Gleaner's Sunday School Lesson at First Baptist Church
October 4, 2026
Unit: How God Speaks: All kinds of things happen in our world. Gravity is one of the physical realities, but spiritual realities are even more foundational: One of the most essential spiritual realities is that God speaks to us—sometimes in thunder, or a whisper, but always with clarity and purpose. Like gravity, His voice demands a response. In this unit, we are learning how God speaks to us through His People, the Bible, Circumstances, His Church, and His Holy Spirit. We also learn how to respond.

Session #5: God Speaks Through His Church (p.55)
The Scripture: Primary Source: ***Bible Studies for Life, the Senior Adult Personal Study Guide,* Fall Edition, *2026*** *or* open your Bible to (**Ephesians 4: 11-16, 25-29)**

Prayer: Heavenly Father, Thank You for Your everlasting love, mercy, grace, and especially Your forgiveness of sin, presence with us, and the gift of Your church. Guide us personally or through group discussion so we can hear You speak through each other. In your holy name, I pray, Amen.

Question #1 (p. 55): How do you most often communicate with family and friends? I communicate with family, friends, as well as shut-ins face to face or on the phone or church website (text or audio). God uses His church to help us grow in our relationship to Him. We are taught, encouraged, and ministered through other believers.
The Point: God communicates to us through other believers.

- **The Setting:** Paul most likely penned this letter from prison in Rome (AD 60-61) to help believers deal with challenges from other religions and philosophies. Several major themes dominate the letter: (1) The roles of God the Father, the Son, and Holy Spirit in both salvation and the church's creation. (2) The desperate condition of humans apart from God's grace, and (3) The practical application of salvation to the church, families, and individuals.
- **Text:** Some scholars view Ephesians as a formal treatise rather than a pastoral letter: Paul included: a greeting referencing "grace.and peace" (1:1-2) significant because these are God's unmerited gifts, then a thanksgiving, (1:3-23), and in the main body God's purposes in Christ (Chaps 1-3) Chapter 4, Paul focuses on God's purposes in the church (Chaps 4-6). He speaks to us through both spiritual leaders and fellow believers in the body of Christ. He also provides a closing (6:21-24).

Read Ephesians 4:11-14 (p. 56) God speaks through our spiritual leaders.

Verses 11-13: Paul liked to portray the local church as a physical **body.** He listed five groups Christ gave His body: **apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers.** With Christ as the head, they were to **equip the saints** for the work of **ministry to build up the body of Christ until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of Christ.** In Acts, *the word **saints** designate believers in Christ.*
(Acts 9:13,32,41,41;26,10)

Verse 14: Paul said, "then we will **no longer be little children blown around by every wind of teaching.** When gifted leaders equip believers for the work of ministry and believers utilize their gifts to build up the body of Christ, then stability in doctrine and practice will be evident in the church. The term ***blown around*** conveys the confusing results of false teaching.
Question #2 (p.57) How would you contrast common misunderstandings of the role of church leaders with the real reasons God gives leaders to the church?

Question #3 (p.47) What can happen when believers do and do not listen to God speak through their spiritual leaders?

Read Ephesians 4:15-16 (p. 58) It really matters what we say with our words and actions since God speaks through the body of believers—His church;

Verses 15, 16: The language of God's people is laden with **truth and love of God.** When members of Christ's body speak the truth in love, the result is relationships where believers build up and benefit one another. False teachers promote their own agenda. Mature Christians search for truth as a united body caring for member's needs. Paul said **let us grow in every way into him who is the head— Christ.** The body grows as members lovingly cooperate with one another under His control. Spiritual growth in our lives is contingent on Jesus being in charge.
Question #4:(p.59) Do you find it harder to speak the truth or speak in love? Why are both absolutely essential?
Question #5: (p.59) How have you experienced spiritual growth as a result of other believers speaking the truth in love to you?

Read Ephesians 4:25-29 (p. 61) God speaks through us to others in the church.

Verse 25: We are to **put away lying and speak the truth.** Those within the body of Christ should be well known in their communities as honest, reliable people whose word can be trusted.
Verse 26: Paul listed two commands that belong together: **Be angry and do not sin.**
Believers must not sin by allowing the right attitude toward evil to become evil itself. Sinning in anger could include unkind words or acting harmfully toward others. Because
anger can degenerate into hostility, hatred, or holding a grudge, Paul added the admonition **Don't let the sun go down on your anger**. Christians are not to carry anger or exasperation into a new day.
Verses 27, 28: We are **not to give the devil an opportunity** to gain control over our attitudes, actions, and relationships. Vengeance is the Lord's prerogative, not ours! (Rom. 12:19). Christians must be engaged in **honest work** with the goal of having **something to share with anyone in need.**

Verse 29: No foul language should come from your mouth. This includes slander, malicious gossip, and any speech that hurts others or causes dissension. Our language is to be free of obscenity and impurity; It should be **good for building up** the needy and **giving grace to those who hear.**
Question #6: (p. 62) What kinds of words give the devil opportunities to work in the life of the church and individual Christians?
Question #7 (p. 62) What kinds of words allow God to work in our midst?
Engage Activity (p.60) "Rags for Robes"
Live it Out choices on (p. 71)

Summary: Believers benefit from being part of the church. The health of the body of Christ depends on having relationships of openness and trust, evident in speaking in love and truth. We can be encouraged and strengthened by others–leaders and members alike–who come alongside us with words and acts of support. We are helped by knowing we are not alone in the struggle to live for Christ. Others can be encouraged by knowing we understand their situation and offer our support. God speaks to us through others; He can speak to others through us.

Prayer: *Father God, Thank You for the incredible blessing of Your church. Please continue to transform each of us into believers who build up the body of Christ with our words and actions. Amen.*
Watchword: ***May the Lord watch between thee and me while we are absent one from another.***