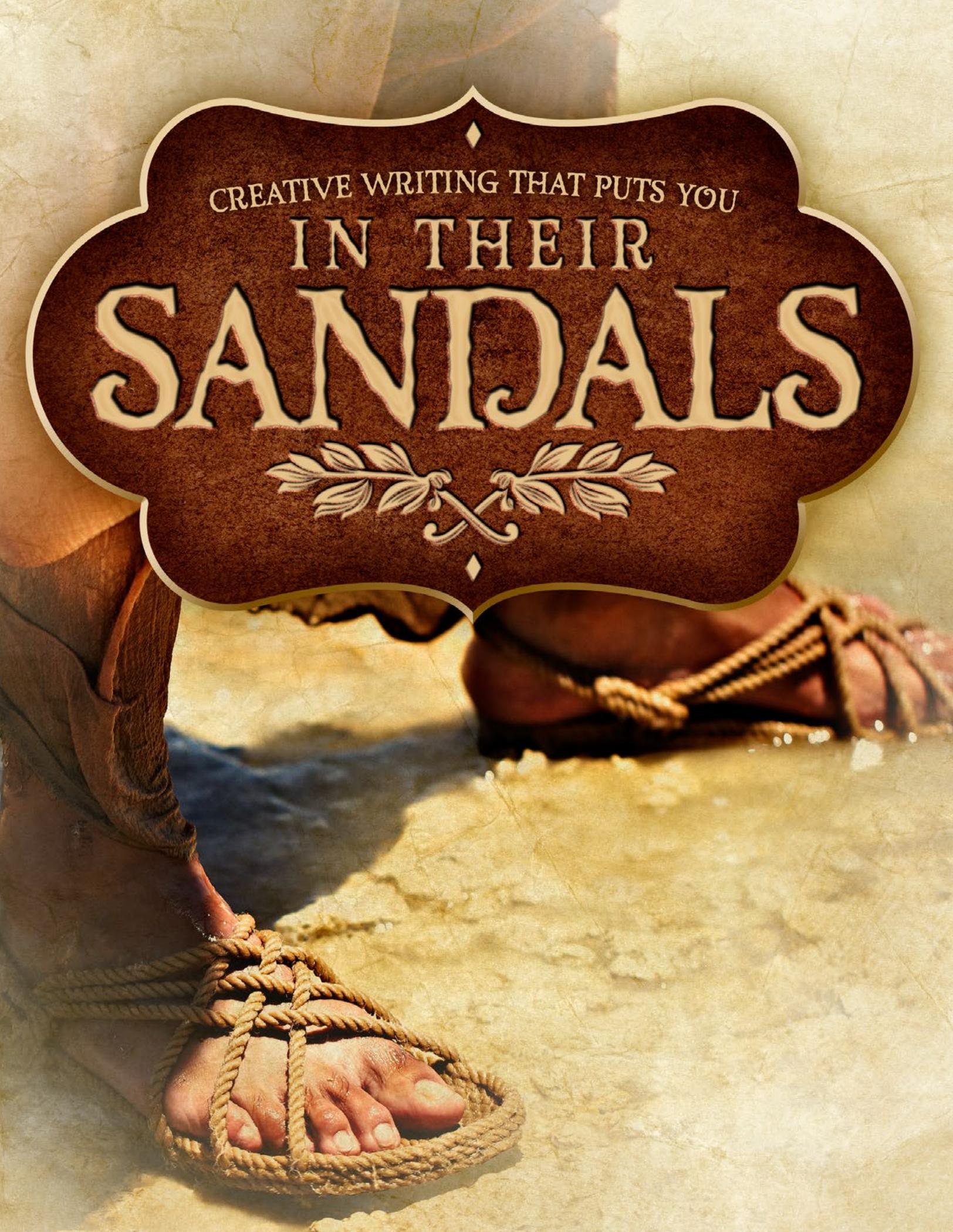


CREATIVE WRITING THAT PUTS YOU

IN THEIR

SANDALS



In Their Sandals
Written by Rand Hummel and Jim Lord

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TO THE TEACHER

This teacher's resource document contains material pulled from the Student Manual of *In Their Sandals*. The content is formatted to help you, the teacher, guide your students through the reading and exercises in each lesson.

This study combines creative writing and Bible study to encourage students to meditate on God in His Word. As students learn more about Him, they will also pick up skills and disciplines that will help them become effective writers.

Before beginning the study, please read with your students the Preface and the Introduction. There you'll find instructions, objectives, and a suggested weekly schedule. This book includes eight lessons, each of which represents a writing project derived from Scripture. The first seven projects are outlined by the study, and the last one is chosen by the student.

We trust *In Their Sandals* will help you and your students grow closer to God through His Word. If you have any questions or comments about using this study, please send us an email at info@positiveaction.org, or call us at (800) 688-3008. We'd love to hear from you!

By His Grace,

The Positive Action Family

Note: All page numbers mentioned in the body of this document refer to pages within the Student Manual.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Preface.....	5
Introduction.....	6
Lesson One: Troubles of a Hog Farmer.....	15
Lesson Two: Passover at the Temple.....	19
Lesson Three: The Inn and the Stable.....	23
Lesson Four: First Sight of Rain.....	26
Lesson Five: Letters from the Dark.....	29
Lesson Six: On the Way Home.....	33
Lesson Seven: The Voyage to Tarshish.....	36
Lesson Eight: Title Unknown.....	41
Extra Exercises.....	42

PREFACE

Dear Student,

Can you imagine what it must have been like to be at the stable the night Christ was born? Or to see Him feed thousands of people with just a few loaves and fish? What would we have seen if we had sailed with Jonah on his trip to Tarshish, or walked with Joseph, beaten and bound, on the dusty road to Egypt?

God gave us His Word as a window to His glory. As we read and meditate on what we find there—the stories and the teaching, the encouragement and the correction, the songs and the prayers—God will give us a better understanding of Himself. He will show us how His character and work impacts our lives, how His principles apply to our behavior, and how He can conform us to the image of His Son.

This study encourages you to dig deep into the Bible by reading Scripture and meditating on its meaning. You will learn how God reveals Himself through His Word, and how to communicate what you've found through creative writing.

By the end of this study, you will have written eight fictional stories based on Scripture, each of which will offer a glimpse of the truth you've learned. This exercise in creative meditation does not attempt to detract from or add to the Bible. We know that God's Word, which He has preserved through the ages, is totally sufficient to encourage, teach, and reprove. This study simply challenges you to consider the messages of Scripture and communicate the same truth in your own writing.

Along the way, you will learn skills and disciplines necessary for good writing. If you are to share truth with others, you should make every effort to do so well.

I trust this study will encourage you in your walk with the Lord. I pray that you will learn to love Him more and cherish the Word He's given you. May God bless you as you meditate on Him.

Sincerely Yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Rand Hummel". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looping initial "R" and "H".

Rand Hummel

INTRODUCTION

From the Student Manual

By the end of this study, you should . . .

- Write eight stories based on events and characters from Scripture
- Read Scripture meditatively, with a mind to seek God’s majesty in His Word, then share Him with others
- Research the historical and cultural context behind well-known Bible stories
- Approach writing systematically, with appropriate research, preparation, drafting, and revision
- Practice the disciplines of a good writer
- Build a basic literary vocabulary
- Understand the importance and use of certain grammar structures

For each lesson, you will be tasked with writing a story based on a particular passage from the Bible. You will write the story in your own words, but you’ll find a good deal of background information and writing prompts to help you along. This study will teach you how to break large writing projects into much smaller, bite-size chunks. That’s not to say that writing won’t be hard work—it is for even the most experienced writers—but you shouldn’t find each project overwhelming.

To guide you through the writing process, every lesson includes five sections that include writing exercises and study activities, as well as a composition skills review that can improve your writing and grammar. You can complete a single lesson in one week of intensive study, or in two weeks of lighter work.

Suggested Schedule—One Week per Lesson

	Section	Description	Estimated Time
Day 1	Research	Read the assigned Scripture. Gather all essential information.	60 minutes
Day 2	Rough	Outline the story and draft descriptions of important elements.	60 minutes
Day 3	Write	Compose the first draft.	90 minutes
Day 4	Apply	Dig deeper into the Word.	45 minutes
Day 5	Revise	Revise and rewrite your story to produce a finished draft. Apply suggestions from the Tools of Grammar section.	60 minutes

Suggested Schedule—Two Weeks per Lesson

Week 1

	Section	Description	Estimated Time
Day 1	Research	Read the assigned Scripture. Gather all essential information.	40 minutes
Day 2	Research	Continue meditating and gathering information.	40 minutes
Day 3	Rough	Outline the story and draft descriptions of important elements.	40 minutes
Day 4	Rough	Continue preparing notes and descriptions for the first draft.	40 minutes
Day 5	Write	Compose the first draft.	90 minutes

Week 2

	Section	Description	Estimated Time
Day 1	Apply	Dig deeper into the Word.	45 minutes
Day 2	Apply	Review and discuss thoughts on the Apply section.	30 minutes
Day 3	Vocabulary, Grammar, and Extra Assignments	Review the lesson's featured vocabulary and the grammar structure. Begin any Extra Exercises.	30 minutes
Day 4	Revise	Revise and rewrite your story to produce a finished draft. Apply suggestions from the Tools of Grammar section.	60 minutes
Day 5	Review	Share your story with other students, if applicable. Review and discuss important concepts from the lesson. Complete any Extra Exercises.	60 minutes

If you use this book to supplement other curriculum, you may choose to complete the lesson content over an even longer period of time, perhaps by spending only an hour or two in the book each week.

Part 1: Research

The first part of each lesson is spent researching background information for your story. After reading the passage that serves as your primary source of information, you will answer six key questions for your narrative:

- What happens in your story? Write out a short summary of the most important event.
- Who was involved? Who are your characters?
- When did this happen? What is the context, historical or otherwise?
- Where does your story occur? How does the location and setting add meaning to the narrative?
- How did this happen? What was the cause? How did the events play out?
- Why did this happen? What is the primary *theme* of your story—the message you want to leave with your readers? What was the purpose of all this? What can we learn from this?

You will search the Bible and other sources to address these questions, and when necessary, you will use your best judgment to fill in any that are unanswered.

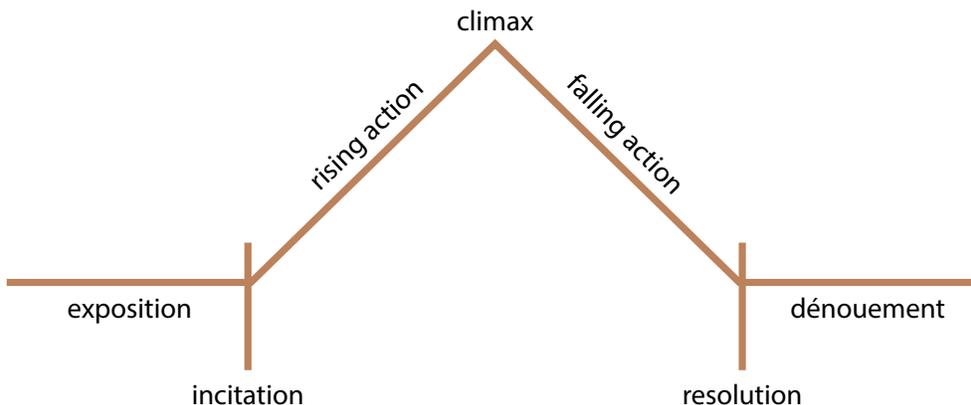
At the end of Part 1, you will reread your primary passage, searching for any missed details. Take this time to meditate on the Word, asking God to show you some glimpse of His character in the passage, so you can better reflect Him to others.

Part 2: Rough

You will spend the second part of each lesson roughing out the structure of your story, then working ahead on descriptions and themes that you will include in your first draft.

Outline

For the outline of your story, you will use Freytag's Pyramid as a template. Gustav Freytag (1816–1895), a German novelist and playwright, argued that most stories followed a similar structure. To help others understand, He devised a picture of what he believed was the average story.



Conflict

This isn't necessarily part of the pyramid, but it helps to determine the primary *conflict* in your story before you create much of an outline.

It's the nature of our fallen, imperfect world that every story or journey includes some form of conflict. There is the *protagonist*, your main character, and there is the *antagonist*, which stands in opposition. Which side prevails—and how—is the question most stories try to answer.

For these, we often think of *external conflict*, in which a character strives against some outside foe, whether that be a villain, the extremes of nature, or a looming assignment deadline.

But many stories feature *internal conflict*, which takes place in the mind and heart of a character. Through the course of the story, characters might grapple with fear, bitterness, anger, ignorance, or other inner enemies that might destroy them.

Perhaps the best stories include both types of conflict, with the external mirroring the internal. And as we understand from our walk with God, we must often gain victory over internal conflicts before we can begin the external.

So for each lesson, decide which conflict will drive your narrative. It can be subtle, or hidden, or even unresolved by the story's end, but your audience will expect some sort of tension.

Exposition

We'll talk a little more about the term *exposition* in Lesson Five, but in Freytag's Pyramid, this word means the start of the story—the place where you introduce your key characters and give some background information to help the reader begin to picture your world.

Incitation

And this is the point that gets your story moving. This event *incites*, or stirs up, the action and conflict. Your readers know that whatever follows might be out of the ordinary.

Rising Action

The *rising action* is the series of events that occur following the *incitation*. Your readers get to see how your characters react to new and possibly dangerous circumstances.

Climax

Your readers then arrive to perhaps the most important part of your story. The climax is the turning point, the height of conflict and tension. This is where your protagonist may resolve some internal struggle or determine a course to follow for the rest of the story.

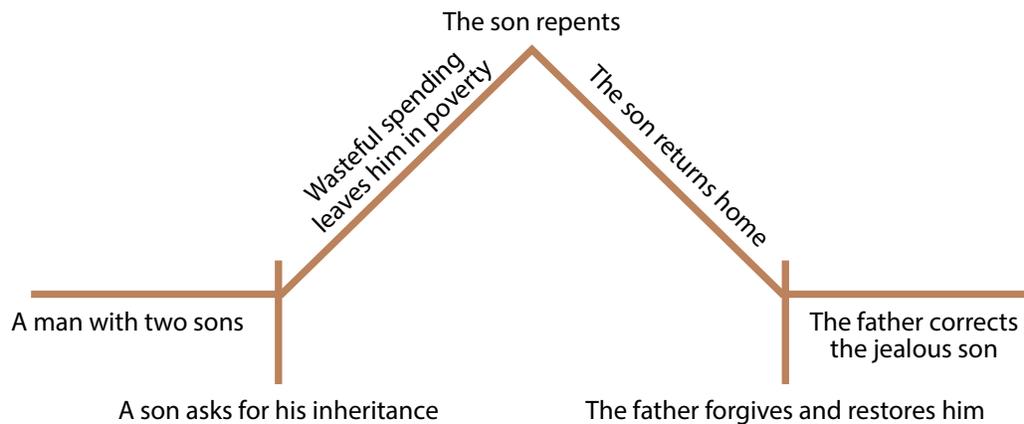
Falling Action

The *falling action* is the series of events after the climax. Readers might notice a change in the way the characters react to their circumstances. The story's pace will often accelerate toward its conclusion.

Resolution and Denouement

In Freytag's pyramid, the *resolution* is the event that resolves the majority of conflict in the story. The villain is defeated, the mountain conquered, the deadline reached. The *denouement*, which comes from the French word meaning "untying," is simply the end of the story's rope, so to speak. The author might use this section to wrap up any loose ends and give the reader a picture of what the world looks like under a different light.

To give an example of how this structure might apply to a story, let's look at the parable Christ told about the prodigal son. If you're not familiar with the tale, read Luke 15:11–32.



Christ begins the story with a brief exposition, followed by incitation—the jarring request from the son to have his future wealth ripped out of his father's estate. The son's actions drive him toward his fall, where at a climax, he realizes his mistake and resolves to return, even if it means that he spends the rest of his life as a servant. He returns home, where his father resolves the conflict by restoring him to the family. The story continues with the other son's jealousy, which gives the father an opportunity to share the beauty of forgiveness.

The story is a flawless representation of God's mercy and grace, as told by the Architect of the gospel Himself. The parable draws from universally understood themes of family love and rejection, using a simple yet striking narrative to flow into a surprising picture of undeserved forgiveness. Some listeners would be shocked that the father would so quickly welcome his son back, so Christ mirrors their expectations with the jealous son, to whom the father explains a grace found only in the gospel.

Once you understand how to use the parts of Freytag's Pyramid, readers will find your stories clearer, more driven, and more satisfying in the end.

Of course, not all stories stick close to this structure. Many writers today like to toy with audience expectations by omitting or changing different parts of the average story. You might start the action with little or no exposition. You may have a protagonist that undergoes no perceivable change at all. You might even end the story just before the conflict is resolved. Sometimes the message of your story can be enhanced by a surprise twist of the standard narrative.

Nevertheless, most of your readers will expect something close to Freytag's pyramid—something with a beginning, a middle, and an end. It's fine to surprise them now and then, but you must first learn the rules before you can break them well.

Descriptions

After you outline your story, you will draft some descriptive text that will ease the drafting process in Part 3. Here you'll consider several elements of the story and jot down your immediate thoughts. These are the smaller, bite-size chunks of writing that, once put to paper, will give you a good head start on your first draft.

Setting

Describe any settings or locations in your story. Paint a postcard picture in words. Refer back to your research from Part 1 for any details you might have dug up.

Characters

Describe each of the important characters in your story. What do they look like? What are their attitudes? When the story is over, how might they have changed?

Events

Describe some of the major events in your story. What do they look like from the perspective of your main characters?

Thoughts and Reactions

Describe what your characters think of events, places, and other characters in your story. How are they affected by what happens?

Examples of the above categories will be included throughout this study.

~Part 3: Write~

Few things intimidate a writer more than a blank sheet of paper. Thankfully, you've done quite a bit of work already, which should make your first draft easier to write.

Your tools will include your notes and pre-draft material, as well as your brain and a healthy portion of wisdom and grace. Prayer is the only way to request the last two. Don't forget a notebook and pencil, or a reliable word processing program.

Once equipped, you will hide yourself away for at least an hour and force yourself to assemble a first draft of your story—no matter how flawed, ragged, or ugly it

might be. *Just get it down.* You'll find it far easier to revise and edit your text later than it would be to continue a half-written story.

~Part 4: Apply~

On Part 4 you will read your assigned Scripture again more slowly, completing a short Bible study that will encourage you to open your heart to God's Word. You must do more than learn facts from Scripture—you must ask God to use His message to shape you into the image of His Son, Jesus.

For each of your primary source passages, ask two questions:

1. What can I see of God's character here?
2. How can this help me grow closer to Him?

Ask God to show you His majesty in His Word.

~Part 5: Revise~

No story is finished when first written. After you've had at least a day to focus on other things, you can revise with a clear mind. Edit your story for the following:

Revise for Economy

Cut out any sections you feel distract from the point of your story. Combine sentences where you can. Smooth over any passages that slow down the action. If you have another person reading your story, ask if there are any parts that seem boring.

Revise for Variety

Look at your sentence structures and ask yourself if there's too much repetition. Mix things up a little, with short sentences and long sentences, with lots of active verbs and clear detail. Read your entire story out loud twice, and adjust whatever strikes you as unnatural.

Revise for Clarity

Did you make your point well? Did you maintain a consistent tone and voice? Are there any inconsistencies in your story—any gaps in the narrative or unexplained events? Is your paper free of spelling, grammar, and punctuation errors? Proofread your story carefully, and ask your reader if he or she found anything awkward, as well.

Be honest with yourself—merciless in a nice way. When your reader gives you feedback or suggestions, accept any criticism with gratitude, realizing that your writing can always improve—or at least speak more clearly to a particular audience.

Tools of Grammar

Each lesson will also include a description of a grammar structure that, when used correctly, can improve your writing. You will likely recall most of this material from English class, but a review can help you revise and tighten your story's prose. Over time you'll learn more than what is correct and what is incorrect—time and experience can teach you what is okay, what is better, and what is *best*.

This section isn't meant to give you an exhaustive lesson on any one grammar structure, but rather a few tips on using it well. The suggestions given in this section can help you tighten your prose stylistically, but they will not give you a complete understanding of the concepts they address.

Extra Exercises

Your teacher will assign you these shorter exercises as he or she sees fit—or you can tackle them for fun. You will find yourself applying your writing skills to unique situations, all of which will require you study and communicate truth from God's Word.

Quotations

As you read through this book, you will find quotations taken from various writers about their craft. Not all of these writers are friendly to the truths found in the Bible—some, in fact, spent their lives promoting ideas with which you or I may disagree. Their thoughts on writing are included to help you become a better communicator. If you explore the works of these and other writers, ask God for wisdom and discretion to evaluate their philosophy.

The Seven Habits of a Good Writer

1. A good writer reads.

The better writing you put in, the better you'll put out. Consume the best writing you can find—fiction, nonfiction, newsprint, speeches, poetry—and learn what entertains, informs, and inspires people.

2. A good writer writes.

Devote a regular time and place to writing. Write anything, so long as you write often. Train your brain to write on command, and learn to finish your projects.

3. A good writer prepares.

Good writing features detail, texture, and depth. These qualities will not simply appear in your writing—you must constantly look at the world around you for useful images and concepts. Take a notebook with you wherever you go, and write down your thoughts as they come to you. Think, research, and outline before you ever begin a first draft.

4. A good writer studies the reader.

Write with your audience in mind. Learn as much as you can about them, and shape your writing to reflect their knowledge, needs, and sensibilities. Don't talk down to them, but don't talk over their heads.

5. A good writer says something.

Write because you want to communicate a message to your readers. You may be required to write because of school or church or work, but do not write just because you have to. Find something you want to say, and say it. Without a central message, your writing will lack direction, organization, and clarity.

6. A good writer edits.

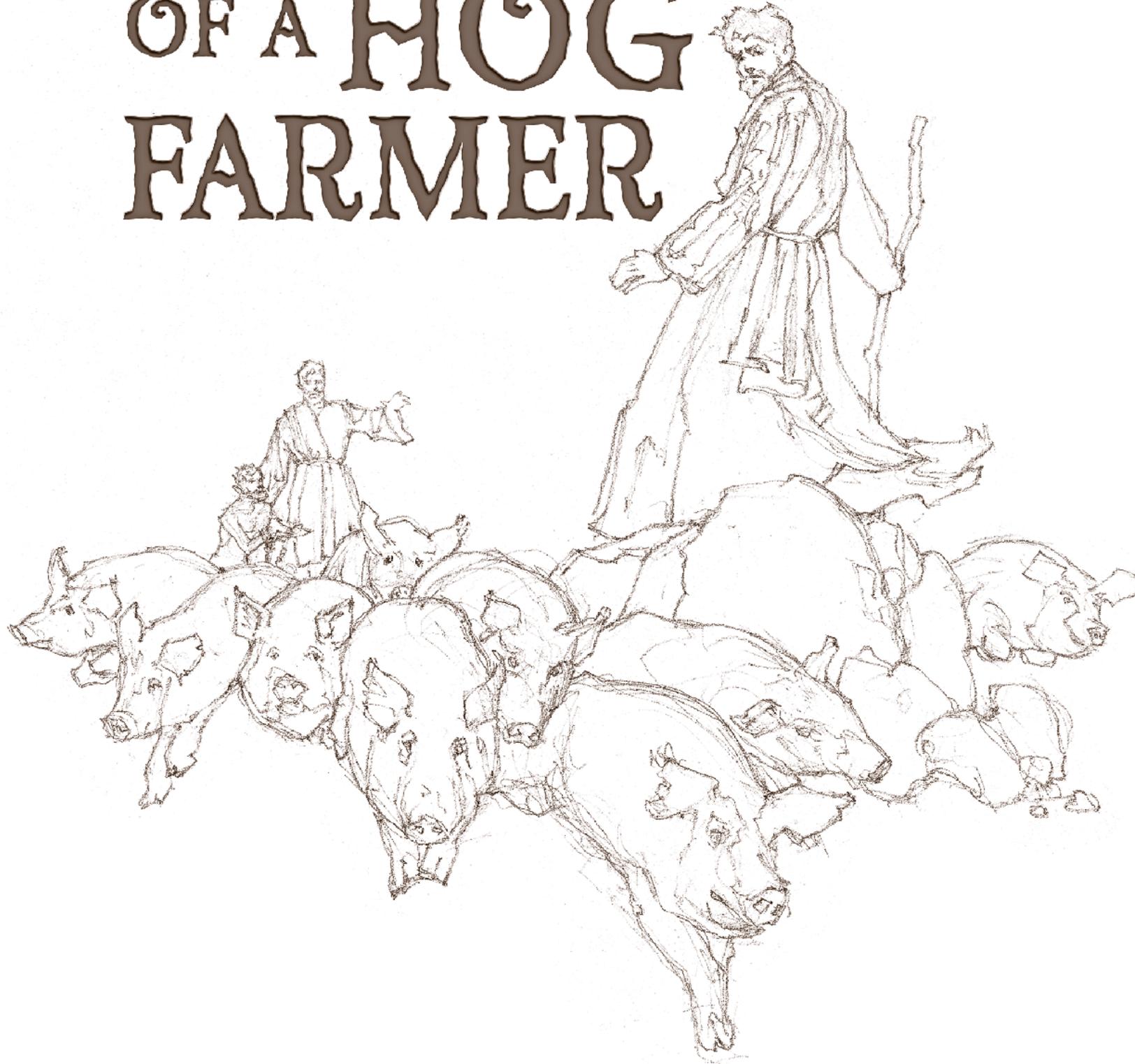
Be merciless with your writing. Never accept your first draft as complete. Find ways to be clearer, more concise, surprising the reader with variety and new insight. And as hard as it may be, remove anything from your writing that does not in some way support your purpose.

7. A good writer stretches.

To be a writer is to be vulnerable. Whenever you put pen to paper, you give others a window into your thoughts, your values, your weaknesses—and that can be scary. But the good writer presses on, sharing truth and love in spite of the discomfort or reprisal that might bring. So stretch yourself. Find new ways and new opportunities to write. Discover what makes you uncomfortable, and hone your craft regardless.

L E S S O N O N E

TROUBLES OF A HOG FARMER



—Writing Prompt—

In Mark 5:1–20, you’ll find an amazing glimpse of Christ’s grace. For your first writing project, you will tell this story as if you were one of the hog farmers whose herd drowned in the sea. You’ve returned to your town, and your master, the man who owns the pigs, has asked you where his property went. You, still dazed by what you saw, tell your story.

Naturally, the hog farmer will relate to Christ’s actions a bit differently than Mark did, but that’s fine. Most of what we call creative writing simply describes something familiar from a unique perspective. For this lesson, your perspective is right next to a herd of stampeding, demon-possessed pigs.

—Target Truths from Scripture—

- Christ displayed His love, mercy, and grace by casting out the demon from the man of Gadara (Mark 5:1–20).
- God asks us to guard ourselves against assault—from spiritual forces on the outside and from our own weaknesses. Only by relying on His strength and grace can we stand (Eph. 6:10–20).
- God exercises complete authority over Satan (Rev. 20:8–10).
- More amazing than the miracle of Mark 5:1–20 is the change God can make in our hearts today (Luke 10:17–20).

—Important Terms—

Unreliable Narrator—a fictional storyteller that believes something which is not true. See page 19.

Didactic—a tone the writer uses to explicitly present factual or moral teaching. See page 20.

Active Verb—a verb that shows a noun performing an action. See page 27.

Auxiliary Verb—a verb that adds meaning to other verbs; helps establish voice, tense, and mood; also known as a helping verb. See page 27.

Be-Verb—a verb that links a noun to a certain state, position, or quality; it connects a subject to a predicate. See page 27.

Linking Verb—a verb that expresses equality between the subject and another word in the sentence. See page 27.

Passive Verb—a verb that shows a noun being acted upon. See page 27.

Tools of Grammar

Be-Verbs, Active Verbs, and Passive Verbs

In this first Tools of Grammar section, note the difference between three general types of verbs.

Be-Verbs

Be-verbs link a noun to a certain state, position, or quality. They do not necessarily show action—they just connect a subject to a predicate.

Some *be-verbs* are part of a larger category called *linking verbs*, which express equality between the subject and another word in the sentence, as in the example below:

 Richard **is** a police officer.

Be-verbs can also be used as *auxiliary verbs*. These add meaning to other verbs, like voice, tense, and mood. An auxiliary *be-verb* can change a verb to its passive form—more on that later—or it can show continuing action, as seen in the example below:

He **was** running down the street.

And sometimes, a *be-verb* simply means “to exist.”

And Jesus said, “I **am**.”

Be-Verb Forms

be	is
am	are
was	were
been	being

Active Verbs

Active verbs show a noun performing an action.

Richard **squinted** at his notes, wondering how anyone ever read his handwriting.

Fingers clenched tight around her bat, Therese **smacks** the ball up over the far fence.

Passive Verbs

Passive verbs show a noun being acted upon. Sentences with passive verbs involve a *be-verb* followed by a past participle form of another verb.

Richard’s notes **were read** aloud by his teacher.

The ball **is returned** by an amused passerby.

Revising with Stronger Verbs

Beginning writers often rely heavily on sentences with *be-verbs* and passive verbs, since active verbs can be more difficult to construct. But clear English prose depends on strong, active verbs. Notice the difference between the two paragraphs below. The second one is much clearer.

With Be-Verbs and Passive Verbs

Therese was struggling to keep her excitement to herself. She walked the bases. Her teammates were held back by the umpire, who was smiling at her as she was stepping onto home plate. The game was called by the announcer. There were screams, hugs, and a shiny gold trophy, but Therese didn't notice. She was hungry.

With Active Verbs

Struggling to keep her excitement to herself, Therese walked the bases. Her teammates crowded behind the umpire, who smiled at her as she stepped onto home plate. The announcer called the game. Screams, hugs, and a shiny gold trophy barely caught Therese's attention—she was hungry.

That's not to say you should never use *be*-verbs or passive verbs. Sometimes your paragraph's context and flow will dictate that you use a non-active verb form. Read the paragraph below.

Rachel was excited. She thought about all the things she and her friends would do tomorrow up on Bluestone Mountain. The place was known for its scenic hiking and biking trails.

The paragraph features all three types of verbs. The first sentence, a short one with a *be*-verb, introduces the paragraph's topic. The second sentence, which supports and explains the first, includes a simple active verb. The third sentence is passive, but only so it can pick up where the second sentence left off with "Bluestone Mountain." "The place" refers back to the mountain, so the writer keeps the reader's focus steady from one sentence to the next.

As you revise your story, look for ways you can change some of your *be*-verbs and passive verbs into active ones. Fill your prose with clear, strong, active verbs that drive your reader along. And wherever you rely on passive verbs, make sure they improve the flow of your text.

For more information on different types of verbs, consult the index or table of contents in your grammar textbook.

L E S S O N T W O

PASSOVER AT THE TEMPLE



—Writing Prompt—

For this lesson you'll write another report—this time, about what Christ did at the Temple during Passover. You will adopt the perspective of a sheep merchant who was thrown out of the Temple's court, and once again, you'll need to explain the disappearance of your animals.

There's an account of this incident in each of the four Gospels.

- Matthew 21:10–13
- Mark 11:15–18
- Luke 19:45–48
- John 2:13–25

—Target Truths from Scripture—

- Christ was meek, gentle, and offered peace (Matt. 11:28; 12:15–21; and 2 Cor. 10:1).
- Yet He found it necessary to forcefully cleanse the Temple of those who defiled it—because of His zeal for His Father's house (John 2:17) and with the goal of teaching His truth there (Luke 19:47).
- Any time Christ showed anger, it resulted in action—and importantly, only action that would reflect His perfect character (Mark 3:1–5; 11:15–18).
- While we no longer offer sacrifices in the Temple (John 4:21–24), we Christians today must still guard our place of worship from sin (1 Cor. 6:19–20).
- We must be slow to anger (James 1:19–20), and we cannot use anger as an excuse to sin (Eph. 4:25–27).

—Important Terms—

Developing a Character—the author's act of changing and molding characters through the use of plot and other devices. See page 37.

Dynamic Character—a person that changes in some way over the course of the story. See page 37.

Static Character—a person that does not change in any apparent way over the course of a story. See page 37.

Participle—a verb that has been changed to modify a noun, much like an adjective or adverb. See page 41.

Tools of Grammar

Participles

Participles are verbs that have been changed to modify a noun, much like an adjective or adverb. The phrase that contains the participle is called a *participial phrase*. There are two types:

A *past participle*, which uses the past tense form of the verb, often ending in **-ed**

Blasted with a water balloon, Tristan fell off the tree branch and onto the trampoline.

A *present participle*, which uses the **-ing** form of the verb

He looked around for his would-be assassin, **trembling with fury**.

Participial phrases can add fantastic levels of detail to your prose. In both preceding sentences, the participles helped paint a clearer picture of Tristan. Since good English depends on strong action verbs, you'll find your writing greatly improved when you use participles often.

You can use participles to suggest a variety of things. First, you can demonstrate a causal relationship between two ideas:

Without participle

Cheryl was elated by the B+ on her history final, so she shredded her notes. That night, she wondered where her chemistry study sheet might be.

With participle

Elated by her B+ in history, Cheryl shredded her notes, only to wonder that night where her chemistry study sheet might be.

You can also describe a sequence of events.

Without participle

Dan pedaled his bike up the hill. Then he swerved when a car met him at the top.

With participle

Dan pedaled his bike up the hill, **swerving to miss the car that met him at the top**.

You can also stack participial phrases together to add detail and motion.

Erica refinished the dresser carefully, **stripping off the old paint, sanding the edges, applying three coats of red enamel, and replacing the drawer knobs**.

Jordan, **confused, bewildered, and shaken by the talk with his teacher**, resolved to study harder for his next test.

Note in the last sentence that “shaken” is neither an **-ed** or **-ing** form of a verb. That’s because some verbs have unique past participle forms—like *shaken* for shake, or *flung* for fling.

You can place participial phrases in one of the following places:

At the beginning of a sentence

Clutching her flashlight, Melanie tip-toed up the stairs.

At the end of a sentence

Melanie tip-toed up the stairs, **clutching her flashlight**.

Right after the noun it modifies

Melanie, **clutching her flashlight**, tip-toed up the stairs.

Where you decide to place your participial phrase will depend on the flow of your paragraph and what you want to emphasize in your sentence. More on this in Lesson Seven.

Just be careful not to place the participial right before a noun it isn’t supposed to modify. The following is called a *dangling participle*:

Walking up the stairs, the silence became more oppressive than ever.

The sentence, as written above, suggests that the “silence” literally walked up stairs, instead of the unseen narrator. The participle is called *dangling* because it lacks a correct noun to modify. A correct version is below:

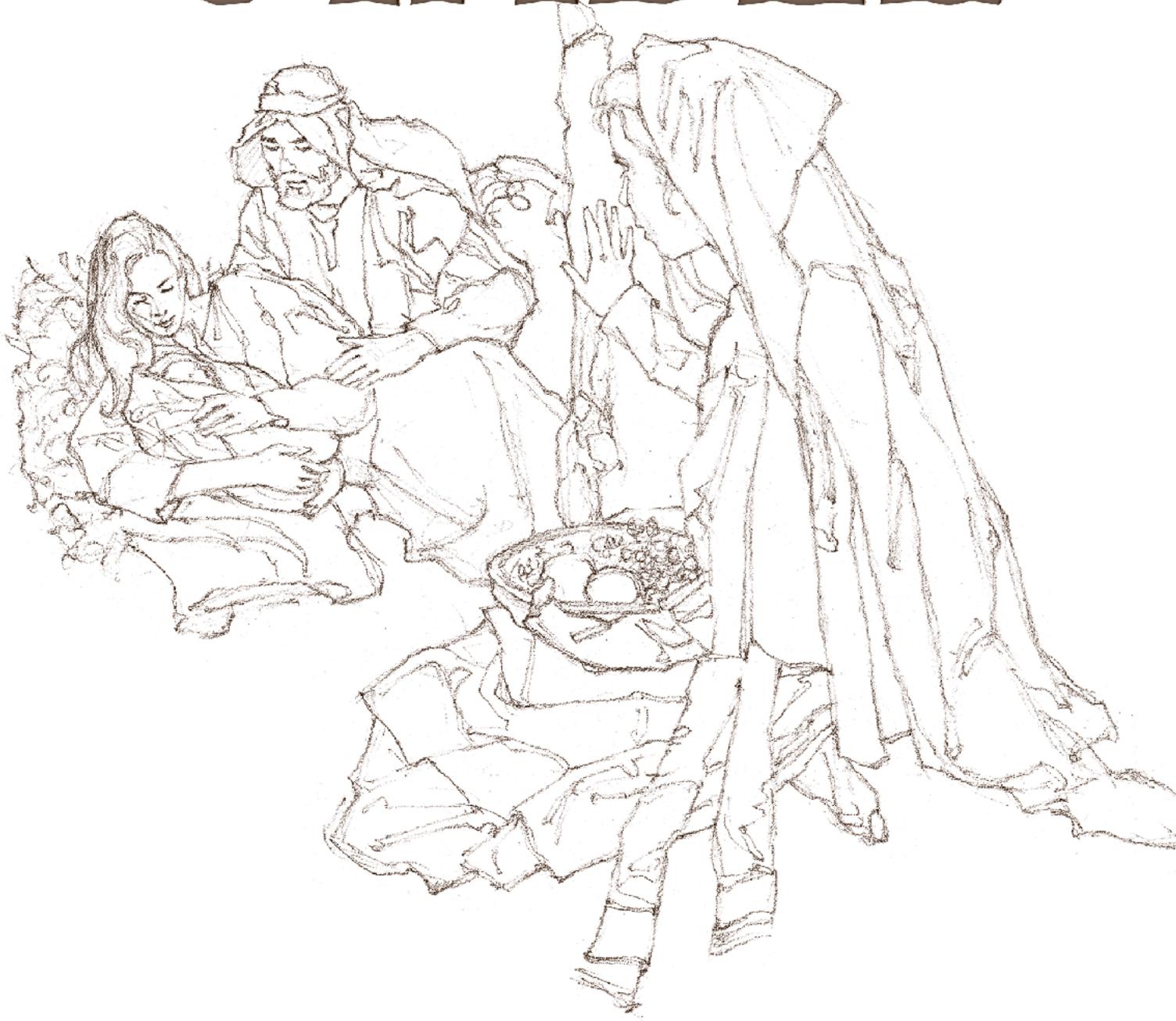
Walking up the stairs, I found the silence more oppressive than ever.

Read over your story again, looking for ways to include participial phrases in your prose. They can tighten up your story and add helpful detail.

For more information on using participles and participial phrases, check the index or table of contents in your grammar textbook.

L E S S O N T H R E E

THE INN AND THE STABLE



Writing Prompt

This lesson's story is about an incredible event that took place in the life of an innkeeper. You'll write from the innkeeper's perspective, crafting a story of the first Christmas and a person who didn't see it coming.

Read Luke 2:1–20. Notice that there's no innkeeper mentioned in the passage. That will give you a great deal of flexibility as you construct your main character. The questions in your research will likewise be more open-ended than before.

Target Truths from Scripture

- Christ's birth, like every part of His life, reflected the nature and purpose of His ministry.
- Throughout His ministry, Jesus reached out to the abused, the hated, and the forsaken (Matt. 4:18–19; 8:1–3; 9:9; Mark 2:13–17; 5:24–34; Luke 2:8–12; John 4:27–41; 8:1–11).
- For us, He offers . . .
 - The fulfillment of the law (Matt. 5:17)
 - His life as a ransom (Matt. 20:28)
 - Healing (Mark 2:17)
 - Eternal life (John 3:16–17)
 - Abundant life (John 10:10)
 - Light (John 12:46)
 - Truth (John 18:37)
 - Redemption to a new family (Galatians 4:4–5)

Important Terms

First Person Perspective—a narrative viewpoint in which the story is told by one of the characters. See page 48.

Frame Story—a story that encloses another story; often includes a character which tells the enclosed story. See page 48.

Second Person Perspective—a narrative viewpoint in which the story is told to one of the characters; used rarely. See page 48.

Third Person Perspective—a narrative viewpoint in which the story is told by an invisible person that talks about the characters and events from a certain distance. See page 48.

Appositive—a noun or noun phrase used to modify another noun. See page 54.

Tools of Grammar

Appositives

Appositives are nouns or noun phrases used to modify another noun.

Rosalie, **a sharp-eyed girl from Alaska**, led the debate team.

When asked by her teacher to select the month's topic, she chose eugenics—**the social science that seeks to “improve” mankind's genetics by population control**.

Her debate partner **Kyoji** wasn't sure if they could beat the opposing team.

You can create an appositive from any *be*-verb sentence. You'll remember that a *be*-verb shows a noun simply being a state, position, or quality. Note the examples below:

Be-verb sentence

Zachary Taylor was the 12th president of the United States.

Sentence with appositive

Zachary Taylor, **the 12th president of the United States**, faced numerous challenges during his short term in office.

Be-verb sentence

Taylor was a fiercely loyal, outspoken, and nationalistic statesman.

Sentence with appositive

Many of his rivals knew that Taylor—**a fiercely loyal, outspoken, and nationalistic statesman**—would defend the integrity of the Union.

Just as with participial phrases, you can stack a series of appositives within a sentence.

Lucia played all sorts of games—**word games, board games, video games, even games she made up on the spot**.

Noam needed a friend, **someone with brains, someone who could help him study for physics**.

See if you can edit out unnecessary *be*-verb sentences in your story by transforming them into appositives.

For more help using appositives, consult the index or table of contents in your grammar textbook.

L E S S O N F O U R

FIRST SIGHT OF RAIN



Writing Prompt

Your story for this lesson will be about the world's first weather reporter. You'll write from the perspective of someone watching Noah build his huge boat, concluding your story at the first sight of rain—literally, according to Genesis, the first rainstorm that ever fell on Earth. You will write about God's judgment as someone who didn't see it coming.

Your source passages are Genesis 6 and 7. Given the length of your reading, an outline of the chapters is included in the first part of this lesson.

Target Truths from Scripture

- Sin is an offense against God's character, and He must judge it. As we view God's holiness, He convicts us of our sin (Isa. 6:1–7).
- God's holiness includes at least two qualities—His perfection (1 John 1:5) and His exaltation (Isa. 57:15).
- We cannot hope to match God's standard of holiness (Isa. 64:6), but He still commands us to be holy like Him (1 Pet. 1:16), and through the hope of Christ's grace, we can put off our corrupt ways and reflect His holiness to others (1 Pet. 13–16).
- We can still grieve God (Eph. 4:30). But if we have accepted Christ, we can ask for the strength to live like Him.

Important Terms

In Medias Res—a Latin phrase meaning “into the middle of things;” in which a story is begun during some action. See page 61.

Foreshadowing—story elements or descriptions that hint at later events. See page 66.

Prepositions—words that create relationships between words and phrases in a sentence. Common examples include of, in, to, on, for, with, from, and by. See page 67.

Tools of Grammar

Prepositions

Prepositions create relationships between words and phrases in a sentence. Common examples include *of*, *in*, *to*, *on*, *for*, *with*, *from*, and *by*, but there are many more. Every prepositional phrase includes an object.

Note the types of relationships in the sentences below:

Time

Javier grabbed his books **before class**.

Object
|

Cause

Because of Addyson's stop at the water fountain for a drink, she missed the start of the lecture.

Object
|

Position

Kelsey slipped her bag **under her desk**.

Object
|

Manner

With a speed that startled her art teacher, Ana sketched a fantastic portrait of her classmate.

Object
|

Association

Like his dad, Nigel could pump out eighty pushups in a little over two minutes.

Object
|

State

Despite her initial confusion, Jamie plowed through the rest of her test, nabbing a solid A in the end.

Object
|

Edit prepositions into your prose to reduce unnecessary clauses and confusing phrases.

For more advice on using prepositions, check the index or table of contents in your grammar textbook.

L E S S O N F I V E

LETTERS FROM THE DARK



Writing Prompt

You will write this story as if you were Joseph, the boy in Genesis 37 who was sold by his brothers into slavery. You'll include all the necessary parts of a story, but you'll communicate them through a series of notes, letters, or journal entries that Joseph could have written during his experience.

Your story will introduce Joseph and follow him up to the point he became a slave to Potiphar. Try to conclude Joseph's internal journey by then, giving your readers an understanding of how Joseph was able to face his later trials.

See additional explanation and advice on page 69.

Target Truths from Scripture

- God offers us grace and strength in our suffering (2 Cor. 12:9–10).
- Not all the suffering we face is a direct punishment for our sin (John 9:1–7).
- We can rejoice and grow in God despite our suffering (Rom. 5:1–5).
- We may not know the purpose for pain and suffering in our lives, but we know God's glory will eclipse our present trials (Rom. 8:18), and His plan for us is good (Rom. 8:28).

Important Terms

Epistolary Narrative—a story told through a series of fictional messages or documents. See page 69.

Exposition—(1) the beginning of the story, where the author introduces the setting and key characters. See page 9. (2) a part of the story in which the author introduces background information to the reader. See page 69.

Relative Clause—a clause, beginning with a relative pronoun, that modifies a noun; also known as an adjective clause. See page 79.

Tools of Grammar

Relative Clauses

A relative clause is a clause that begins with a relative pronoun and modifies a noun. It includes a predicate separate from the main clause in the sentence. See the examples below:

Brenda, **who once wrote short articles for the local paper**, is now three weeks from publishing her first novel.

Edgar sat at the desk **that featured the cherry wood moldings**.

If you tend to use a lot of short, staccato sentences in your writing, you can use relative clauses to help you edit for economy.

Simple sentences

Some teens repainted Mrs. Ward's house.

Mrs. Ward thanked the teens.

Sentence with a relative clause

Mrs. Ward thanked the teens **that repainted her house**.

Relative clauses generally begin with a relative pronoun like **who**, **whom**, **whose**, **which**, or **that**. Choosing which to use can be difficult.

Use either **which** or **that** to follow things—anything that is not a person.

Lena picked up the pen **that once belonged to her grandfather**.

Seiki spoke in a language **which sounded like Japanese**.

Use either **who** or **that** to follow subjective nouns that are people.

People **who want more yogurt** should go to the back of the line.

People **that want more yogurt** should go to the back of the line.

Use **whom** or **that** to follow objective nouns that are people. In these cases, you can also use no relative pronoun at all.

The person **whom Dr. Johannessen selected** would progress to the next round.

The person **that Dr. Johannessen selected** would progress to the next round.

The person **Dr. Johannessen selected** would progress to the next round.

When multiple pronouns are acceptable, choose whichever sounds best to your inner ear.

Some relative clauses can begin with a preposition:

The suitcase, **in which Adam had placed his entire T-shirt collection**, slid off the loading bay and into the parking lot.

And some begin with a description of quantity:

The voters, **many of whom felt deceived by Representative Jacobs**, chose Morris, instead.

You can change the meaning of some relative clauses by altering their punctuation. Read the following sentences:

Restrictive relative clause

Teachers **who ignore their responsibilities** can sometimes be let go by their administrators.

Non-restrictive relative clause

Teachers, **who ignore their responsibilities**, can sometimes be let go by their administrators.

Notice the difference in meaning between the two sentences. The first simply says that teachers who are lazy run the risk of losing their jobs. The second sentence, which includes commas around the relative clause, states that *all* teachers ignore their responsibilities.

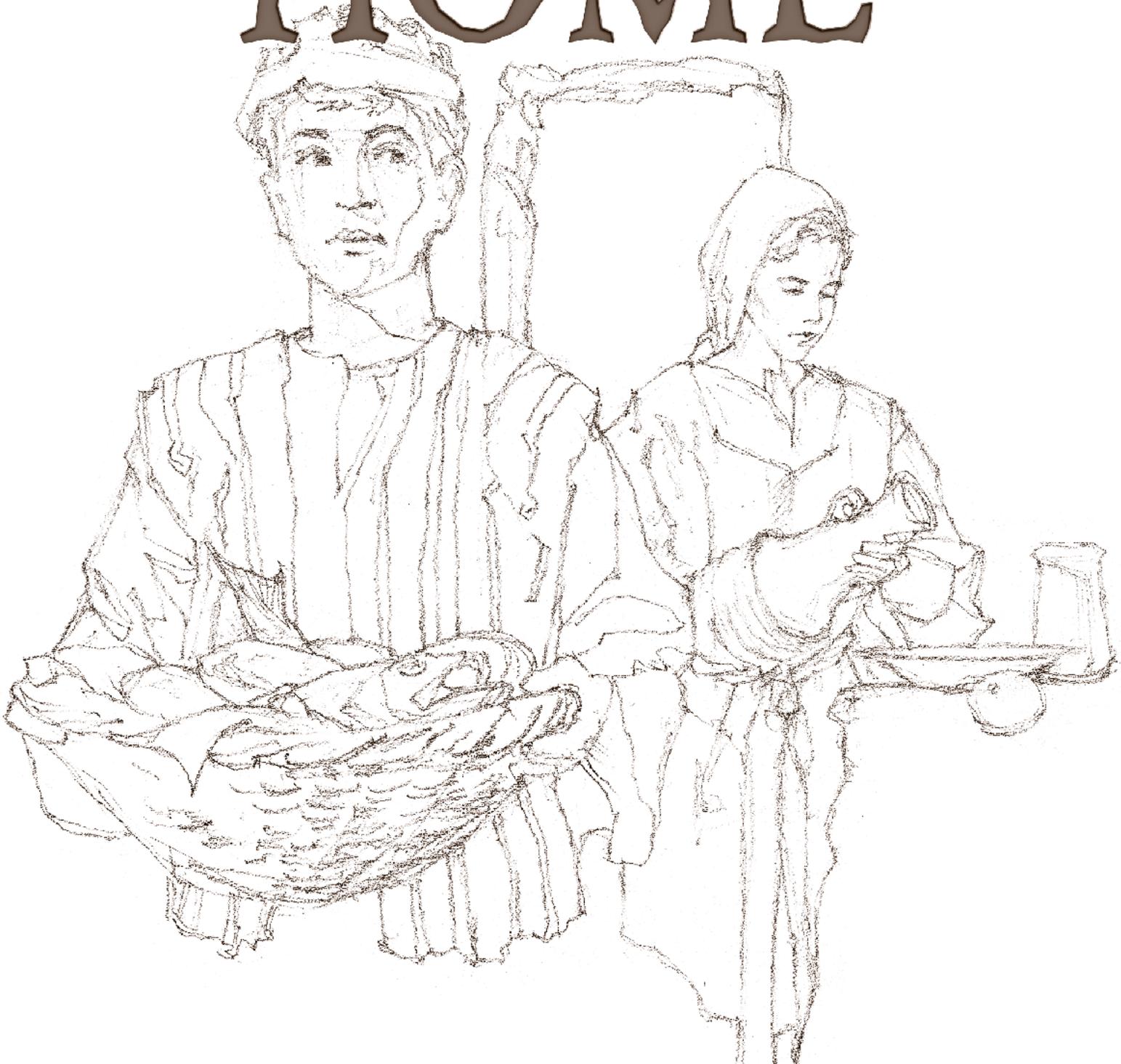
The first sentence above is called a *restrictive relative clause* because it limits the description to only *some* of the people or things.

The *non-restrictive relative clause* does not limit its description—it applies to all the people or things it modifies.

For more information on relative clauses and pronouns, check the index or table of contents in your grammar textbook.

L E S S O N S I X

ON THE WAY HOME



Writing Prompt

Your project for this lesson will be to write a story in the form of a dialogue between mother and son. The son, in this case, has just come home after witnessing a fantastic miracle—this man, Jesus, fed a *gazillion* people. And as if that weren't amazing enough, Christ used the boy's own lunch to do it. The mother is skeptical, understandably, but her ultimate response is up to you.

You can write this story as an omniscient, third person narrator, relating the appearance, actions, and words of your characters. Or you can script the dialogue like a play, with lines, cues, and stage directions for your actors. In either case, this project will challenge you to maintain distinct, consistent voices for the two characters.

All four Gospels record this miracle, so you have a bit of reading to do for this lesson. The references include Matthew 14:14–21; Mark 6:34–44; Luke 9:11–17; and John 6:1–13.

Target Truths from Scripture

- In this lesson's passages, we read of Christ's great compassion for others, an example we can follow only by God's grace.
- Christ felt compassion for others, and He showed love even when facing sorrow (Matt. 14:12–14).
- If we love Christ, we should follow His example and share truth with His people—we must feed His sheep (John 21:15–19).
- God doesn't need a super-Christian to serve Him. He will use anyone He chooses, including a person like Peter, who had many weaknesses and failures (Acts 10:9–20; Gal. 2:11–14).

Important Terms

Hyperbole—exaggeration used to emphasize an implied truth. See page 85.

Absolute—a phrase in a sentence that is constructed like a *be*-verb sentence, but does not actually have a verb. See page 91.

Tools of Grammar

Absolutes

An absolute is a phrase in a sentence that is constructed like a *be*-verb sentence, but does not actually have a *be*-verb. See the examples below.

Clara sat on the edge of the dock, **her feet swinging just over the surface of the water.**

Sevin, **his eyes a focused, startling blue,** slowly raised his bow.

Notice how both of the absolutes above are essentially *be*-verb sentences without the *be*. They could be written like those below:

Clara sat on the edge of the dock. Her feet **were** swinging just over the surface of the water.

Sevin slowly raised his bow. Sevin's eyes **were** a focused, startling blue.

As with relative clauses, you can use absolutes to edit for economy and variety. The examples above also focus the reader's attention on a small part of a larger whole, adding extra detail and texture to the picture painted in the rest of the sentence.

You can also indicate relationships with absolutes, as in the example below.

Her class portfolio finally completed, Serena could now relax.

This sentence suggests that Serena could now relax *because* her portfolio was complete.

To add great detail to your stories, revise to include strings of absolutes in a single sentence.

Cayden arrived home tired, **his feet sore, his knees bruised, his shirt torn under the collar, but his pride intact.**

For more information on absolutes, look in the index or table of contents in your grammar textbook.

L E S S O N S E V E N

THE VOYAGE TO TARSHISH



—Writing Prompt—

In this lesson you will write a story that intersects the tale of Jonah, the prophet from the Old Testament that was eaten by a fish, yet somehow made it back to shore.

Your source material is Jonah 1. Your story should include most of the events listed there, told primarily from the perspective of the sailors.

You'll have more freedom than you did in your other assignments, but you'll also have a tad more responsibility. How you write the story is up to you. The narrator is your choice—as is the format, the style, the structure, everything. You can write a collection of log entries by the captain of the boat, a first person account by a galley slave, or whatever else you might find challenging.

But it's also your responsibility to conduct your own research.

—Target Truths from Scripture—

- God offers mercy even to those who repeatedly reject Him, as He did with Lot (Gen. 19:15–17). Even these people fit in His plan to reveal His glory.
- To those who accept His mercy, He provides redemption (Luke 15:11–32).
- We serve a God who cares for His people (Psalm 139:7–12).

—Important Terms—

Symbol—a person, place, or thing used by the author to represent a larger idea or theme. See page 98.

Foil Character—a person that contrasts with another character, usually the main character, giving the author an opportunity to reveal more information one or the other. See page 99.

Motif—any element that recurs to reinforce a particular theme in a story. See page 99.

Focus—as presented in this study, the reader's point of awareness from sentence to sentence and from paragraph to paragraph. See page 104.

Coherence—in writing, the order, consistency, and smooth transition between thoughts and arguments. See page 105.

Periodic Structure—a sentence structure in which the majority of the sentence's meaning is withheld from the reader until the very end. See page 105.

Stream of Consciousness—a style of writing that seems to present thoughts and feelings unfiltered from a character's mind. See page 106.

Synecdoche—a literary device in which the author uses a small part of a larger object or body to represent the whole. See page 106.

Tools of Grammar

Focus

As you revise and edit your writing, you should keep tight control over your reader's *focus*—that point of awareness that travels over the picture the writer tries to paint. To get an idea of a paragraph without focus, read the example below:

Silas walked into class with a red ball cap perched on his head. The new substitute teacher wrote her name on the chalkboard. He sat down at his desk, and he looked up. Was everyone sick? Aaron wasn't here, Austin was missing, and so was Ryan.

The paragraph above requires readers to jump quickly and arbitrarily around the classroom scene. The author has not maintained a tight focus. Read the revision below:

Silas, a red cap perched on his head, walked into class, just as the new substitute teacher wrote her name on the chalkboard. Ignoring her, Silas went to his desk and sat down. Then he looked up—huh, Aaron wasn't here, nor was Austin or Ryan. Was everyone sick?

In this second paragraph, readers can more closely follow Silas' movement and thoughts. Their focus moves with him from the class door, past the teacher, and to his desk. They look up as he does, slowly realizing that his friends are absent. The paragraph ends with a quick guess as to why.

Think of each paragraph as a relay race, and each sentence as a member of the relay team. The *focus* is a baton that must be passed from the end of one sentence to the beginning of another. If a sentence drops the baton, or throws it too far without explanation, the reader can become confused. Generally speaking, you want to begin each sentence where the last one left off.

And if you want to start a new thought, just begin a new paragraph.

Read the paragraph about Silas again below. The arrows mark how each sentence passes the baton to the next.

Silas, a red cap perched on his head, walked into class, just as the new substitute teacher wrote her name on the chalkboard. Ignoring her, Silas went to his desk and sat down. Then he looked up—huh, Aaron wasn't here, nor was Austin or Ryan. Was everyone sick?

It's not an exact science, but if you find your readers confused with your direction, revise with the focus in mind. Do not grip your focus so tightly that your writing becomes stilted or unnatural. There are no hard and fast rules, but time and experience will teach you how to keep a reader's attention where you want it. This can only

happen when your writing has *coherence*—that is, an order, consistency, and flow to your thoughts.

Let's look at how you can control your focus with some of the grammar structures presented in this study.

Be-verbs, Active Verbs, and Passive Verbs

While active verbs are generally better, you can sometimes use a passive construction to maintain focus.

Virginia liked Jason. He was known as a decent guy.

And sometimes you can use a *be*-verb to set up an emphatic statement.

The one thing Cora wants, more than anything, even ice cream, **is a purple road bike**. One would be hers soon enough—assuming she could get her budget together.

The sentence above (“The one thing Cora wants . . .”) can be said to have a *periodic structure*—that is, the majority of the sentence’s meaning is withheld from the reader until the very end.

Relative Clauses

Relative clauses, as we reviewed in a previous lesson, are subordinate to the main clause in a sentence. But given two clauses, how do you decide which should be subordinate, and which should be the main clause?

Again, this choice requires an awareness of your readers’ focus. Read the sentences below:

Damian was born in Alaska.

Damian always loved the outdoors.

If you were to use the first sentence above as your main clause, your readers would expect you to further elaborate on Damian’s birth or early years.

Damian, **who always loved the outdoors**, was born in Alaska. His parents moved there to work in a fishery, and he spent his early years wandering the docks of a small fishing town, learning the taste and feel of the cold sea.

But if you were to subordinate the clause about Alaska and focus on his love of the outdoors, your paragraph might go like this:

Damian, **who was born in Alaska**, always loved the outdoors. Every summer he went fishing and hunting, conquering hills and rivers and forests. Even in the long, dark winters, he found excuses to venture out into the cold.

Absolutes

Writers often place absolutes in a series for the sake of focus and emphasis.

Bridget sat down in Hillary’s office, **back straight, legs crossed, hands folded, eyes focused and ready.**

The sequence in the sentence above is not arbitrary. The first three absolutes paint a picture of a woman that is professional and engaged, and the last phrase summarizes her mental state. The phrase “eyes focused and ready” could be considered a *synecdoche*, in which an author uses a small part of a person or object to represent the whole. Bridget’s eyes are focused and ready, and so is she. Other examples of synecdoche might include “so many mouths to feed,” which represents hungry people, or a “nice set of wheels,” which represents a vehicle.

When writing a long series of absolutes, consider using the final phrase to summarize the tone or mood of the sentence.

Absolutes are sometimes helpful when writing a sentence that presents a *stream of consciousness*—that is, a series of phrases that seems to arise unfiltered from a character’s mind.

I glanced at the clock on the wall. Andres wasn’t here—he wasn’t here, but would he be coming? I stood, **knees shaking, back sweaty, my fingers to my face so I could bite my nails**—gotta stop that—and waited. Waited *forever*.

Some readers find it difficult to digest an entire story in such a style, but in brief doses, stream of consciousness can create a sense of motion, panic, authenticity, or immediacy.

As you revise and edit your story, look for ways you can use these and other structures to tighten your focus.

L E S S O N E I G H T

Title Unknown

—Writing Prompt—

Congratulations! You've made it to the end of this study with seven—soon to be eight—stories under your belt. I trust that you've become a somewhat more skilled, more disciplined writer, one that appreciates the value of detail and texture, and one that isn't afraid to revise, rework, and make each sentence edifying to others.

I pray also that the Lord has used His Word in your life, and that you've benefited from examining Scripture closely, with a mind to learn and a heart to teach. If there's one thing I hope you take from this study, it's a desire to seek God's glory in His Word and then share it with others. Writing is just one of many ways to share Him.

For this final lesson, you're on your own. Well, you have your Bible, your brain, and the help of the One who gave you both, but the story is entirely up to you. Just use the following pages as you did before, researching, roughing, and drafting. Share a new perspective on events or characters in Scripture, one that might reveal just a little more of God's majesty to others.

And when you're finished, sketch a picture and a title on the page at the beginning of the lesson.

Have fun!

—Questions for Scripture Reading—

- Read your source passage again. What does it tell you about God's character and work?
- Does this passage remind you of any others? What other verses demonstrate the same truths about God?
- How does this impact you? How can you better reflect your Father to others?

EXTRA EXERCISES

Pulpit Committee

You've been tasked with organizing the search for a new pastor at your church. To begin evaluating candidates, you need to write a one-page introductory letter describing the qualities you're looking for. What kind of person does God intend for this position? How can He lead you to an appropriate decision?

Before you write, check out 1 Timothy 3:1–7, Titus 1:6–9, and any other passages you believe appropriate.

Our Shepherd

Your church is preparing a special worship service called *The Lord is Our Shepherd*. The director has asked you to compose a poem for the inside cover. Use Psalm 23 as your base text.

Fruit of the Spirit

You're helping a teacher at your church put together a bulletin board that features the nine-fold fruit of the Spirit from Galatians 5:16–26. This will be displayed in a 4th grade classroom. When the teacher falls ill, you decide to finish the board on your own, which means you'll need to write a summary of each characteristic listed in the passage.

Search the Scripture and write a short definition for every fruit. Keep in mind your audience. Support with specific verse references.

The Greatest of These

You've discovered an opportunity to write short articles for your local paper. When your new editor discovers that you're a Christian, she asks you to write an opinion piece answering the question: "Does Christianity Promote Charity?" Another writer will be featured alongside your article, arguing that no, Christianity doesn't encourage charity because the Bible says suffering is temporary and irrelevant in light of eternity.

You have 700 words or less. What will you write?

All You've Done

You've decided to attend an international convention for musicians and songwriters. There you enter a songwriting competition. You'll need to write the lyrics in two days, and someone else will write the music. The contest organizers assign you a topic—"All You've Done for Me"—thinking you'll write a love song.

You decide to take a different approach. Choose a passage of Scripture as your base text, and write a song of appreciation to God. If it helps, write your lyrics to match the music of a favorite hymn.

Now They See

Write a five-minute monologue as one of the blind people Christ healed in Matthew 9:27–31; 20:29–34; or Mark 10:46–52. Tell your story, sharing how Jesus changed your life.

That Special Someone

Read what 1 Corinthians 13:1–13 says about love. As you look ahead to marriage, what kind of person, and what kind of love, do you hope you'll find? Who is the perfect example of love?

For this project, list what you want and what you need from your future spouse. Describe also what you pray your marriage will look like, and who you'll ask God to help you become.

For the People

Imagine that you're starting a church in an area where there are none. The people you hope to serve have little idea of what a church should be like, so it's up to you to decide from Scripture your philosophy of ministry.

Write at least three pages describing the principles that will guide your new church. What is its purpose? How will it serve others? What kind of group do you hope your church members will become?

Before you begin this project, ask for a copy of your church's constitution, doctrinal statement, or philosophy of ministry. Do you agree with everything you find? Which parts are essential to a church body, and which are merely beneficial to serving people in your culture?

The Sword and the Son

After sharing a devotional message with some of your peers at a youth meeting, someone asks you a difficult question. You had spoken of how God used His power in the battle of Jericho (Josh. 2:1–24), but this person wants to know why God didn't spare the people living in the city. Why did God have them die? How could He be loving and merciful, yet still condemn these people?

You say you aren't sure of any quick answer—you'll need to spend some time in the Word and answer later. So now you have to write down what you believe about God's judgment. Who can you ask for help? What resources are available to answer this question? Do you agree with all of the arguments you find? Does the Bible itself address this question? How does Christ's sacrifice on the cross affect your answer?

You could fill entire books with possible answers, but keep this project under three pages. What are the most important points to remember?