

A Thousand Words

by Lee M. Fields

I enjoy looking at photographs of my children. I marvel at how they have changed physically over the years. Yet, the photos do not record the growth of my children spiritually and emotionally. Words are necessary for that. This quarter's material treats the theme Images of Christ in a powerful way. The images are word pictures. They record sharply the real person and work of Christ. Following images from the Book of Hebrews and the Gospels, James presents images to help us put hands and feet to our faith.

Unit 1: Images of Christ in Hebrews

Hebrews was written to Jewish believers undergoing persecution. The author writes to bolster their faith by presenting images of who Jesus really is. Lesson 1 stresses the uniqueness of God's Son. He is of the same essence as the Father. Christ's priesthood (reality) is both different from and superior to the Levitical priesthood (shadow), as Lesson 2 drives home. In Lesson 3, we see the author of Hebrews contrasting the earthly and heavenly temples. This strengthened the original readers, who were undergoing persecution. Lesson 4 offers us a picture of Christ as the best example of enduring under wrongful suffering. Lesson 5 leaves no doubt that Christ's nature ought to affect our relationships with other Christians, our commitment to truth, and our praise to God.

June 01	God's Son	Hebrews 1:1–12
June 08	Only Intercessor	Hebrews 7:20–28
June 15	Perfect Redeemer	Hebrews 9:11–18; 10:12–18
June 22	Trustworthy Leader	Hebrews 12:1–13
June 29	Eternal Christ	Hebrews 13:1–16

Unit 2: Images of Christ in the Gospels

Each of the next four lessons comes from a different Gospel account. The writers are careful to present accurate pictures of Jesus. In Lesson 6, Jesus is the master teacher—one able to confront successfully both spiritual and earthly opponents. Jesus is the powerful healer in Lesson 7; his power as healer confirms the truth of his message. Lesson 8 asks a question: if Jesus can wash his disciples' feet, how can we not follow his example of serving one another? Lesson 9 recounts Peter's great confession. It also gives us a foretaste of the suffering the Messiah had to undergo.

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Unit 2 *Images of Christ in the Gospels Continued*

July 06	Master Teacher	Luke 4:31–37; 20:1–8
13	Powerful Healer	Mark 1:29–45
20	Exemplary Servant	John 13:1–20
27	Promised Messiah	Matthew 16:13–23

Unit 3: Images of Christ in Us

Instead of looking at Jesus from the outside as we would watch a movie, James allows us to see Jesus from inside of us, as though we were actors in the movie. It is quite a vista to see Jesus inside us, changing us to be more like him. For example, Lesson 10 stresses that when Christ lives in us, the Father is able to help us become more like him in attitudes, speech, and service. Christ was no respecter of persons, as Lesson 11 establishes, and neither should we be. Lesson 12 offers us James's thoughts regarding areas in which our speech must be wise. As Christ works in us, may our words be used for the benefit of others. Lesson 13 leaves no doubt that we should be godly servants in both attitudes and actions. Jesus expects us to correct a condemning judgment of others. The subjects of patience and prayer as the correct approaches to handling our desires wrap up our quarter in Lesson 14. In the course of studying these lessons, let us study the word pictures of Jesus. Let us also take before and after photographs of ourselves. As we become more like him, I dare say we will marvel at the change.

August 03	Doers of the Word	James 1:17–27
10	Impartial Disciples	James 2:1–13
17	Wise Speakers	James 3
24	Godly Servants	James 4:1–12
31	Prayerful Community	James 5:7–18