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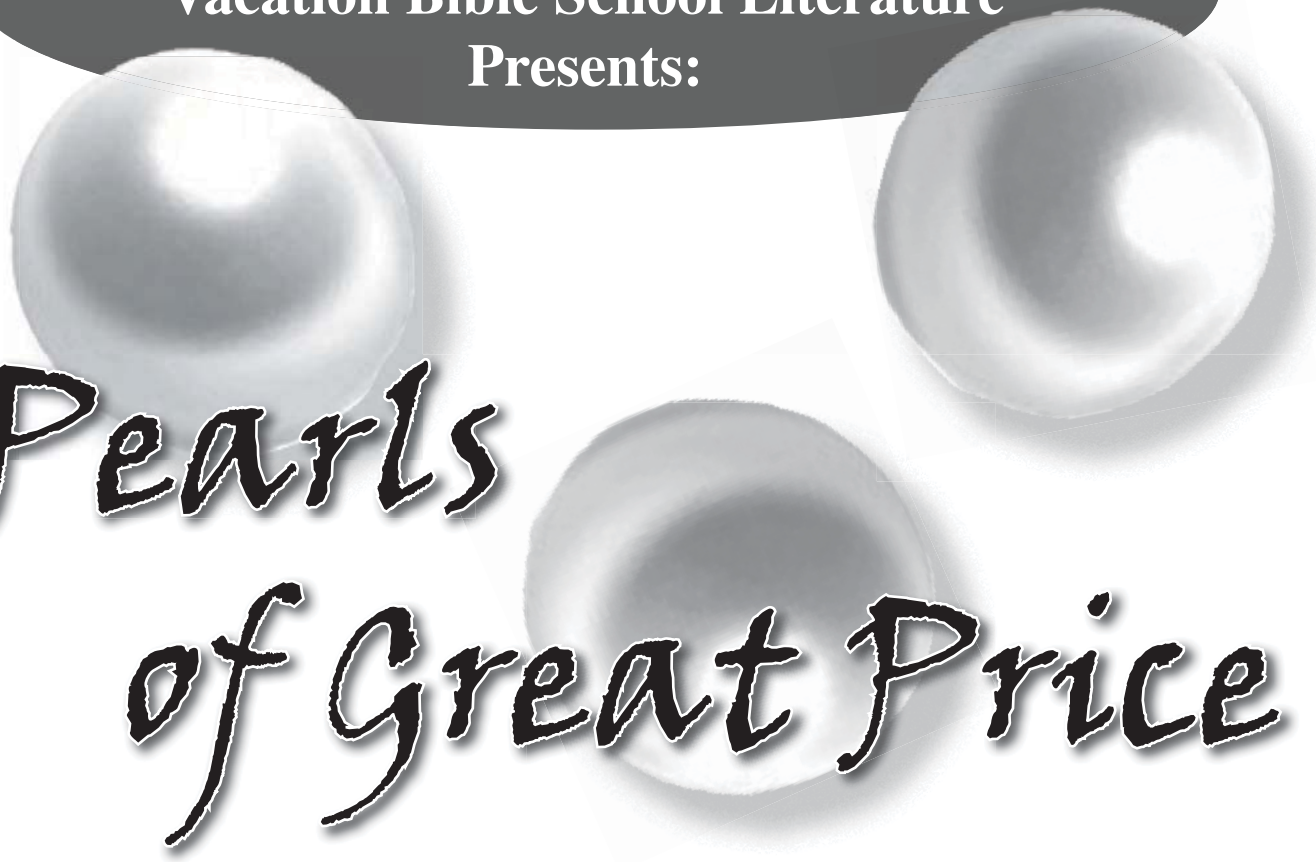

Pearls of Great Price

Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchant man, seeking goodly pearls: Who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had, and bought it. **- Matthew 13:45-46**

AGES 7 - 9

The Missionary Baptist
Vacation Bible School Literature Committee presents

Pearls Of Great Price

Vacation Bible School Lessons for Ages 7-9
Written by Sister Susan Collins

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LESSON ONE
WEALTH
Key Verses: Matthew 6:19-21

What are some things you would consider worth a great price? According to much of the world, wealth is measured in terms of money, land, or possessions. Jesus, however, teaches us about another idea of wealth when he compares the kingdom of heaven to a merchant who seeks beautiful pearls. During Jesus' time, merchants were businessmen who would travel long distances to obtain precious goods to sell. This particular merchant finds a pearl so special—a "pearl of great price—that he goes and sells all he has to buy it. In other words, Jesus is saying that heaven is worth giving up everything, even our very lives, to obtain. As we begin our first lesson this week, think about what you consider to be a "pearl of great price". Are the possessions you value material or spiritual?

Let us consider a man named Barnabas, who was a member of the early church. God had blessed Barnabas, a landowner, with material wealth; but as we discover in the book of Acts, Barnabas was also spiritually wealthy. The Bible says that just after Jesus' death and resurrection, the multitude of believers—or Christians—were of one heart and soul. They shared all possessions in common, and all who possessed houses or lands sold them and brought the money to the Apostles. The Apostles then distributed the money to each as the need arose so that no one was without. (Acts 4:32-37) Barnabas, a Levite from Cyprus, was one of the people who sold his land and laid the proceeds at the feet of the Apostles.

Barnabas went on to become a missionary with Paul and actually introduced

Paul to the community of believers. Though not an Apostle himself, his sacrifices and encouragement helped spread the gospel to all the known world. In fact, the Apostles gave him the name “Barnabas” (his original name had been Joses), which means “Son of Encouragement”. Do you think this name fits?

Now let us consider a married couple named Ananias and Sapphira, who were also members of the early church. Like Barnabus, Ananias sold a possession; however, instead of giving the full amount, he kept part of the proceeds for himself and his wife. He gave the other part to the Apostles but pretended to have given it all. Peter, with God’s help, realized what Ananias had done. He told Ananias that both the land and the money he received from selling it was his to do with as he wished. Peter then asked Ananias why, if it had been his to give or keep, had he lied to the Holy Spirit? When he heard Peter’s words Ananias fell down dead and was buried.

Three hours later Peter then questioned Sapphira, who was aware of what Ananias had done, about the price of the land her husband had sold. Instead of being honest about the price, Sapphira also lied. Peter then said to her, “How is it that ye have agreed together to tempt the Spirit of the Lord?”(Acts 5:9) He then told her that the men who buried her husband were at the door to carry her away, as well. Like her husband, Sapphira immediately fell dead and was buried.

Do you see the difference between Barnabas and this dishonest couple? Barnabas, like most of the early church members, gave what he had from his heart not because it was required. Ananias and Sapphira wanted to appear holy without actually being holy in their heart. Barnabas went on to live a profitable life for the Lord while Ananias and Sapphira died and brought

spiritual profit to no one.

It is our hearts that Jesus is interested in. He has promised to provide for our needs if we are obedient and serve Him. Jesus wants us to be spiritually wealthy. That is the true “pearl of great price”. Would you be willing to surrender your life completely to Jesus in order to obtain it?

MEMORY VERSE: Matthew 6:20
“But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven,…”

QUESTIONS:

1 What was the parable Jesus taught?

2 Who was Barnabas? What does his name mean?

3 What lie did Ananias and Sapphira tell? What happened to them?

4 What do you think is the “pearl of great price” in this lesson?

LESSON TWO
HEALTH
KEY VERSES: Proverbs 3:5-8

Last night we discussed the role of wealth in a Christian's life. Tonight we will consider another great desire, or "pearl", for many people: the desire to be healthy.

Many people spend thousands of dollars on physical fitness. Whole sections in bookstores are devoted to diet and exercise, as well as to books and magazines on makeovers and hairstyles. Plastic surgeons get rich "fixing" people's bodies to fit their ideas of beauty, and memberships to health and fitness clubs are at an all-time high. The urge to look youthful and physically beautiful has never been greater.

Along with the quest for outer perfection, many people today are also overly-focused on staying free of any inward illness or disease. Researchers spend their lives trying to find cures for chronic illnesses such as heart disease, diabetes, and cancer, and thanks to the Internet, much of this medical data is available to the average person. People now have access to an overwhelming amount of information on the causes and methods of preventing disease.

It is good to have knowledge of diseases and their prevention. There is absolutely nothing wrong with trying to remain healthy; God has given us our bodies and we are to take care of them. With so much medical information available to us, however, we are often tempted to become obsessed with our health. When we focus so much on physical health that this quest becomes our first priority, we can miss the good life God has planned for us. Instead

of concentrating on the work God has given us—to love our neighbors as ourselves—we end up becoming very self-absorbed individuals!

Consider a disciple from Joppa named Dorcas (translated from the Greek name Tabitha). Acts 9:36 records that Dorcas was a woman full of good works who did many charitable deeds. She was a busy woman for the Lord! Dorcas did not spend her time perfecting a body that by nature would one day grow old and die. Instead, her heart was focused on pleasing God.

When Dorcas did become sick and died, she was washed and laid in an upper room. The disciples attending her heard that Peter was in the nearby town of Lydda. They sent two men who implored him to come right away to Dorcas. Peter arose and went with them. When he arrived and entered the upper room, all the widows were weeping. Heartbroken over Dorcas' death, they showed Peter all of the tunics and garments that she had made for them. Dorcas was obviously a well-loved woman.

Peter sent everyone out of the room, and then he knelt down and prayed. Peter turned to the dead body and said, “Tabitha, arise.” Dorcas then opened her eyes, and seeing Peter, she sat up. Peter then reached out his hand and lifted her up. He called for the saints and widows and presented Dorcas to them alive. Imagine the joy that was felt when this godly woman was returned to them! Did Peter heal Dorcas? No! Jesus, before He ascended to heaven, gave the apostles power to heal in His name. It was Peter’s faith in God that healed Dorcas.

Prayer is very powerful! Even when physicians have done all they can, it is often the power of prayer that heals. We know, however, that God does not always choose to heal us when we are sick. Many people through no fault

of their own become ill with chronic or incurable diseases. Others become ill due to poor lifestyle choices. Many of these illnesses can be prevented by making healthy decisions, but in our desire to be healthy, we should not be so absorbed with this world that we neglect our spiritual health. The Bible says that it is appointed to man to die and then the judgment. There is only one disease that is truly fatal, and it is one that we all have—the disease of sin. Unlike many other diseases, however, there is a definite cure—the blood Christ shed on the cross for our sins. Instead of chasing physical perfection, make this cure—salvation through Jesus—your own "pearl of great price".

The Bible says in I Tim: 4:8, "For bodily exercise profiteth little: but godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come."

MEMORY VERSE: Proverbs 3:5
"Trust in the Lord with all thine heart…"

QUESTIONS:

1 Who was Dorcas and what was her other name?

2 Why did the widows cry when she died? What did she make for them?

3 What apostle came to her bedside and prayed for her to be healed?

4 Who really healed Dorcas?

5 Why should we be more interested in godliness than physical beauty?

LESSON THREE
WISDOM
KEY VERSES: Proverbs 9:10-11

When we are young, many of our choices are made for us. Our parents or elders decide where we will go, what we will do, or who we will be around. As we grow up, however, we begin to control our own decisions. We decide whether or not we will hang out with trouble-makers, tell the truth, or follow rules we encounter in daily life. The process of growing up, or maturing, often involves a lot of hard lessons that are the result of bad choices. The gift of discernment, or good judgment, helps us make good decisions. More importantly, it helps us make decisions the way God would have us to. In the Bible, this good judgment is called wisdom. Wisdom is a "pearl of great price" indeed, much more so than our health or wealth.

Our daily lives are full of situations that require wisdom; for example, every time a driver arrives at a stoplight, he or she has to make a good or bad decision based on what color the light is. Long before we become drivers, we learn that the color red means stop and the color green means go. We also learn that the color yellow means slow down. Knowing what these different colored lights mean and obeying these rules are two different things, however. Instead of slowing down when the light turns yellow, many people choose to speed up. Others simply choose to race through the light even after it has turned red!

On another note, some people disobey traffic lights because they choose to do something other than pay attention to the road. Raise your hand if you have ever seen any of these behaviors: women putting on make-up,

people talking on cell phones or texting, or people eating while driving! These are very common behaviors, but they are just as dangerous as deliberately disobeying the rules; in fact, they cause just as many accidents as speeding. When any type of accident happens, the guilty driver may not be the only one hurt. Innocent people may be injured or killed because of someone else's poor choice. We would say these drivers have knowledge of traffic rules, but they lack good judgment. In other words, they make unwise choices.

Like in traffic, we can also have “crashes” in life when we make poor choices. God wants us to avoid these crashes that rob us of our peace, freedom and good character. We can do this by developing discernment, or sound judgment. Discernment requires wisdom, and the best way to gain wisdom is by reading the Bible. God's word provides us with many examples of people who learn, often the hard way, to make good choices.

One of these examples is Solomon. Solomon's father, David, had been king of Israel and was much loved by his people. Even God said that David was a man after God's own heart! Let's just say Solomon had big shoes to fill when he became king after David's death! Solomon, however, knew where to turn to receive the wisdom he needed to lead Israel. I Kings 3:3-14 says that shortly after becoming king of Israel, Solomon was at Gibeon offering sacrifices to the Lord. That night the Lord appeared to him in a dream. God said to Solomon, “..., Ask what shall I give thee.” (1 Kings 3:5)

"And Solomon said, Thou hast shewed unto thy servant David my father great mercy, according as he walked before thee in truth, and in righteousness, and in uprightness of heart with thee; and thou hast kept for him this great kindness, that thou hast given him a son to sit on his throne, as *it is* this day. And now, O LORD my God, thou hast made thy servant king instead of David

my father: and I *am but* a little child: I know not *how* to go out or come in." (1 Kings 3:6-7)

Notice how Solomon approached God. He first acknowledged that God had been good and merciful to his father David. Solomon also recognized that God had given him the kingship while he was still a young man. Lastly, he confessed his need of help from God to be a good king. In verse nine, he specifically asked God to give him an understanding heart to be able to judge God's people and discern good from evil. As Solomon said, "...For who is able to judge this thy so great a people?" (1 Kings 3:9)

The next four verses are God's response to Solomon. We read that God was pleased with Solomon's request because he did not ask for selfish things like riches or a long life, or even for God to avenge his enemies. Instead Solomon asked for something to help him serve God and His people. Because of this, God said, "…I have given thee a wise and an understanding heart; so that there was none like thee before thee, neither after thee shall any arise like unto thee." (1 Kings 3:12) In addition, God told Solomon that He had also given him what he did not ask for—riches and honor! God went on to tell Solomon that if he walked in God's ways and kept His statutes as David had that He would give Solomon a long life, as well! For a great example of Solomon's wise judgment, read chapter 3:16-28. His wisdom made all of Israel marvel!

When Solomon was an old man, he looked back over his life and recorded what he had learned. This record is the book of Ecclesiastes. The last thing he says (or the "conclusion of the whole matter" as he puts it) is that we should "...Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this *is* the whole *duty* of man" (Ecc. 12:13). We can make many good choices in life, but the best choice we can make is to obey God and follow Him. As Jesus tells us, God's

first commandment is “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind” (Matthew 22:37). This is the ultimate good choice or the ultimate wisdom in life.

Many of you have not felt God convicting you of your sins yet. Some day, however, the Lord will knock on your heart and let you know that you need Him and His forgiveness. Trust in God for salvation while you are young. Then, like Solomon, pray for wisdom to live a life in obedience to God, loving Him with all your heart, soul, and mind. Jesus said, “But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you” (Matt. 6: 33). Make wisdom a “pearl of great price” in your life, and God will guide you every day that you live.

MEMORY VERSE: Proverbs 9:10
“The fear of the Lord *is* the beginning of wisdom:…”

QUESTIONS:

1 Why is it important to obey traffic laws? And why should we obey God’s laws?

2 Who was the man that prayed for wisdom?

3 What was God’s answer? Did the man receive more than he asked for?

4 What should you do if God lets you know you need to be saved?

5 What should you seek first in your life?

LESSON FOUR
FREEDOM
KEY VERSES: John 8: 32-36

Freedom. What does this word mean to you? Perhaps it means a chance to be away from your parents' authority? Maybe to you freedom means summertime when you are finally out of school and away from teachers and principals. Whatever your definition of it is, do you think of freedom as a “pearl of great price”—something worth owning no matter the cost?

We live in a country with many freedoms. These freedoms are listed in the Bill of Rights of our Constitution. Can you name any of these rights? The right to practice our religion without fear of persecution is one. In many countries, Christians are arrested and mistreated for practicing their faith. In other countries religion has fallen by the wayside and is no longer important to the people at all.

Since the events of Sept. 11, 2001, Americans have become more aware of how precious freedom is. Our country came under attack by people who do not share our vision of freedom and rights for all. The mastermind behind the terrorist attacks was a man named Osama Bin Laden. Right now our country is at war with the Taliban in Afghanistan, the country who harbored this violent man. We are also at war in Iraq against Al Qaida, another terrorist group. Many men and women have died while serving their country to fight these terrorists. Many others have been permanently injured. They have paid a high price for America’s freedom.

In the Bible, Jesus said a lot about freedom, but the freedom he spoke of

cannot be found in the constitution of any country. Jesus spoke of freedom from sin. How may we receive this freedom? It is by believing the truth that is found in God's word. This truth is that Jesus is the Son of God and He died on the cross for our sins. As Jesus himself said while talking to a group of Jewish believers, "...If ye continue in my word, *then* ye are my disciples indeed; And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." (John 8:31-32)

Jesus went on to explain in verses 34 and 35 that anyone who commits sin is a slave to sin. He explained that a slave is not allowed to live in his master's house forever but a son is. When we are saved, we become the children of God. We are no longer slaves to our sin but are welcomed into God's family as a son or daughter. Our sins will be covered by the blood of Jesus Christ forever. Jesus promised that "If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed." (John 8:36)

You may ask, "Why do I need this freedom?" The Apostle Paul said in Romans 3:23 "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;" The Bible also teaches that the wages of sin is death. Without the freedom Jesus offers through his death on the cross, mankind has no hope. By believing in Him, we receive freedom from death. As John 3:16 says, "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." Does this verse mean that we will not suffer physical death? No, physical death is the consequence of Adam and Eve's sin in the Garden of Eden. Belief in Jesus saves us from spiritual death—or eternal separation from God.

Jesus said to Thomas in John 14:6, "...I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, except by me." Jesus is the truth, and he gave his life that we might be free from the penalty of sin. Someday you will

realize you are lost without God. When this happens, turn in submission and repentance to Him, trusting in the Lord Jesus Christ as your Savior, and He will set you free! Of all the “pearls” that can be valued in this world, Jesus Christ is indeed the “Pearl” of greatest price.

MEMORY VERSE: John 8:32
"And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.”

QUESTIONS:

1 What does freedom mean to you?

2 Who gave the ultimate price for our freedom?

3 What did Jesus say in John 14:6? In John 8:31-32?

4 What must you do to be saved from the penalty of sin?

5 Who is the “Pearl” of greatest price?

LESSON FIVE
PEACE & LOVE
KEY VERSES: Romans 5:1; I John 4:10

Today we finish VBS with our last two “pearls of great price”, peace and love.

PEACE

Most people in life are seeking peace. They may believe that money will bring them peace, but it often only brings more worries. Other people try to find peace through relationships with others but quickly find that people let them down, even those who care about them the most. What then, does provide peace in life?

Once there was a man named Saul who was filled with anger and bitterness. Saul was a Pharisee, a group of Jews who strictly followed the Law of Moses. He did not believe that Jesus was the Son of God, and he thought that those who did believe in Jesus were blasphemers. This made him so mad that he went about persecuting Christians and even consenting to their deaths.

One day Saul was traveling on the road to Damascus. His plan was to arrest every Christian he could find in that city. As he was journeying along, a great light shown on him and he was blinded. Saul, frightened, fell down to the ground as he heard Jesus speaking to him. Jesus asked, “...Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? And he said, Who art thou, Lord? And the Lord said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest:...” (Acts 9:4-5).

Saul immediately asked Jesus what He wanted him to do. Jesus told him to go into Damascus where he would be given instructions. Saul obeyed. He was

blind for three days before Jesus allowed his sight to return.

From this point on Saul, who came to be called Paul, began to preach the gospel boldly. Many of the Jews sought to kill him. Paul, whose name means “humble”, suffered much persecution and physical harm for the rest of his life; however, Paul endured with patience and humility. He realized that in place of anger and turmoil, God had placed peace in his heart.

Paul made many missionary journeys throughout the known world, in order to preach the gospel and help establish churches for Christ. He wrote many letters to these early churches, teaching the members godly principles and the importance of obeying Christ. To the Ephesians, Paul said of Jesus, “For He is our peace...” (Ephesians 2:14). Paul also wrote in Ephesians 4:1-3, “I…beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, with all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forebearing one another in love; endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.” Paul valued the peace of God more than man's approval, even more than his own safety, and he wanted more than anything to share with others how they, too, could have this “pearl of great price”.

LOVE

How can you tell when someone really loves you? How do you show others that you truly love them? The story of the Apostle Peter teaches us a lot about what it means to love someone. Peter was chosen by Jesus to be one of the twelve disciples. A fisherman by trade, Peter immediately left his vocation and followed Jesus. Peter considered himself to be very loyal to Jesus. After all, he traveled everywhere with Him. Jesus, however, saw Peter’s heart. He knew when it came time for Him to be crucified that Peter would not understand. Jesus knew

that fear would drive Peter away. As the time drew near for Jesus to die, He began to prepare His disciples. Jesus told them that He would be going away. "Simon Peter said unto him, Lord, whither goest thou? Jesus answered him, Whither I go, thou canst not follow me now; but thou shalt follow me afterwards" (John 13:36).

"Peter said unto him, Lord, why cannot I follow thee now? I will lay down my life for thy sake. Jesus answered him, Wilt thou lay down thy life for my sake? Verily, verily, I say unto thee, The cock shall not crow, till thou hast denied me thrice." (John 13:37-38)

After Jesus was arrested, Peter followed to see where He was taken. As he followed, Peter was asked three different times whether he knew Jesus. Each time he denied knowing Christ. Then the rooster crowed, and Peter remembered what Jesus had told him. He then wept bitterly.

But that is not the end of Peter's story. Just as Jesus knew that Peter would deny Him, He also knew that Peter would grow in faith and be a great preacher and leader of the early church. Aren't you glad God does not give up on us when we make a mistake, but is willing to forgive us and use us in His service? That is what Jesus did for Peter. After he was resurrected, Jesus appeared to His believers for forty days. He walked with them and taught them how to carry on without Him, giving them the promise of the Holy Spirit.

John, Chapter 21, tells us that one day after Jesus' resurrection, He prepared fish on the shore of the Sea of Tiberias for the disciples. After feeding them, He turned to Peter and asked, "...Simon, son of Jonah, lovest thou me more than these? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my lambs" (John 21:15). A second time Jesus asked Peter the same question, and Peter replied the same. Jesus then said, "...Feed My sheep"

(John 21:16). Yet a third time Jesus asked Peter if he loved Him. Peter was now grieved at being asked three times and replied again in the affirmative. Jesus once again said, "...Feed My sheep" (John 21:17). Why do you think Jesus asked Peter this question three times? Do you think Peter knew the reason?

Jesus finished speaking to Peter by saying "…When thou wast young, thou girdedst thyself, and walkedst whither thou wouldest: but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldest not. This spake he, signifying by what death he should glorify God. And when he had spoken this, he saith unto him, Follow me" (John 21:18).

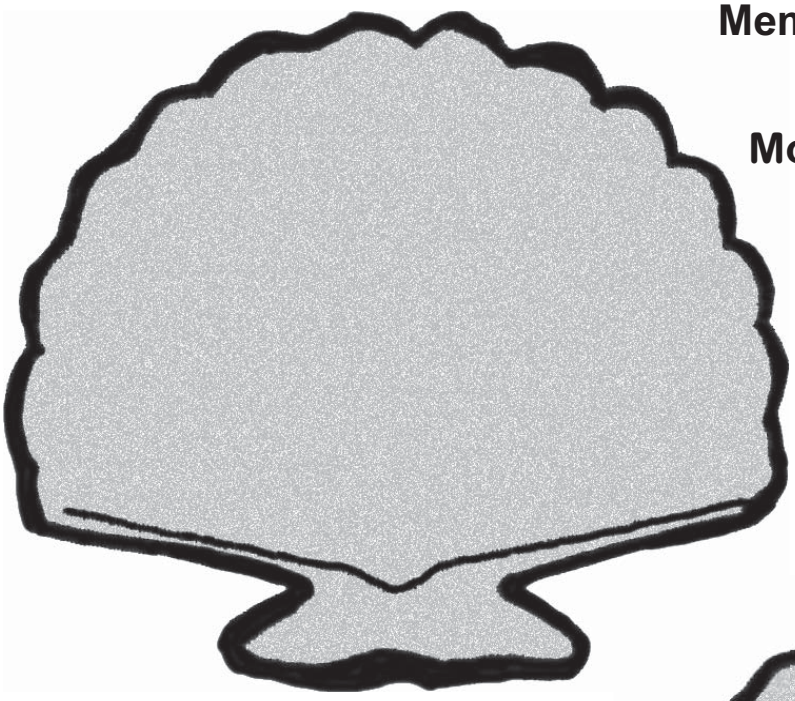
Peter did follow Jesus and spent the rest of his life serving the Lord and His church. It is believed that Peter died a martyr's death. In fact, most people believe that Peter was eventually crucified. Peter proved by his life and death that he did indeed love Jesus. The Bible teaches that we love God because He first loved us. Once again we see Jesus as the "Pearl of greatest price."

MEMORY VERSE: Romans 5:1
"…we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ:"

QUESTIONS

1 Why was Saul angry at Christ's believers?
2 What did he plan to do in Damascus?
3 What changed his mind?
4 How did Paul show that he had changed to a man of peace?
5 What did Peter say he would do for Jesus?
6 What did Jesus say that Peter would do and did this happen?
7 What did Jesus command Peter to do?
8 Did Peter give his life for Christ?

Pearls of Great Price
Memory Verses

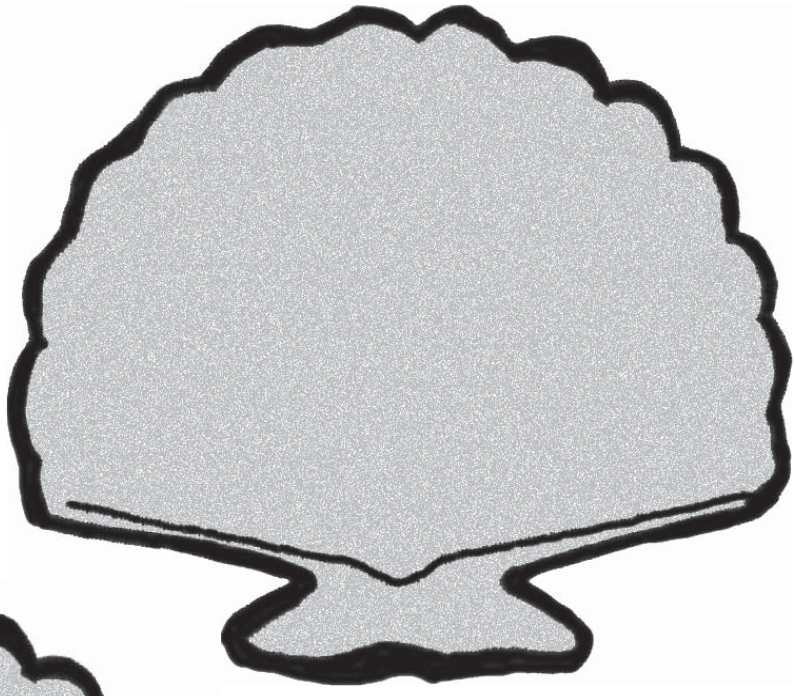


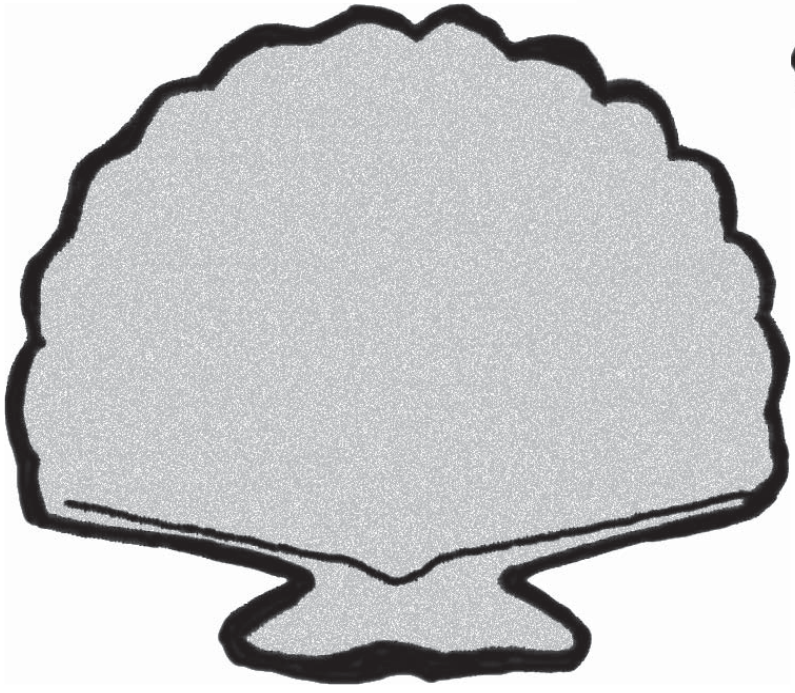
Mon.

But lay up for yourselves treasures in Heaven,... Matthew 6:20

Tues.

Trust in the Lord with all thine heart;... Proverbs 3:5





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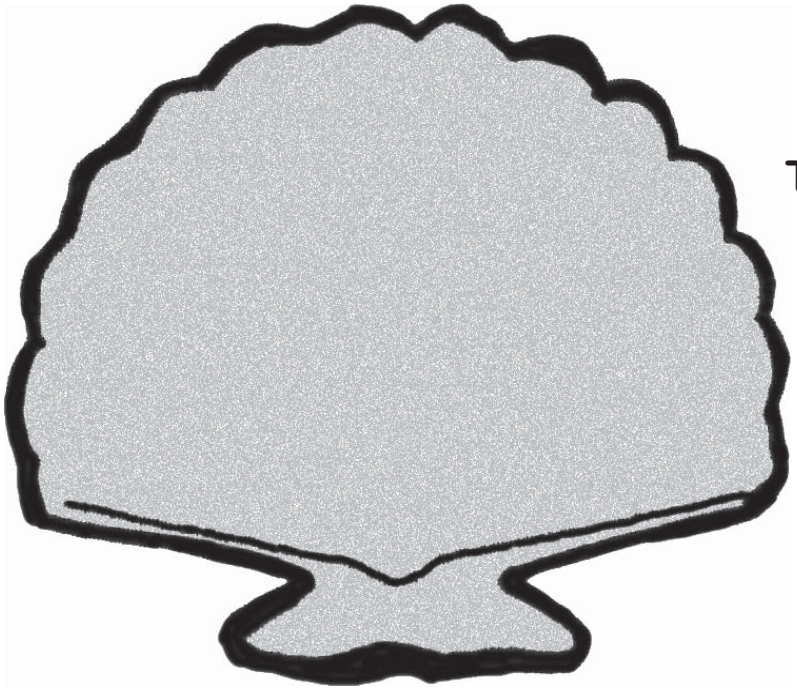
The fear of the LORD *is* the beginning of wisdom:... Proverbs 9:10

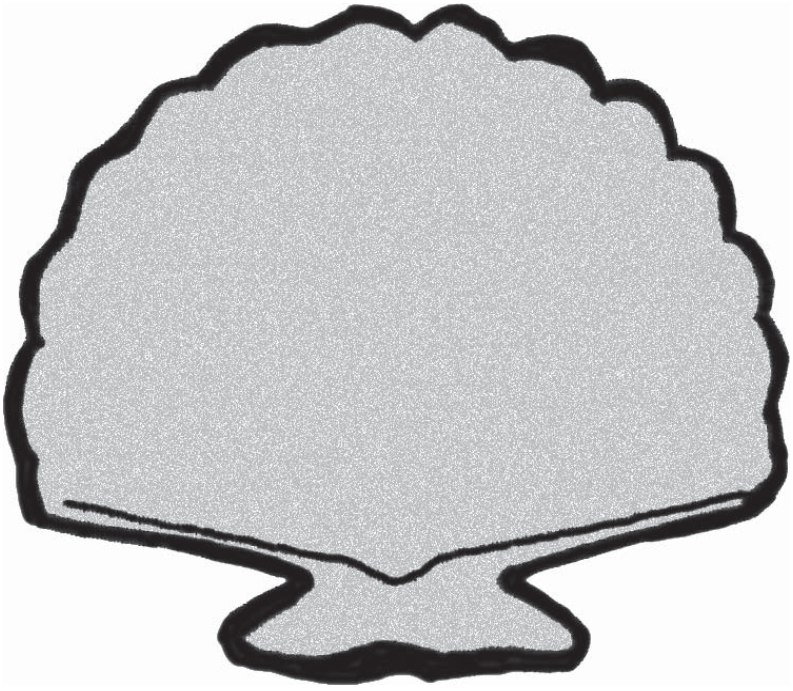


Thurs.

...know the truth, and the truth shall make you free. John 8:32

Fri.

...we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: Romans 5:1



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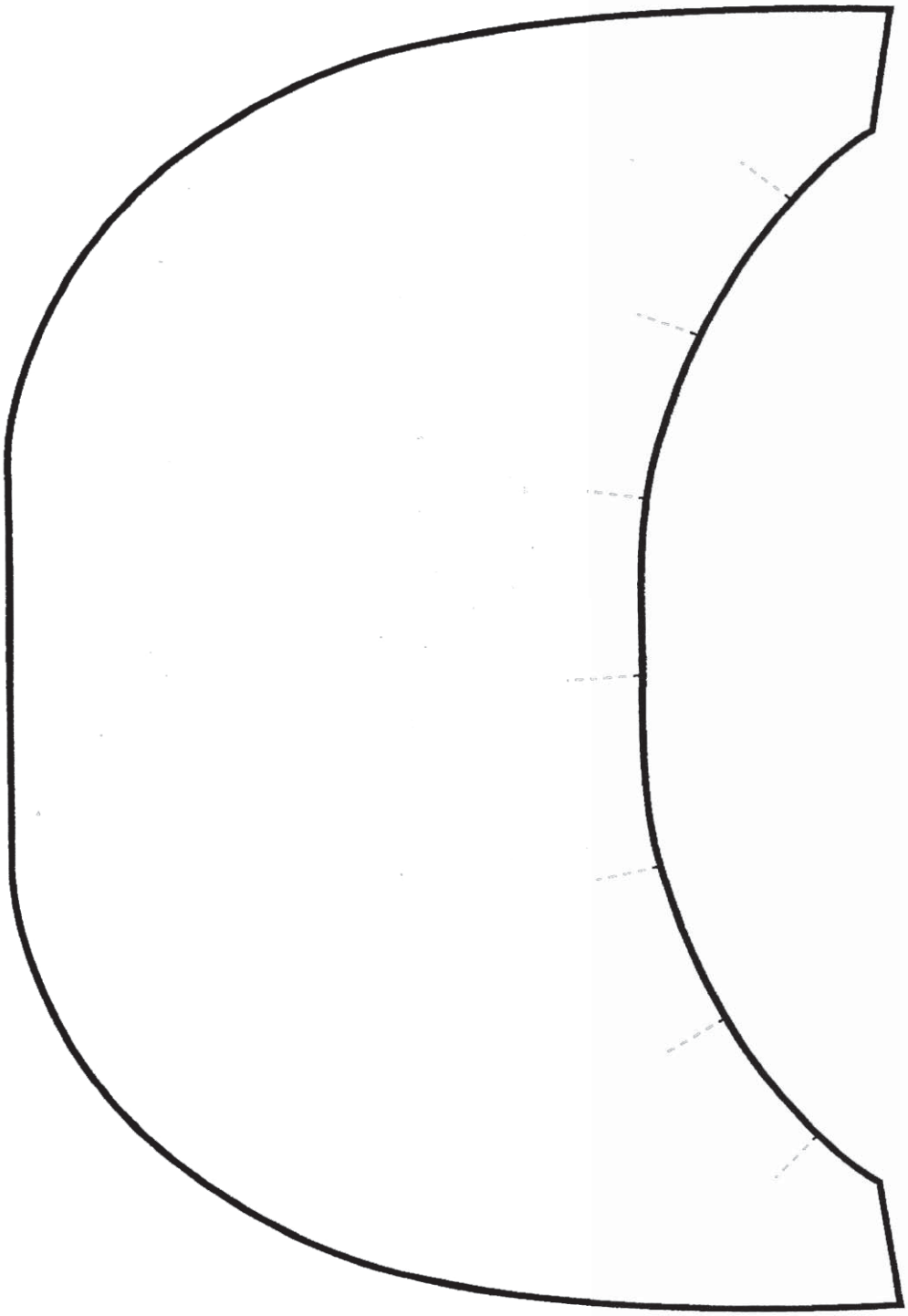
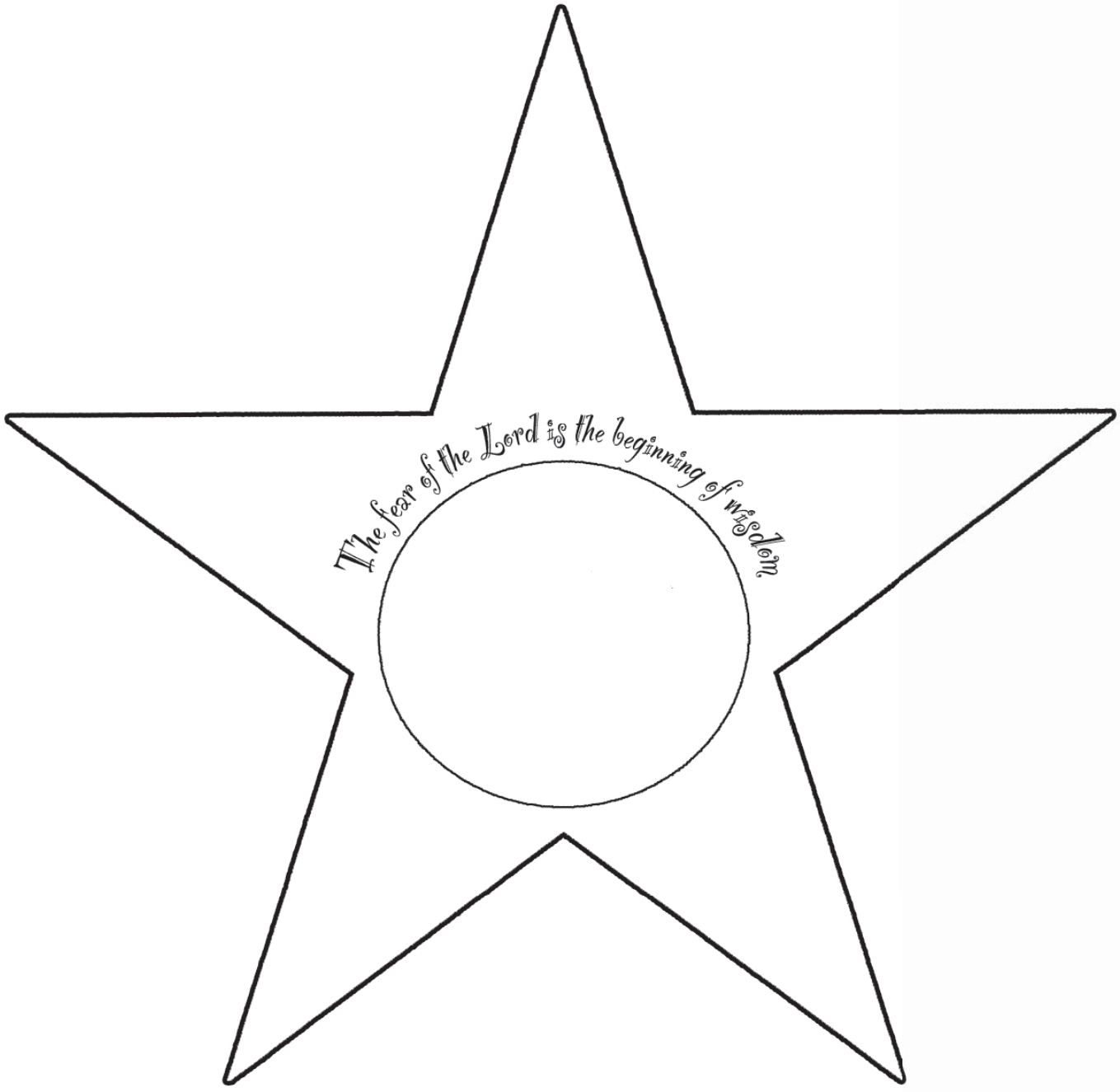


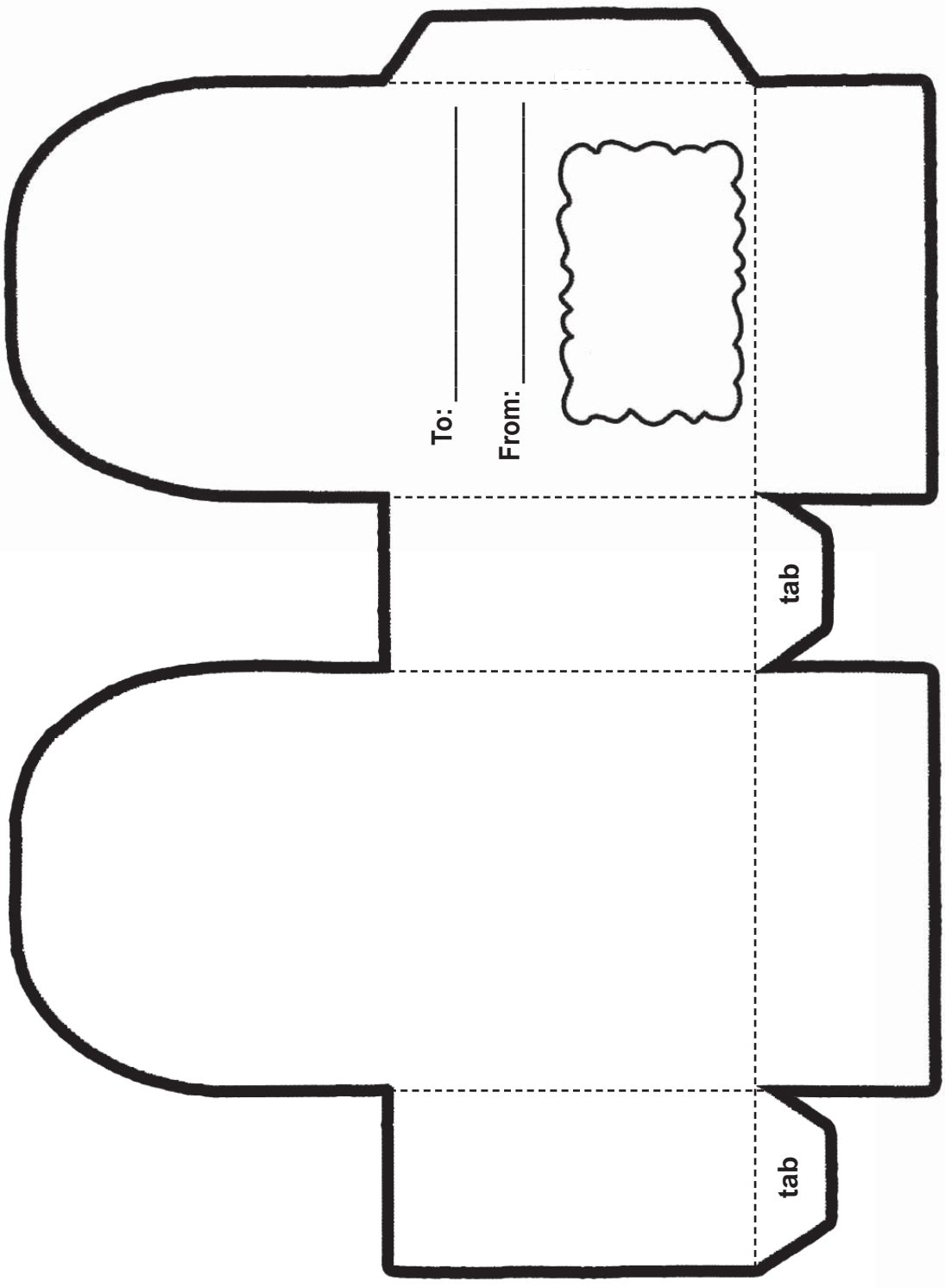
But lay up for yourselves treasures in Heaven,...Matthew 6:20

Mug (Tuesday)

TRUST IN THE LORD
WITH ALL THINE HEART

Picture Frame (Wednesday)



...know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.

Goody Bag (Friday)