

VBS Small Group Monday, June 24th

Today's Bible Story:

Jesus calls Matthew and eats with sinners • *Luke 5:27-32*

Today's Bottom Line:

Everyone is Wanted

CONNECT:

Get to know your group / W-A-N-T-E-D

What You Need: "W-A-N-T-E-D" Activity Strips in a bag

What You Do:

- Have 1 kid draw a strip from the bag and then:
- Introduce themselves and read the sentence/phrase
- Share a time they have done what the sentence says
- OR Share a way they can do what this says
- Pass the bag to the next kid to have introduce themselves and them share
- Go around the circle until all kids have had a chance to introduce themselves and share

SCRIPTURE READING:

Luke 5:27-32

²⁷ Later, as Jesus left the town, he saw a tax collector named Levi (**also called Matthew**) sitting at his tax collector's booth. "Follow me and be my disciple," Jesus said to him. ²⁸ So Levi got up, left everything, and followed him.

²⁹ Later, Levi held a banquet in his home with Jesus as the guest of honor. Many of Levi's fellow tax collectors and other guests also ate with them. ³⁰ But the Pharisees and their teachers of religious law complained bitterly to Jesus' disciples, "Why do you eat and drink with such scum?"

³¹ Jesus answered them, "Healthy people don't need a doctor—sick people do. ³² I have come to call not those who think they are righteous, but those who know they are sinners and need to repent."



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. What did Matthew collect? (Taxes)
2. Why did most people dislike Matthew? (Tax collectors sometimes took more money than they needed to)
3. How did Jesus treat Matthew differently than other people did? (Jesus spent time with him; went to his house; invited Matthew to follow Him)
4. How did Matthew respond to Jesus' invitation? (Accepted; he had a dinner party)
5. Why do you think Matthew was so surprised and excited about Jesus' invitation? (Matthew was not popular and other people did not like him, but Jesus still invited him; also, others didn't show him this kind of love or attention; he may have felt unworthy)
6. Did Matthew accept Jesus' invitation? (Yes)
7. Why is this surprising? (Matthew wanted to be invited even though others didn't invite him)
8. How did the Pharisees and teachers of the law act when they found out Jesus was partying with tax collectors? (Complained to Jesus' disciples; asked why)
9. How do you feel when you find out that other people are not doing what you think they should be doing? (Allow kids to respond – frustrated, we want them to get in trouble, etc.)
10. How did Matthew choose to celebrate? (He invited Jesus and some other tax collectors to come to dinner)
11. How did Jesus respond to the Pharisees and teachers of the law when they asked him why he spent time with tax collectors and sinners like Matthew? (Jesus called out the Pharisees and told them all are invited, not just people like you – they can't choose some people to be accepted and not others; Answers should point to Jesus loving and accepting others.)
12. How can we act like Jesus when we don't like someone? (Be kind even if we don't feel like it; invite people to our parties who we would not normally invite; help all people not just the ones we are friends with, etc.)



MEMORY VERSE

“**Even before he made the world,** (Raise arms up to make a world/circle)

God (Point up to God)

loved us (Cross arms over chest)

and chose us (Point thumbs to chest)

in Christ (Point up to God)

to be holy (Place hands over head and make a halo)

and without fault (shake and cross hands one over the other)

in his eyes.” (Bring hands to eyes to make binoculars)

Ephesians 1:4 NLT (Open hands like a book)

Practice the memory verse 3x's with your group. Ask anyone if they would like to recite the verse on their own.

PRAYER & KEYCHAIN ACTIVITY

Hand out a loop keychain to every child along with the **wanted sign** charm.

- Ask kids: what does a picture of a wanted sign have to do with today's lesson? (It is a reminder that we are wanted and chosen in Christ)
- Ask kids: how can we remember what we learned every time we see a wanted sign? (ALLOW RESPONSES)

Collect all keychains and keep in backpack to re-distribute each day and give to kids to take home on Thursday.

If time, ask for prayer requests.

Close in Prayer:

Dear God, thank You for loving each of us so very much. We sometimes mess up and don't do the right thing, but You keep loving us anyway. Thank You for sending Jesus to help us see how You want us to live and treat others. We celebrate You and love You. Amen.



VBS Small Group – Tuesday, June 25th

Today's Bible Story:

The Woman at the Well • *John 4:1-26, 39-42*

Today's Bottom Line:

Jesus wants to fill us with joy.

CONNECT:

Overflowing Joy

What You Need: Clear plastic tub, 3 clear plastic cups, scrap pieces of paper, pens or pencils, and Alka-Seltzer® tablets

What You Do:

- Give each kid a piece of scrap paper and a pen or pencil.
- Ask them to write down something that fills them up (or makes them feel happy, joyful, purposeful, etc.).
 - Prompt them with examples such as: doing good schoolwork, being a great soccer player, spending time with friends, playing video games, etc.
- Direct kids to fold and put their papers in one plastic cup.
- Point out the empty spaces you can still see through the cup and how the papers can't ultimately fill the cup completely. Say: something is still missing!
- Place a new plastic cup in the clear plastic tub. With the Alka-Seltzer tablet at the bottom, slowly pour water into the cup, and watch it overflow.

What You Say:

The woman at the well was surprised to find that Jesus knew all about her life and that He was—and is—the Savior God had promised. Like the woman at the well, there are times we try to fill ourselves up with different things—even good things—but those things alone will leave us feeling unfulfilled. We need something more to fill up our lives! Jesus is the only thing that will completely fill us with joy. As a matter of fact, the joy Jesus gives us is overflowing just like the water from the second cup. The woman couldn't help but tell everyone about Jesus by sharing the amazing things He told her. Because we are wanted in Christ, we can respond by putting our faith in Him. That's some good news that will get eternal life and overflowing joy.



SCRIPTURE READING

*(Note: you can read just the **bold** portion for younger groups)*

Jesus knew the Pharisees had heard that he was baptizing and making more disciples than John ² (though Jesus himself didn't baptize them—his disciples did). ³ So he left Judea and returned to Galilee.

⁴ He had to go through Samaria on the way. ⁵ Eventually he came to the Samaritan village of Sychar, near the field that Jacob gave to his son Joseph. ⁶ Jacob's well was there; and **Jesus, tired from the long walk, sat wearily beside the well about noontime.** ⁷ **Soon a Samaritan woman came to draw water, and Jesus said to her, "Please give me a drink."** ⁸ **He was alone at the time because his disciples had gone into the village to buy some food.**

⁹ **The woman was surprised, for Jews refuse to have anything to do with Samaritans. She said to Jesus, "You are a Jew, and I am a Samaritan woman. Why are you asking me for a drink?"**

¹⁰ **Jesus replied, "If you only knew the gift God has for you and who you are speaking to, you would ask me, and I would give you living water."**

¹¹ **"But sir, you don't have a rope or a bucket," she said, "and this well is very deep. Where would you get this living water? ¹² And besides, do you think you're greater than our ancestor Jacob, who gave us this well? How can you offer better water than he and his sons and his animals enjoyed?"**

¹³ **Jesus replied, "Anyone who drinks this water will soon become thirsty again. ¹⁴ But those who drink the water I give will never be thirsty again. It becomes a fresh, bubbling spring within them, giving them eternal life."**

¹⁵ "Please, sir," the woman said, "give me this water! Then I'll never be thirsty again, and I won't have to come here to get water."

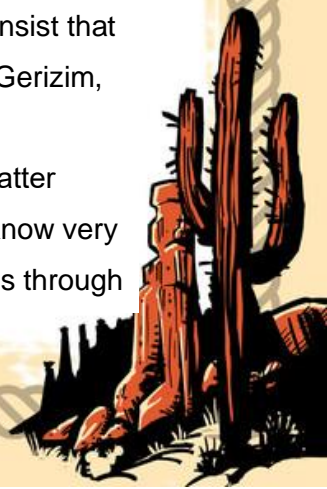
¹⁶ "Go and get your husband," Jesus told her.

¹⁷ "I don't have a husband," the woman replied.

Jesus said, "You're right! You don't have a husband— ¹⁸ for you have had five husbands, and you aren't even married to the man you're living with now. You certainly spoke the truth!"

¹⁹ "Sir," the woman said, "you must be a prophet. ²⁰ So tell me, why is it that you Jews insist that Jerusalem is the only place of worship, while we Samaritans claim it is here at Mount Gerizim, where our ancestors worshiped?"

²¹ Jesus replied, "Believe me, dear woman, the time is coming when it will no longer matter whether you worship the Father on this mountain or in Jerusalem. ²² You Samaritans know very little about the one you worship, while we Jews know all about him, for salvation comes through



the Jews. ²³But the time is coming—indeed it’s here now—when true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and in truth. The Father is looking for those who will worship him that way. ²⁴For God is Spirit, so those who worship him must worship in spirit and in truth.”

²⁵The woman said, “I know the Messiah is coming—the one who is called Christ. When he comes, he will explain everything to us.”

²⁶Then Jesus told her, “I AM the Messiah!”

³⁹Many Samaritans from the village believed in Jesus because the woman had said, “He told me everything I ever did!” ⁴⁰When they came out to see him, they begged him to stay in their village. So he stayed for two days, ⁴¹long enough for many more to hear his message and believe. ⁴²Then they said to the woman, “Now we believe, not just because of what you told us, but because we have heard him ourselves. Now we know that he is indeed the Savior of the world.”

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. On Jesus’ way to Galilee, he had to go through the town of...(Samaria)
2. What did Jesus decided to rest in near in Samaria? (A well)
3. Who came to get water from the well where Jesus was sitting? (A Samaritan woman)
4. What did Jesus first ask the woman when she came to the well? (For a drink)
5. Why did the woman think this was odd? (Jesus was a Jew, and Jews and Samaritans didn’t usually talk to each other or like each other)
6. Why is it so strange that Jesus talked with someone that others did not like? (Allow kids to respond. Ideas are: this is not a popular thing to do, people would think Jesus was weird, or they would judge him, etc.)
7. What did Jesus tell the woman about the water in the well? (She would be thirsty again after but He could give her living water that would make her never thirst again)
8. What surprising thing did Jesus tell the woman about? (Details of her life only she knew)
9. After Jesus was talking with the woman, who did she say would be coming soon to explain everything? (The Messiah)
10. What did the woman do after the time she spent with Jesus? (She began telling others about Him and helped others believe)
11. Why was she so excited to tell other people about Jesus? (She felt seen by Jesus, she was filled with hope, she was not looked down on, etc.)
12. In which book of the Bible is the story found? (John)
13. What is the bottom line from the story? (Jesus wants to fill us with joy)



14. How does Jesus fill us with Joy? (He knows us inside and out and still loves us completely, He cares about us deeply even when others don't, He fills us with purpose and gives us hope)
15. Can you say this week's memory verse? ("Even before he made the world, God loved us and chose us in Christ to be holy and without fault in his eyes." Ephesians 1:4)

MEMORY VERSE

"Even before he made the world, (Raise arms up to make a world/circle)

God (Point up to God)

loved us (Cross arms over chest)

and chose us (Point thumbs to chest)

in Christ (Point up to God)

to be holy (Place hands over head and make a halo)

and without fault (shake and cross hands one over the other)

in his eyes." (Bring hands to eyes to make binoculars)

Ephesians 1:4 NLT (Open hands like a book)

Practice the memory verse 3x's with your group. Ask anyone if they would like to recite the verse on their own.

PRAYER & KEYCHAIN ACTIVITY

Distribute the loop keychains to every child along with the **barrel** tag.

- Ask kids: What does a barrel have to do with today's lesson? (Jesus wants to fill us with joy. The barrel is a reminder that we can be overflowing with joy when we seek Jesus)
- Ask kids: How can we remember what we learned every time we see a barrel? (Allow kids to respond)

Collect all keychains and keep in backpack to re-distribute each day and give to kids to take home on Thursday.

If time, ask for prayer requests.



Close in Prayer:

Dear God, we thank You that You never leave us needing more. In a world where there are many good things that bring us happiness, You bring us complete joy even when things get hard. This week, we ask that Your Holy Spirit will remind us that we have everything we need when we follow You because you want to fill us with joy, Amen.



VBS Small Group – Wednesday, June 26th

Today's Bible Story:

Jesus' Parable of the Lost Son • *Luke 15:11-32*

Today's Bottom Line:

God wants us to come to Him

CONNECT:

Take A Snapshot

What You Need: Plastic cowboy hats, whip cream, Kix's Cereal

What You Do:

- Place a plastic cowboy hat upside down in the center of the table.
- Carefully fill the hat with whip cream.
- Give each kid one cup of cereal.
- Ask the kids to think of examples of good news they've celebrated in their own lives or in the lives of others.
 - For example: Acing a test, winning a softball tournament, getting their first cell phone, a family member finding out they are cancer free, etc.
- Each time a kid shares an example, have them toss a Kix's cereal into the cowboy hat so it sticks to the whip cream.
- Continue taking turns to give everyone plenty of opportunities to share, as time allows.
- Ask the following questions, and allow time for discussion:
 - What's the best news you've ever heard?
 - Have you ever felt like the younger son (from the story today) who was forgiven?
 - Have you ever felt like the older son (from the story today) who didn't think his brother deserved a celebration?
- Remind kids that in the parable Jesus told, the son who was welcomed home was able to celebrate the good news of unconditional love and forgiveness. The older son felt jealous because he hadn't done anything wrong, and yet the party was for his brother, who messed up. But the father was celebrating the good news of having both of his sons being home. We should remember that no matter what, we can always join the party and celebrate the good news of what Jesus did for all of us!



- Be open to any kids in your group that may have questions about what Jesus did on the cross and what it means to have a relationship with Him.

SCRIPTURE READING:

¹¹To illustrate the point further, Jesus told them this story: “A man had two sons. ¹²The younger son told his father, ‘I want my share of your estate now before you die.’ So his father agreed to divide his wealth between his sons.

¹³“A few days later this younger son packed all his belongings and moved to a distant land, and there he wasted all his money in wild living. ¹⁴About the time his money ran out, a great famine swept over the land, and he began to starve. ¹⁵He persuaded a local farmer to hire him, and the man sent him into his fields to feed the pigs. ¹⁶The young man became so hungry that even the pods he was feeding the pigs looked good to him. But no one gave him anything.

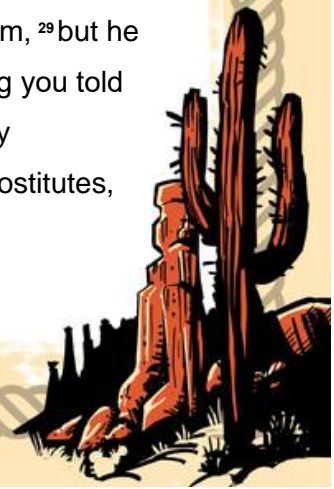
¹⁷“When he finally came to his senses, he said to himself, ‘At home even the hired servants have food enough to spare, and here I am dying of hunger! ¹⁸I will go home to my father and say, ‘Father, I have sinned against both heaven and you, ¹⁹and I am no longer worthy of being called your son. Please take me on as a hired servant.’”

²⁰“So he returned home to his father. And while he was still a long way off, his father saw him coming. Filled with love and compassion, he ran to his son, embraced him, and kissed him. ²¹His son said to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against both heaven and you, and I am no longer worthy of being called your son.’

²²“But his father said to the servants, ‘Quick! Bring the finest robe in the house and put it on him. Get a ring for his finger and sandals for his feet. ²³And kill the calf we have been fattening. We must celebrate with a feast, ²⁴for this son of mine was dead and has now returned to life. He was lost, but now he is found.’ So the party began.

²⁵“Meanwhile, the older son was in the fields working. When he returned home, he heard music and dancing in the house, ²⁶and he asked one of the servants what was going on. ²⁷‘Your brother is back,’ he was told, ‘and your father has killed the fattened calf. We are celebrating because of his safe return.’

²⁸“The older brother was angry and wouldn’t go in. His father came out and begged him, ²⁹but he replied, ‘All these years I’ve slaved for you and never once refused to do a single thing you told me to. And in all that time you never gave me even one young goat for a feast with my friends. ³⁰Yet when this son of yours comes back after squandering your money on prostitutes, you celebrate by killing the fattened calf!’



³¹“His father said to him, ‘Look, dear son, you have always stayed by me, and everything I have is yours. ³²We had to celebrate this happy day. For your brother was dead and has come back to life! He was lost, but now he is found!’”

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Who does the father symbolize in the Parable of the Lost Son? (*God*)
2. What was the most important gift the father gave the son? (*Forgiveness*)
3. In the story, forgiveness led to a “Welcome Home” party for the son. What does forgiveness lead to for us? (*A relationship with God that will last forever*)
4. Have you ever experienced God’s forgiveness? (*allow each kid to respond*)
5. What’s the best news you’ve ever heard about Jesus?
6. How can you be happy for someone else, even when you don’t feel like they deserve a celebration?
7. What are some ways we can celebrate the good news?
8. Have you ever made a mistake and had to ask for forgiveness?
9. How do you feel when someone forgives you?
10. Do you feel like you deserve God’s forgiveness?

MEMORY VERSE

“**Even before he made the world,** (Raise arms up to make a world/circle)

God (Point up to God)

loved us (Cross arms over chest)

and chose us (Point thumbs to chest)

in Christ (Point up to God)

to be holy (Place hands over head and make a halo)

and without fault (shake and cross hands one over the other)

in his eyes.” (Bring hands to eyes to make binoculars)

Ephesians 1:4 NLT (Open hands like a book)

Practice the memory verse 3x’s with your group. Ask anyone if they would like to recite the verse on their own.



PRAYER & KEYCHAIN ACTIVITY

Response Cards:

What You Need: activity page for each kid; highlighter for each kid

Give each kid a "Response Card" Activity Page.

- Talk about how God loves us and gave Jesus for us. Talk about how Jesus lived a perfect life and died so we could have a relationship with God that lasts forever.
- Give kids time to read through each statement on the card.
- Set out the highlighters.
- As you read through each statement again, invite kids to highlight the statement if it matches how they feel. Don't pressure kids to highlight any statement. They can also simply highlight some of the artwork on the card.
- When done, ask kids to flip their cards over to write their names on the back and to write down any questions they have about following Jesus.

Prayer Accepting Jesus:

Dear Jesus,

Thank you for being a personal God who loves me and wants to have a relationship with me.

I know that I make mistakes. I believe that you died on the cross for my sins and then you rose again.

Please forgive me for my mistakes. I want to have a relationship with you and ask you to fill my life with your love.

God, I make the decision to make you king over every area of my life. I choose to put my faith in you. Please grow me into the kind of person you want me to be.

Thank you. I love you, Amen.

If you prayed this prayer with me today, you are now God's child. Becoming a part of God's family is something to celebrate! If you prayed this prayer today, make sure you tell your parents.

If you had a child accept Christ in your group, during the large group worship time or here in small group, please complete the Decision QR form for each child.



Distribute the loop keychains to every child along with the **boots** tag.

- Ask kids: what does a pair of boots have to do with today's lesson? (God wants us to come to Him. The boots symbolize walking towards Jesus)
- Ask kids: how can we remember what we learned every time we see a pair of boots?
(Allow kids to respond)

Collect all keychains and keep in backpack to re-distribute each day and give to kids to take home on Thursday.

If time, ask for prayer requests.

Closing Prayer:

Dear God, today we think about the ultimate sacrifice You made so we can celebrate the good news. Instead of leaving us in our sin, You sent Jesus to die on the cross to take our sin, leaving us with freedom and forgiveness. We ask that this good news sinks deep down in our hearts today and bursts out of us like confetti to everyone we know! May we remind everyone that this good news isn't just for us, but for everybody. In Jesus' name, Amen!



VBS Small Group – Thursday, June 27th

Today's Bible Story:

You Are the Light of the World • *Matthew 5:14-16*

Today's Bottom Line:

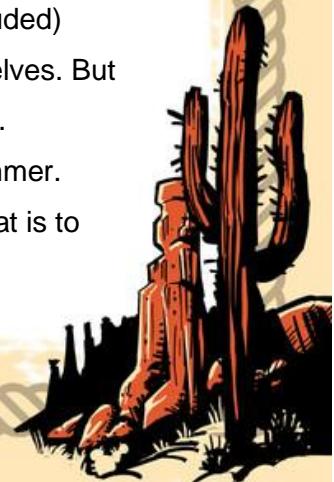
Jesus wants you to shine

CONNECT:

What You Need: "Glow Party Game" Activity Page, cones and glow necklaces

What You Do:

- Divide the group into two teams and direct them to go on either side of your table.
- Arrange the prepared cones in number order, single file, so that the "3" is furthest away from the kids and the "1" is closest.
- Hand the first kid in each line a glow necklace.
- Explain they will toss the glow necklace and try to make it land around one of the cones.
 - If they don't make it onto a cone, they will go to the end of the line.
 - If the necklace lands on a cone, you will ask them a question from the "Glow Party Game" Activity Page that coincides with the number on the cone. (Explain that the number indicates the level of difficulty for their question.)
- If they get the answer right, their team gets the number of points according to that cone.
- If they get the answer wrong, their team get no points, and the question can be used again for another turn.
- Continue playing in this way until all questions have been asked. Whichever team has the most points at the end is the winner!
- Invite kids to sit down. Ask the following questions:
 - What does it actually mean to shine your light for Jesus?
 - Who in your life can you be a light to?
 - How can you be a light with people who you don't know or who may be different than you? (ie: a new kid at school or someone who needs to feel included)
- Hand each kid two glow necklaces. Explain that they can keep one for themselves. But they can use the other to give to a friend when they invite them to do something. Challenge your group to think about this as they go through the rest of their summer. Remind them how important it is to love ALL people, and one way we can do that is to invite people into our world who aren't typically included.



SCRIPTURE READING:

¹⁴“You are the light of the world—like a city on a hilltop that cannot be hidden. ¹⁵No one lights a lamp and then puts it under a basket. Instead, a lamp is placed on a stand, where it gives light to everyone in the house. ¹⁶In the same way, let your good deeds shine out for all to see, so that everyone will praise your heavenly Father.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS - “Tell” what Jesus did

1. Is it challenging to invite people who are different from you? Why or why not?
2. How can YOU be a light for Jesus?
3. Who can help you shine your light for Jesus?
4. Why did Jesus give us the responsibility of shining His light?
5. How can Matthew 5:14-16 provide you with a sense of purpose?
6. Jesus told the disciples that we should not put a lamp under what? (A bowl)
7. How can we shine our light? (Answers will vary but may include helping others and treating others the way we want to be treated)
8. Should we only shine our light to our closest friends and family? (No)
 - Who were the people we learned about this week that Jesus helped? (Matthew the tax collector, the woman at the well, the younger son in the parable)
 - Who are people that you can shine your light to that don't already know about Jesus? (allow kids to respond)
9. What did Jesus say about a town built on a hill? (It can't be hidden)
10. Why should we let our light shine before others? (They'll see the good things you do and bring glory to God)
11. What's today's bottom line? (Jesus wants you to shine)
12. What book of the Bible did today's story come from? (Matthew)
13. When Jesus was talking about being a light of the world, where was He and what was He doing? (Sitting on a mountainside, teaching people about how God wants us to live)
14. What does joy have to do with shining our light? (When we live life with joy, we shine the light of Jesus to those around us)
15. What are some things we can do to let our light shine? (Answers may vary but may include anything about loving others, telling people about Jesus, inviting friends to church, etc.)



MEMORY VERSE

“**Even before he made the world,** (Raise arms up to make a world/circle)

God (Point up to God)

loved us (Cross arms over chest)

and chose us (Point thumbs to chest)

in Christ (Point up to God)

to be holy (Place hands over head and make a halo)

and without fault (shake and cross hands one over the other)

in his eyes.” (Bring hands to eyes to make binoculars)

Ephesians 1:4 NLT (Open hands like a book)

Practice the memory verse 3x's with your group. Ask anyone if they would like to recite the verse on their own.

PRAYER & KEYCHAIN ACTIVITY

Distribute the loop keychains to every child along with the **lantern** tag.

- Ask kids: what does a lantern have to do with today's lesson? (Jesus wants us to shine. The lantern is a reminder that we can shine for Jesus)
- Ask kids: how can we remember what we learned every time we see a lantern? (Allow kids to respond)

Kids will be taking home keychains today.

If time, ask for prayer requests.

Wow, God! Thank You for this amazing time we've had together learning about how You want us to follow Jesus here, there, and everywhere. Whether You're calling us to help friends in another country, or to be there for the new kid sitting at the desk across from us, please remind us how important it is to follow You. Please give us courage for whatever mission You've set before us. Give us excitement to **GO where Jesus leads**. Remind us that while You could choose anyone, You've chosen us. Please remind each and every one of my friends sitting here what a very big deal they are in Your big Kingdom plans. We love You, and we pray these things in Jesus' Name, Amen.

