

# The Life of John Paton

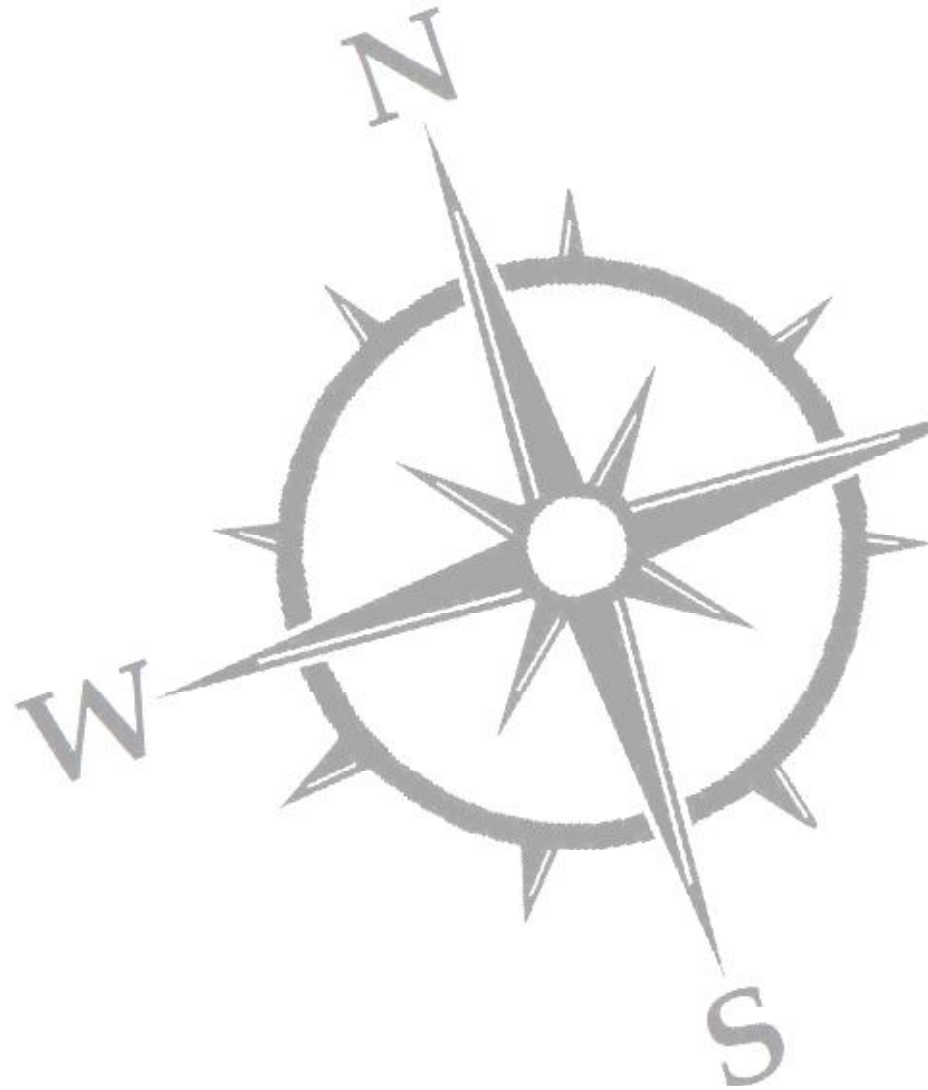
(1824-1907)

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## Lesson: 3.4 – Preparation Missionary Spotlight Series

This story shows how God prepares a missionary by first saving him and then opening doors for him. God has a plan for each person who trusts Christ as his Savior. God prepares missionaries for their mission work long before they are on the field. He gives them opportunities and gifts to develop in order that He might better use them on the field. God had some things that He wanted to do in John Paton's life to prepare him for what lay ahead of him.

*"Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ." - 2 Timothy 2:3*







### **Who remembers where we left off last week?**

(Read the last paragraph from last week's lesson to begin this lesson as a review).

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I took a deep breath. I knew an offer like this should not be passed up. A poor boy like me did not get a chance for a job like this. "Sir," I began, "I would be very sad not to have this job that I enjoy so much..." I said trying to think before I spoke more. "I am grateful for all you have done for me, but I cannot accept that offer." My boss frowned and let out a long sigh. "Very well, give me your drawing instruments. You can pick up your pay for this week on your way out," he said in a huff. I again thanked him for all of his kindness and told him that I enjoyed working for him.

The four-mile walk home seemed much longer that day. "Had I made the right decision?" I wondered as I followed the long dirt road home. As I walked, I passed several fields with all sorts of crops ripe for picking.

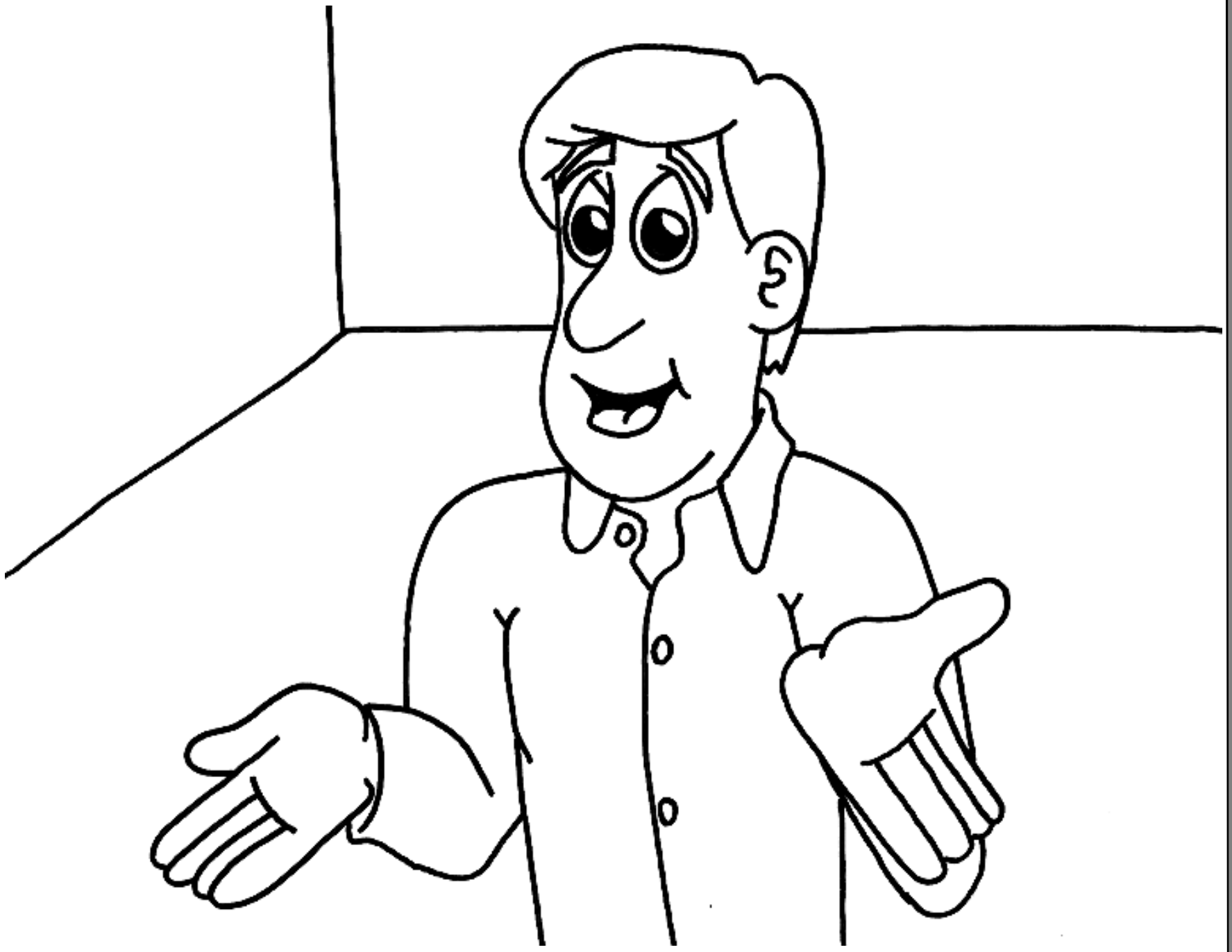
I noticed that it was getting close to harvest time. I wondered if maybe I could get a job working for a farmer. I had never done that kind of thing, but I needed to earn more money to be able to go to school. I traveled to the nearby village of Lockerbie where my Grandad lived. There, I found a farmer who was willing to hire me. My first try at tying up a bale of hay led to it falling all over the place. The farmer laughed but was patient with me. Even though I wasn't very good at being a farmer, I always tried very, very hard to do my best and learn all that I could. Finally, I had saved up enough money to go to college.

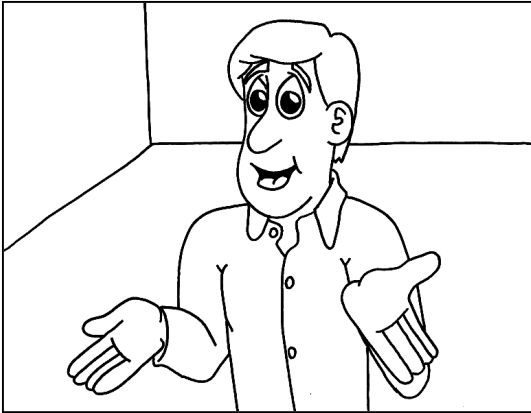
"It's going to be very different," I said to my younger brother as I finished packing my bags before the sun was even up. "Glasgow is a huge city and is very different from our small village." My father was waiting for me at the door. "I'll walk with you for the first six miles, son," he said. I knew that it was almost a 40-mile walk to reach the train station that would take me the rest of the way. The night before had been filled with hugs and tears and the prayers of my parents and all of my brothers and sisters. As we walked, my father and I talked. "If you get a job working for the church there, we may not see you for several years," my father said. I told him that I hoped that I would get a job like that. Visiting and preaching to people in the poorest parts of Glasgow would help me to get ready to be a missionary. "I'll tell you something else that will help," my father said, "there are many places where a missionary has to do many things completely on his own. The jobs you

did in my workshop, the time you spent making maps, and the time you spent harvesting and planting crops may come in handy one day!" As we got closer to the spot where we would part ways, neither one of us spoke. I saw tears coming down my father's cheeks. We stopped and prayed together. "God bless you, son," my father said as I hurried down the road fighting back tears. I prayed that I would always live in such a way that I would be the kind of man that made my parents proud. I reached the top of a hill and turned around one last time and saw my father still standing in the spot I had left him.

Three days later, I was standing with another young man in front of several men in Glasgow. "We can't afford to hire both of you for this job with the church, but we also cannot decide between you, because we feel that both of you would be great at it. Would you be willing to share the pay and both work for us?" The other young man and I nodded our heads in agreement. As I stepped out into the street, I looked around at the tall buildings. Carts and wagons hurried past. People went this way and that way all around me. How different this place was from my home. "Glasgow's not that bad," I said to myself with a smile. Soon though, I realized that living on half wages wouldn't be as easy as I thought. Not getting a lot of food and living in a damp room soon led to me getting very, very sick. After going back home to recover, I realized that living like this might help me when I talked with those who also lived in the poorest places of the city.

When I got back to Glasgow, I knew





“This isn’t a dance class?” the boy said. Shrieks of laughter came from all the other children. “If you are in the wrong class, it would be best if you leave now!” I said. The boy stood up and marched to the front of the room and put his fists up to fight me. I stepped over to the door. But instead of running out, I locked it and put the key in my pocket. The boy looked confused. The other teachers had run off! The boy began to throw punches, but growing up with all those brothers had taught me one thing... how to dodge a punch. “Whack!” went the boy’s fist against the desk as he swung at me and I dodged out of the way. I grabbed the cane and used it until the boy said “Please stop...I’ve had enough,” and stumbled back to his desk. “You tell all your friends,” I said to the class, “if you are willing to learn than I am willing to teach you. Even young Goliath back there can stay and learn if he behaves.”

The next morning, I had the younger children for the first time. I thought they would be easier, but it wasn’t long before I heard “meow, meow” coming from one side of the room and spotted two boys through the floorboards hiding under the schoolhouse. At lunchtime, I went out and caught them by their shirts and brought them before the class. “What should we do with these two?” I asked the class. Hands shot up. “You should lock them outside without lunch,” one child said. “You should use your cane on them... ten good whacks should do the trick,” another said. “Since this is your first time,” I said to the boys, “and if you apologize, I won’t use the cane on you.” The boys apologized and never gave me any more problems.

that I needed to find work. I needed more money to begin my medical studies. I knew that I may end up in a place where no doctor could be found for miles and miles. I hunted and hunted, but no jobs could be found. I looked all over the city, but then one day, I noticed a small sign in a window that read “teacher wanted.”

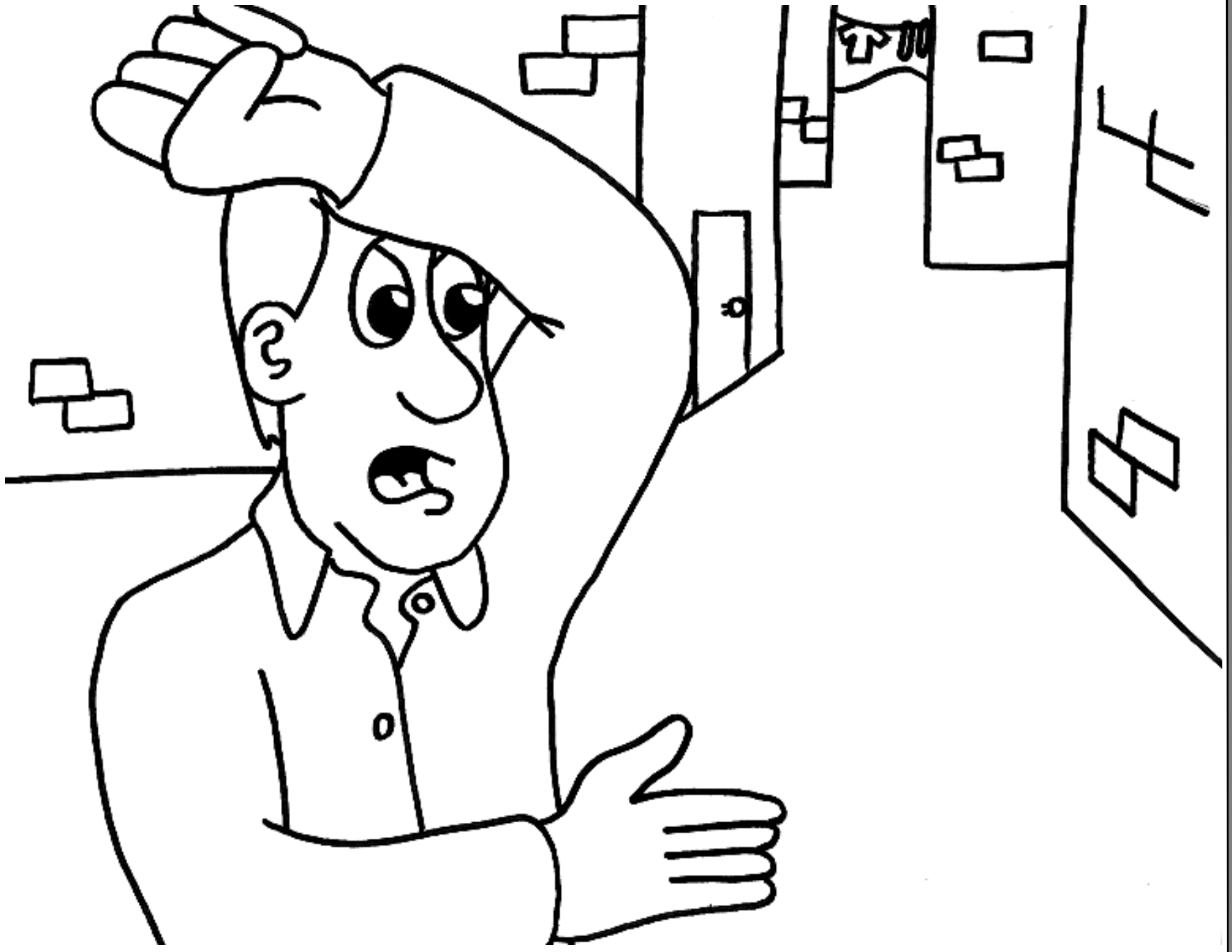
“You’re the only one who has applied for the job and that sign has been up for many, many weeks!” the minister said. “I must tell you the truth. People who know about Maryhill Church School won’t apply for the job. We have two classes...one for the older children and one for the younger ones. It’s the older ones that are a problem. A few of them broke chairs and frightened away all the other teachers. Maybe a cane like this will help you get them in line,” he said. The sight of the cane brought back some ugly memories of my old schoolmaster.

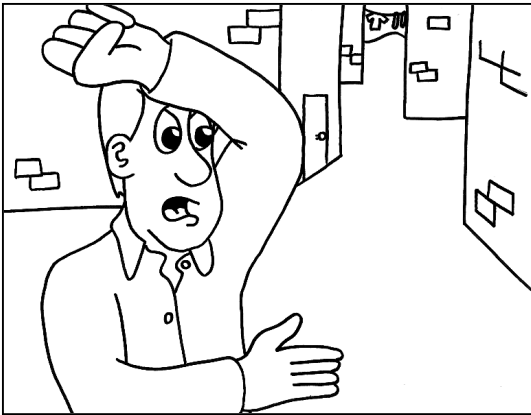
Very soon after, I stood in front of a class of kids covered in dirt and grime from working in the coal pits and the mills. “Let’s get started,” I said. At that instant, a bigger boy in the back stood up and began to dance.

As the weeks went by, more and more students came to the school. One day, the minister came to me. “The school now has a fine reputation and a lot of students. The committee has told me to hire a qualified teacher. I have to give you a week’s notice.”

One week later, I was again out of a job. “What should I do now?” I wondered as I left the school. But God had guided me so far and I knew He had a plan in mind. I didn’t have to wait long to find out. When I got home that day there was a letter waiting there for me. “We have been watching you, John,” the letter said, “and we want you to come and work for us.” The letter was sent from the Glasgow City Mission. My new job would be to visit the poorest parts of Glasgow and tell the people about Jesus. This is exactly what I have been waiting for! I got down on my knees and thanked the Lord for providing this perfect job for me so quickly.

“Get over against the wall!” another mission worker shouted a couple of days later. I moved just in time as a smelly liquid splashed down on the ground beside me from a window in the house above. I had been assigned to work in the Green District, but there wasn’t much green about it. It was nothing more than a maze of dirty, stinky alleyways. “I’ll show you your meeting place now,” the worker continued. Around the next corner, we stopped in front of a two-story building. “Is that cows I hear?” I said. “Yep,” the mission worker said. “The man keeps cows in here, but up above is a hayloft. It’s the only place available for you to meet. You can meet here every Sunday evening.” I was excited to begin. Each day, I would get





Jesus had done for him.

Exactly one year after I started in the Green District, I stood before my congregation of seven men and women. “I’m sorry to tell you this, but the mission wants to move me to another district.” I could see how sad they all were at the news. I told them that I had talked the mission into letting me stay a little longer though. “If we all brought a family member or friend next week, you could tell them your congregation has doubled in just one week!” one man said. We all laughed. I thought it was a joke, but the next Sunday each one of them had a friend there with them. One by one, the people decided that they would go and see what my meetings were all about in the hayloft. One by one, the people asked Jesus to save them and joined us. Everything seemed to be going well... or so I thought.

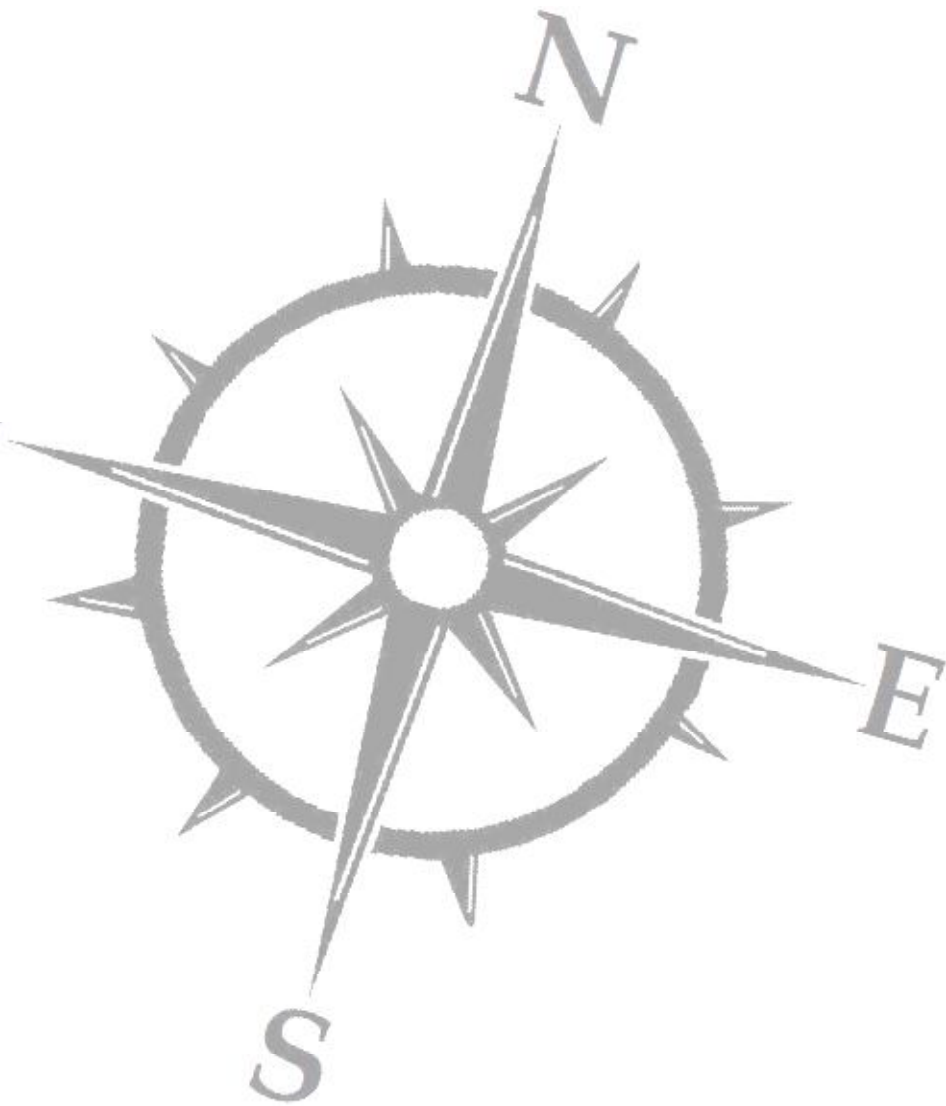
WHACK! I suddenly felt a sharp pain in my forehead early one morning as I walked past a row of houses. My eyes were blurry and I fell onto the cobblestone road holding my head. I tried to get up, but I fell back down on my knees again right away. My head was aching and spinning. I looked down at my hands and saw that they were now covered in blood. I looked all around. I looked up and down the quiet and empty street. “What just happened?” I wondered as I closed my eyes again.

**What do you think happened to John? To find out, come back next time.**

*(For additional information, discussion questions and materials on this lesson please refer to **lesson 3.4** on **page 136** in your *Vanuatu Expedition - Leader's Guide*).*

up early and go through the Green District and pray with people and invite them to come to the hayloft. “Why do you bother us,” a man said one day “just leave us alone.” I knew that the people here needed Jesus and I wanted to continue to tell them about Him. “Don’t listen to him,” one older man said as I was talking to some younger men one day. “The Bible is not true. There is no God who cares about you.” This older man had a whole library of books that taught that there was no God. One day, I learned that this same older man had become very sick. I decided that I would go and visit the man.

As I sat next to his bed, I read from the Bible. The man’s face had a large frown on it. “God loves you,” I said, “He wants to take away all of your sins and give you peace in your heart.” The man was very quiet for what seemed like forever. Finally, he looked up and said, “I do need peace... I cannot die without God... I will accept Him today.” Surprisingly, the man got better and once he was able, he asked his wife to help him tear up and throw all of his old books into the fireplace. He told everyone he knew what



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For further reading or to obtain more information on this portion of the life of this missionary, please consult the following sources from which we obtained our information:

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