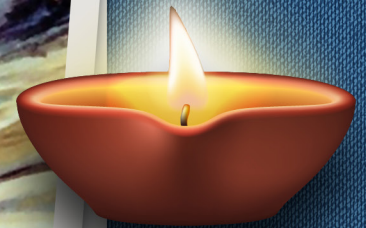
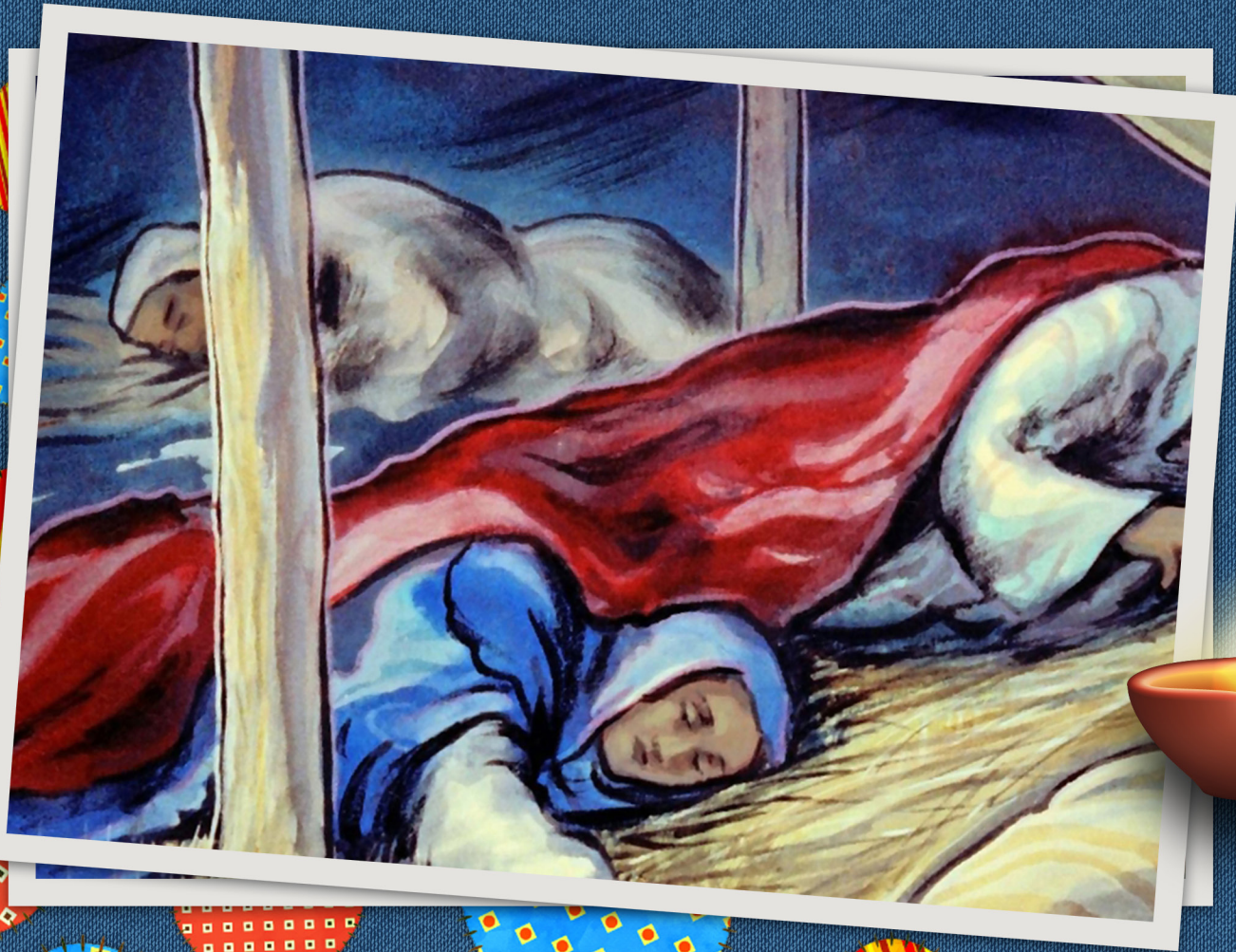


THE FINAL FITTING:

The Parable of the Ten Bridesmaids



LESSON SIX

The Final Fitting: The Parable of the Ten Bridesmaids

- Unit Memory Verse:** *So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them. (Genesis 1:27)*
- Biblical References:** **Matthew 25:1-13**
- Key Verse:** *Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh. (Matthew 25:13)*

Gram was all smiles as she met Liam and Izzy on the stairs leading down to her sewing room. “I have a surprise for you in here! I can’t wait for you to see her,” announced Gram.

“Her? Really? Who is it?” Izzy peppered her grandmother with questions.

Liam announced, “I hope it’s a cat. Gram, you should get a cat.”

“Or a guinea pig,” added Izzy.

“Sorry, you two. My surprise doesn’t have four legs; she’s two-legged.” Gram opened the door to the sewing room. “My little bride is here for the final fitting of her wedding gown. Meet Abby.”

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2.

Izzy rushed into the room and gasped, “Oh, she’s so pretty. She looks like a princess, and the dress—Honey Gram, the dress looks beautiful on her.”

Izzy made enthusiastic and polite introductions. “Hi, I’m Izzy, and this is my brother, Liam.”

“I’m happy to meet you both and I’m glad you like my dress.” Abby twirled in a circle. “Your grandmother did a beautiful job on it.”

“Did she happen to tell you lots of Bible stories about marriage?” questioned Liam. “That’s what she’s been doing with us while she was working on your dress.”

“Yeah,” agreed Izzy. “Even though the dress is for a bride, she keeps reminding us that when there was a wedding in Bible days, waiting for the groom provided the biggest excitement.”

Abby picked up a framed photograph from the bed. “That’s who I’m excited about. The groom. Don’t you think my fiancé’s handsome?”

“Do I have to say?” asked Liam. “I’m just a little bit uncomfortable with all this girly talk.” As was his habit, Liam grabbed Gram’s laptop and plopped down on the couch.

Izzy ignored him and examined the photo. “He has a nice smile. I’m not sure what the word fiancé means, though.”



3.

Abby smiled. Izzy sat down on the floor to get a closer look at Abby's dress as the bride-to-be explained, "Adrian is the man I've pledged to marry. When a woman is engaged to a man, he becomes her fiancé."

"Oh," nodded Izzy. "That's a little bit like when Mary and Joseph were betrothed. They weren't really married yet, but they had made a binding agreement. I remember that word from the last story Honey Gram told."

"I guess you could consider this ring from my future husband as a symbol of our agreement to marry."

"Uh oh," announced Liam. "Look at Gram's face. I know that look. Watch out. A storm is brewing in her mind at this very moment."

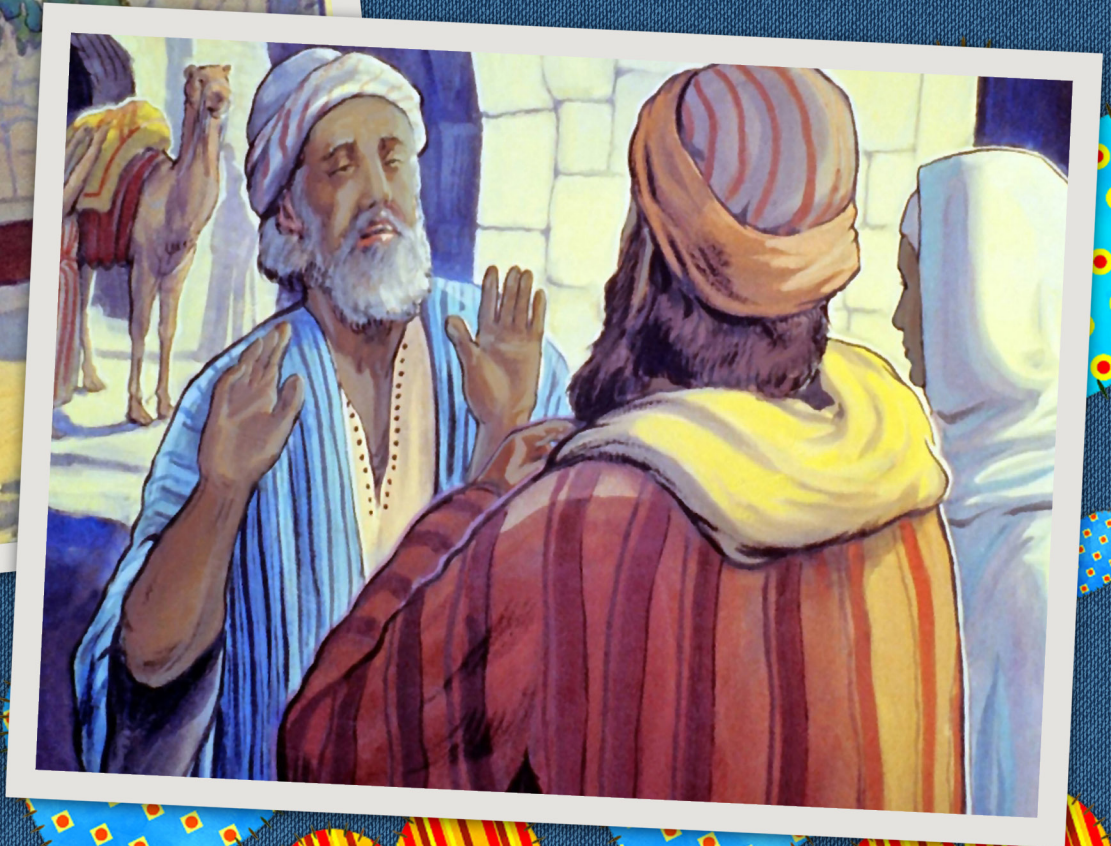
Gram blushed a little. "Well, I just wanted to point out that in the Bible days, instead of a ring being exchanged, after the father of the groom had selected a bride for his son and an agreement had been reached, a bridal payment was made."

"Oh, I remember about that," said Liam. "When you told us about Ruth and Boaz, and Boaz was her kinsman redeemer. He paid a price."

Izzy added, "Yeah, and you told us that the bridal payment was a symbol of Jesus paying the price for us, the Church, His bride. You said He redeemed us from our sins and I remember how you told us the Church isn't a building. It's the people who believe and trust in Jesus."

"Yes, you're right!" Gram was pleased to hear them repeat what they had learned earlier. "During the betrothal period, the groom had a big responsibility before the wedding and marriage feast could take place."

"What was that?" asked Izzy.



4.

“It was his job to prepare a place for him and his soon-to-be bride to live. Usually, these were rooms added to the groom’s family home,” Gram explained.

“Goodness,” exclaimed Abby. “I’m glad I don’t have to wait until that happens before I can get married. How long did that take?”

Gram was happy to have Abby’s interest. “Usually about a year. Actually, no one knew for sure. The groom didn’t even know when the wedding would take place. The groom’s father made the decision concerning the time the groom could claim his bride.”

Abby asked, “How in the world can you plan for that? We have our wedding events planned to the last detail, invitations and everything.”

“The wedding party had to stay prepared at all times for the groom to appear. Jesus told a story, a parable, about that very thing,” Gram answered.

“You better get out while you can, Abby. Gram’s wound up. This could take a while,” joked Liam.

“I think I’d better hang around. I need all the marriage talk I can get, and besides,” said Abby, “I like your grandmother’s stories too.”



5.

“Okay,” began Gram, “here goes. I need to give a little background first. Jesus told this story shortly before He gave His life for us. He knew the time of His death and resurrection was close, and He wanted His followers to know that He would be leaving, but that He would return. They needed to be ready.”

Some of this was new information to Izzy. “Return? What do you mean return? Jesus is coming back again?”

“Yes, He is. Where is Jesus now, Izzy?” asked Gram.

“He’s in heaven with God. You’ve told us that lots of times,” Izzy answered.

“Right, and do you know what He’s doing there?” Gram looked lovingly at her granddaughter.

Izzy confessed, “I guess I’m not exactly sure.”

Gram looked at Liam while he tinkered with her laptop computer. “Liam, find John chapter fourteen and read verses two and three for me.”



John 14:2-3

In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.

6.

Almost immediately, he responded. “Got it.” Liam began to read the verses he had found on the computer. “In my Father’s house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.”

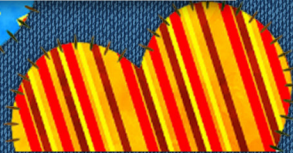
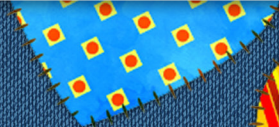
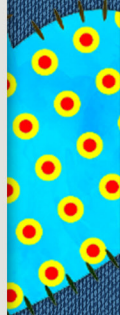
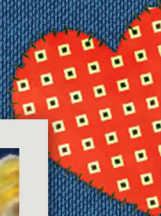
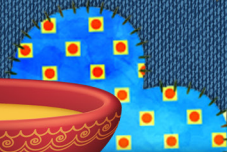
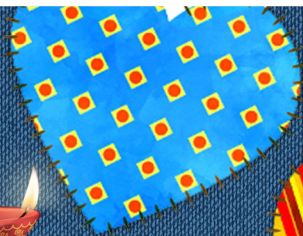
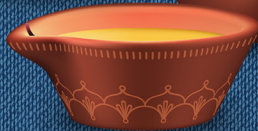
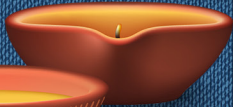
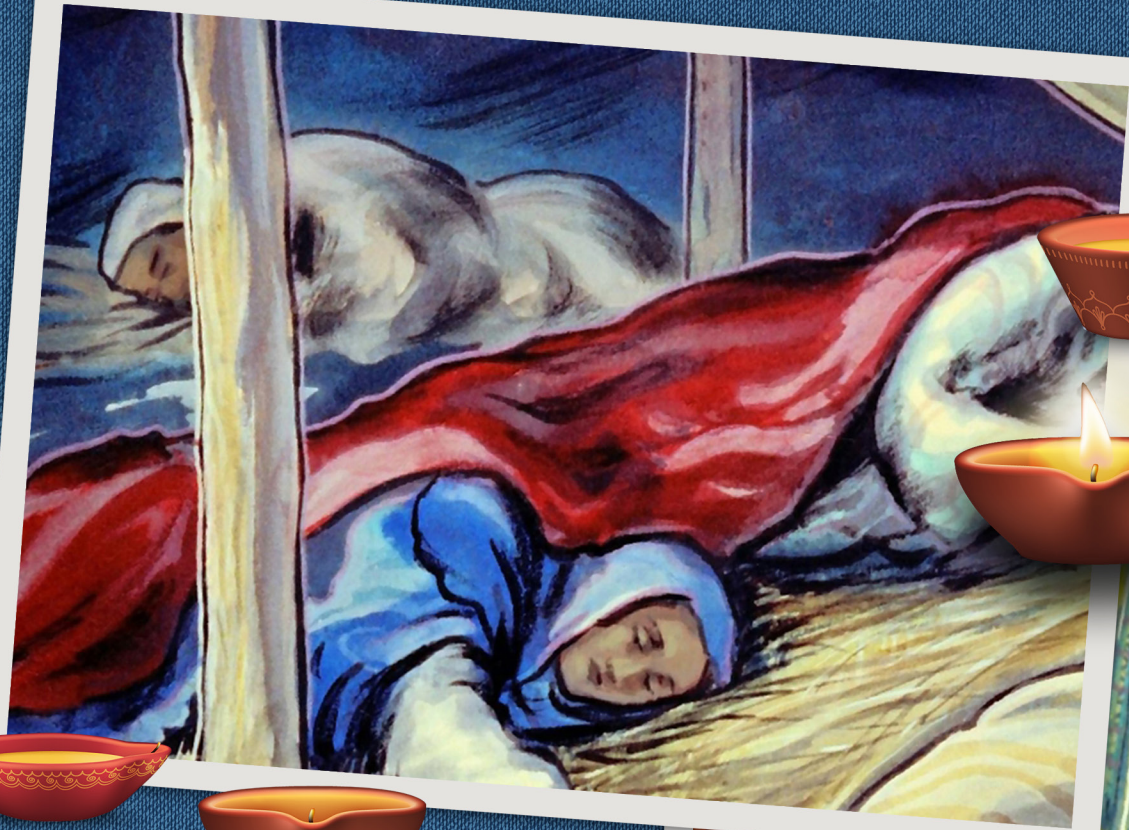
Abby’s face lit up with understanding. “Oh, I see. This sounds just like the ancient wedding custom of the groom coming for the bride after he builds a home for her. In these Bible verses though, the groom represents Jesus, and the father of the groom represents God.”

Izzy nodded at her new princess friend. “Yeah, Gram taught us a song about it. She sings it all the time. ‘Jesus is the Bridegroom, the Church His bride.’”

“That should be wonderful news to you and the whole world, Izzy,” said Gram. “Jesus is coming back for us, His bride. Only thing is, we don’t know when. We need to be ready, just like the ten bridesmaids in our story today.”

Suggested Activity

This would be a good place to insert the **Always Prepared Activity**. *Note: After game is completed, use a “Call to Order” technique to settle the children.*



7.

“Ten bridesmaids? Oh, dear. I can’t imagine having to get dresses for and manage ten bridesmaids. The poor seamstress,” laughed Abby.

“These bridesmaids had another task in addition to tending to the bride. It was their job to have lamps prepared to meet the groom. No one except the father of the groom knew when he would be coming for the bride, and often it was at night,” explained Gram. “The bridesmaids had to light the way with their lamps. In the story Jesus told, five of them were wise and brought extra oil along with their lamps, but five were foolish and didn’t bother to make extra preparations.”

Liam looked up from the computer. “I think I remember this story. Didn’t the groom take a long time to come, and eventually all the bridesmaids fell asleep?”

“Yes, that’s what happened,” said Gram. “Then, at midnight, a cry rang out. ‘The bridegroom is coming. Come out and meet him!’ The bridesmaids woke up and began to prepare their lamps, but the foolish ones had no oil left.”

“What did they do?” Izzy asked.



7.

“Proving how foolish they really were, they told the wise bridesmaids to give them some of their oil,” Gram answered.

Izzy thought about this. “It seems like they were not just foolish, but they were selfish too. If the wise bridesmaids had given them oil, they wouldn’t have had enough for themselves.”

“You’re exactly right,” said Gram, “and that’s just what they told the foolish bridesmaids. They advised those unprepared young maidens to go find someone who sold oil and buy some for themselves, but while they were on their way doing this, the groom arrived.”

Izzy was placing Abby’s wedding shoes in a cloth bag, but still paying close attention. “What happened to them?”

“They didn’t have a happy ending, that’s for sure,” Gram explained. “The bridesmaids who were ready when the groom appeared went in with him to the wedding banquet and the door was shut.”

Liam remarked, “That sounds pretty final.”

“It was,” Gram agreed. “Later, when the foolish bridesmaids returned, they begged for the door to be opened to them, but the groom replied that he didn’t even know them.”

Izzy sighed. “What a sad story.”



8.

Gram nodded in agreement. “Yes, it is very sad, but this story Jesus told has great meaning for us, His followers. He ended it by saying, ‘Therefore, keep watch, because you do not know the day or the hour.’”

Izzy looked a little confused. “How do we do that—keep watch, I mean?”

“We are reminded by Jesus, our coming Groom, to be prepared and watchful of His coming for us, His bride. We, as believers in Jesus Christ, will be ready because we are already filled with His Spirit.” Gram knew a lot of what she was saying might be hard for Izzy to understand, and she was praying for her sweet granddaughter as she answered her questions.

“How do I get God’s Spirit in me?” Izzy asked.

Gram smiled. “That’s the most important question you could ask, Izzy. All of these stories I’ve told you about marriage and this Holy union between a man and woman represent the love Jesus had for us, how He laid down His life for His bride. As you learn and understand these things, God invites you to choose to become His follower. We’ve all learned a special Bible verse telling us about that great love. Why don’t we say it together?”



John 3:16

“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.”

9.

A sweet calm seemed to sweep the room as Abby, Izzy, Liam, and Gram all began to quote the precious verse, **“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.”**

Continuing, Gram said, “After you have realized your need for Jesus, our Redeemer, to forgive your sins and you have received this gift of His grace and love, His Holy Spirit will come to live within you. As you grow in your love and faith, you will—”

Izzy interrupted. “What? Grow in faith? What does that mean?”

Gram smiled. “I think I’ll let our bride-to-be answer that question.”

This surprised Abby. “Me?” she squealed. “My head is so jumbled up with wedding preparations, I don’t think I can explain anything clearly right now.”



10.

“That’s understandable,” Gram agreed. “I think you can answer my next question though. If your new husband loves you the same way Jesus loved the Church and gave His life for her, how do you think you would respond as a bride?”

Abby grinned at Izzy. “To be loved so completely and sacrificially like that would make me want to do everything I could to please my groom.”

“Would that make you more married?” asked Gram.

“More married? Gram, what kind of question is that?” asked Liam.

“I think I see what you’re getting at.” Abby winked at Liam. “If we pattern our marriage in the same way Jesus loves us, our love and trust for one another will grow. It would be impossible to be more married, but our marriage would sure become sweeter and stronger.”

Gram added, “In that same way, once we believe in Jesus and God makes us His children, we do not become more of God’s children as we grow in faith; rather, our relationship with God grows sweeter and stronger.”



11.

Gram added, “In that same way, once we believe in Jesus and God makes us His children, we do not become more of God’s children as we grow in faith; rather, our relationship with God grows sweeter and stronger.”

Gram turned her attention to her granddaughter. “Izzy, can you think of some ways a husband and wife could grow in their love and trust for one another?”

Izzy became thoughtful. “Well, they should spend lots of time together, listen and talk to each other. I think it would be helpful for them to try to do nice things for each other.” Izzy paused and added, “And they should do it for better or for worse like the wedding preacher says!”

“That’s a nice list, Izzy, and it helps answer your earlier question about growing in your faith and trust in God and His Son Jesus. Spend time learning about Him from the Bible. Love Him and love others. Trust Him and talk to Him in your prayers.” Gram paused and repeated Izzy’s words. “For better or for worse.”

Izzy looked very thoughtful as she stood up to give her grandmother a hug. “You’ve given me a lot to think about today, Honey Gram.”

Gram looked at their special guest. “I have talked even more than usual, and Abby, I’m guessing you’re a bit exhausted with all the wedding plans and such.

“Oh, I’ve enjoyed this so much.” Abby gave Gram a tender hug. “I think the wedding vows I make to my groom are going to have much more meaning after this.”



12.

Liam returned with the water, and Gram made an attempt at a joke. "I'm glad to hear that, Abby. Oh, by the way, after you're married, you'll have both a new name and a dress."

Abby was puzzled. "What?"

Liam grinned. "It's a joke, I think. She was trying to make a pun about your new dress and your new address. Gram's not very good with jokes."

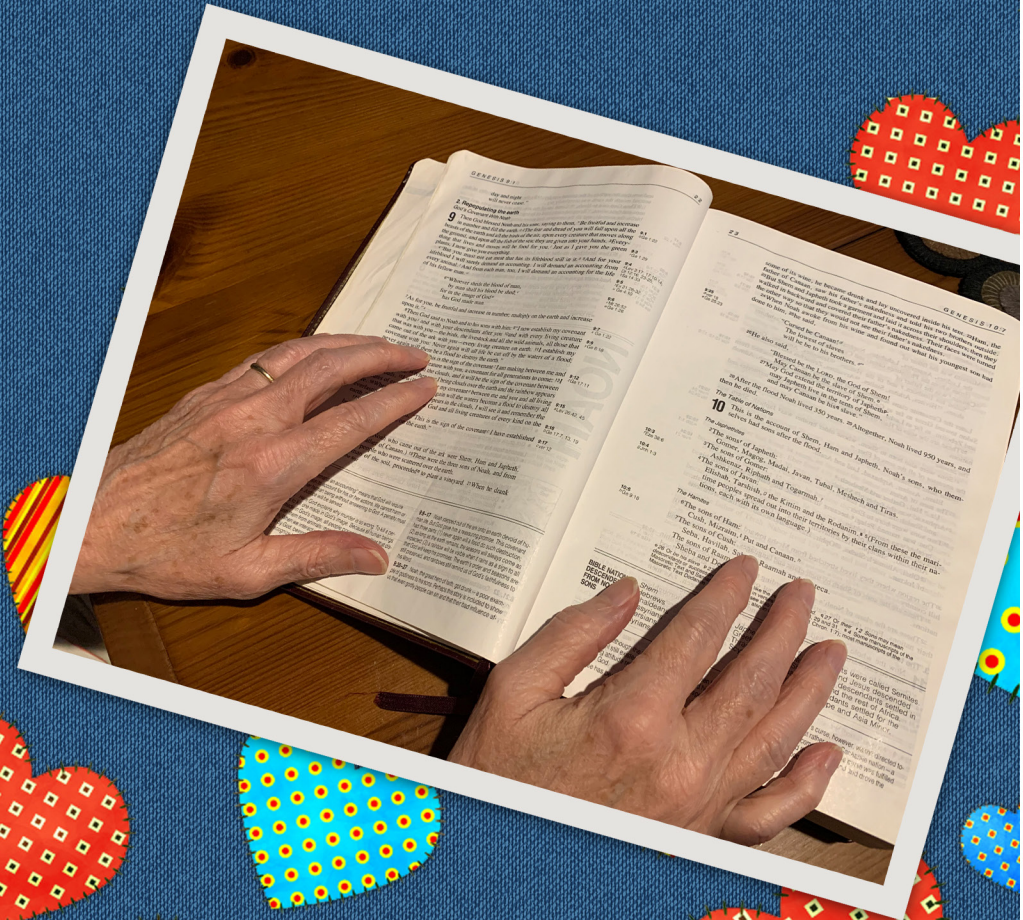
"Why, I'm surprised. I thought your grandmother was good at just about everything," giggled Abby.

"Most things, she is," agreed Izzy, "but some things, not so much. She can't cook too well, either."

"Yeah, she serves us lots of burnt offerings, but she's Gram, and we love her." Liam got up and patted his grandmother on the shoulder.

1 Thessalonians 4:16-17

“For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, and the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.”



13.

Gram laughed with them. "I'm glad I've provided all of you with some comic relief. You're fortunate I love you all so much." She reached for her Bible and began flipping through the pages.

"Before Abby goes home and continues to make preparations while she waits for her groom, I want to read something to you as we all wait for the return of our wonderful Redeemer, Jesus Christ."

Gram began to read, **"For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, and the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord."**

Looking lovingly around the room, Gram said, "It's such a joy to wait for the Groom with all of you."

End of Story Review

Answers from the Bible

(4th-6th graders)

1. Locate and read a description of how a bride and bridegroom are adorned for their wedding. How does this compare to how God has clothed us according to this verse? (Isaiah 61:10)
2. Jesus performed His first miracle at a wedding. Where was it and who was with Him to witness and believe on Him? (John 2:1-2, 11)
3. Locate and read a description of the marriage supper of the Lamb. (Revelation 19:7-9)
4. Locate and read a description of Jesus coming again to earth. (Matthew 24:30-31)
5. When will Jesus return to earth? (Matthew 24:36)

Review Questions

(1st-3rd graders)

1. Who knew when the groom would come to get his bride? (The father of the groom)
2. What was the job of the ten bridesmaids? (They had to light the way for the groom with the oil from their lamps)
3. How did the groom respond to the unprepared bridesmaids? (He told them he did not even know them.)