PLAN Brainstorm ways to combine your gifts to do a family service project. Let family members add their gifts to your chain.

SING Sing "Make Me a Servant" or another song about service.

PRAY Commit your gifts and your plans to God.



letting me know ahead of time what to expect. But I can't turn back."

"The Lord's will be done," his friends responded. For the last few days at Philip's house they spent memorable moments together.

Finally the day came when Paul and his friends started the walk from Caesarea down to Jerusalem. At the end of the first day of walking they stopped for the night at the home of another friend, Mnason. A believer who had moved from Cyprus to be closer to Jerusalem, he was one of the first Gentile believers. His comfortable home was a place where Gentile believers could stay when coming to Jerusalem for church meetings or visits. Mnason



was one more of the many, many believers who made up the body of the newly formed Christian church.

Paul didn't know what lay ahead for him, but he knew that God had blessed the believers with many different gifts. Each gift was to be used to administer God's grace to others. Each member of the growing church was one more link in God's chain of grace let down from heaven to save and to serve all who would believe in Him.

PUZZLE 8

USE YOUR GIFTS

Instructions: Below is a Bible verse in code. Break this code by removing the M's to learn how to use your gifts.

SI NC EM YO UM AR EM EA GE RM FO RM GI FT SM OF MT HE MS PI RI TM TR YM TO ME XC EL MI NM TH OS EM TH AT MB UI LD MU PM TH EM CH UR CH M