

A GOD'S WORD FOR LIFE RESOURCE



COVENANT

AN INVITATION TO A RICHER
RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD

LESSON GUIDE | FALL 2025



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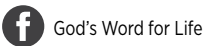


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HOW TO USE THIS LESSON GUIDE

GETTING STARTED

The first page of each lesson gives valuable information to help you teach. Here you will find the Lesson Title, the Truth about Covenant, My Response to Covenant, the Focus Verses, and Lesson Text. The Covenant Context will pinpoint where you are in God's big story of His covenant relationship with humanity.

THE BEGINNING

FALL 04

SEPTEMBER 26, 2025

LESSON TEXT

Genesis 11-25

FOCUS VERSE

Genesis 12:1

TRUTH ABOUT COVENANT

God promised Abraham that he would become a nation and inherit the Promised Land.

COVENANT CONTEXT

As the world rebuilt after the Flood, they attempted to build a tower to keep God from scattering them once more, indicating they did not trust Him to keep His covenant. God called one man, named Abram, to enter into covenant with Him, even when it could cost him everything.

Abraham and Isaac

I WILL TRUST GOD WITH EVERYTHING.

TEACHING OUTLINE

Icebreaker: In what area of life is it hardest to trust others?

Teacher Tip: Connect the group's answers to show the value of our trust in God who keeps His word.

Lesson Connection: Share the Lesson Connection.

I. ABEL AND UR

A. Another Rebellion

B. Another Savior

DISCUSS: Have you ever felt led of the Lord to do something or make a faith decision when you did not have the full picture or all the details?

C. I will always hope in the gracious mercy of God.

DISCUSS: Have you ever felt hopeless about a situation outside your control? How did the Word of God help you navigate those feelings?

II. GOD'S COVENANT WITH ABRAHAM

A. The Most Unlikely Choice

B. Abraham Believed and Obeyed

DISCUSS: Have you ever considered a promise from the Lord, only to be reassured of it in a miraculous way?

C. I will seek encounters with God that renew my covenant relationship with Him.

III. ABRAHAM'S FINAL TEST

A. The Call to Mount Moriah

DISCUSS: Has your faith ever been tested? How did you respond?

B. God's Final Provision

C. Abraham's Final Act of Faith

D. I will trust God with everything.

DISCUSS: Have you had to put to death any promises in your own life? Has it worked out for the better? If not yet, do you believe it will?

Internalizing the Message

PRAYER FOCUS

Lead the group in prayer and consider the following topics of focus:

• For God to show us any areas of our lives we need to surrender to Him completely

• For God to give us peace about the present and the future when we trust Him

SG TEACHING OUTLINE

The SG (Small Group) Teaching Outline is the lesson content in outline form. Each lesson main point is listed along with suggested discussion questions. Although the outline can be used to teach the lesson in a large group setting, the "SG" indicates the content is also designed to be used in a Small Group. Because of this, an icebreaker question has been provided to help jump-start interaction in the Small Group meeting.

LESSON CONNECTION

Most often the Lesson Connection will be a story or illustration designed to give students a glimpse of the overall theme of the lesson. Since stories often appeal to the heart and emotions, this portion of the lesson seeks to engage the heart to receive the truth that will be taught. You are encouraged to personalize this section and include your own testimony to help students connect to the lesson.

LESSON CONNECTION

The husband and wife could not contain their excitement. They were having another boy. Like the first time three years earlier, a few complications required surgery during delivery. The loud cry of a beautiful, healthy baby boy made those complications seem trivial. Mom's recovery went smoothly. Within a few days, the entire family made their return home to settle into a new normal. Mom and sons would stay home for the rest of the summer, with Grandma helping as much and as often as needed. Dad prepared for his return to work on Monday with a ample supply of pictures to proudly display.

Upon entering the office, he immediately sensed something was wrong. Of course he received the obligatory "congratulations" from his coworkers, but he could not shake the feeling that he was missing something. Something had muted the celebratory atmosphere he expected. It did not take long to figure out why "Mark, can you come into the office for a minute, please?" his manager asked. Mark sat down and his manager continued, "As you know we are a startup company. We have been running on funds from our investors. I hate to have to tell you this now, but those funds are running out next week. We cannot pay you any longer. Your position will be eliminated."

His feelings changed so fast. He was happy, now he was devastated. The company had made him promises. They helped him plot out his career path. He even ignored other opportunities to start with this startup. Everything changed. Not only did the father have to immediately begin looking for another job, but he had to do so with his wife recovering from surgery, a three-year-old son who would soon have to have his tonsils removed, and a week-old baby. And all of them were depending on him to provide food, clothing, and everything else, not to mention the medical bills that had not yet started arriving.

Overcome with fear, worry, and anxiety, he tried to pray. He knew that, unlike him, God was not in a state of shock over this situation. His words quickly morphed into tears. Just then he remembered his last conversation with his grandmother in the nursing home a few years ago, just weeks before she died. They had talked about living for God, and when he asked her favorite Bible verse, in a coherent moment she replied, "I don't remember where it is, but I've always liked this one that says 'I was young and now I am old, but I have never seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread.'" His grandmother's paraphrase of Psalm 37:25 instantly became an anchor.

Mark had always trusted God with his family and finances, and trusting God proved fruitful. Between job interviews, Mark helped at home. The insurance covered more of the medical bills than he expected. By the end of the summer, he had a job offer with a higher salary and more benefits than the one he had lost.

Have you ever been in a similar situation? Can you trust God when you cannot track God's goodness? It is helpful to remember that nothing catches Him off guard. As Paul rightly wrote: "All things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose" (Romans 8:28).

BIBLE LESSON

FALL LESSON 04

I. BABEL AND UR

A. Another Rebellion

The floodwaters had washed away wickedness from the earth, but humanity's propensity to sin remained. God desired the descendants of Noah to "be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth" (Genesis 9:1). Instead, those called to replenish rebelled. Their stated goal is noted in Genesis 11:4: "Let us make us a name, lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth." Seemingly unaware of God's covenant and knowingly disobedient of His command, the people set out to establish for themselves a permanent residence with a man-made tower at the center—a source of pride and protection from future floods.

Yet again, humanity deserved full and final judgment. And yet again, God chose to bestow mercy instead. In another example of undoing what He had done initially, the one who brought order to disorder in the days of Creation introduced disorder to the rebellious people by confusing their language. They were unable to communicate with one another, so they had no choice but to stop their ill-advised tower building program and spread out over the earth as the Lord had commanded them to do in the first place. God continued to prove Himself faithful to His covenant despite what humanity deserved.

B. Another Savior

As the population of the replenished world increased, so did sin. Another flood was justified. Perhaps the first few times it rained, they breathed a sigh of relief when the rain stopped falling short of a flood. But after each thunderstorm, arched in the sky as if suspended from Heaven itself, hung a rainbow as a sign of God's covenant. It reassured humanity that God was faithful to His promise. Free will remained one of God's greatest gifts to humanity. Those who willingly obeyed the Lord repaid the blessing. Prior to the Flood, Noah found grace in the eyes of God, and his obedience brought salvation for himself, his family, and the animal kingdom. Generations later, God's call for obedience was heeded by another man—Abraham.

"Now the Lord had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will show thee" (Genesis 12:1). We learn a few verses later "So Abram departed, as the Lord had spoken unto him" (Genesis 12:4). Abram heard a command from God, and he obeyed that command without knowing exactly where he was going. His obedience resulted in a covenant with a promise from God to make him a blessing to all nations.

BIBLE LESSON

The Bible Lesson is a manuscript of the entire lesson. The lessons are written by various Apostolic authors who explain the truths of God's Word and share ways we can apply these truths to our lives. The lesson contains discussion questions to foster interaction, and you will find media callouts (videos and images available in the Adult Resource Kit) to help you connect with students of all learning styles.

INTERNALIZING THE MESSAGE

The end of each lesson invites the students to apply what they have learned. This segment usually includes a story or illustration for you to share, or you may share a story or illustration of your own to help bring your students to a call to action. Feel free to use the Prayer Focus at the end of the Small Group Outline (on page 2 of each lesson) to call your students to prayer.

Teacher Option: Tell the story below or share one of your own to illustrate the value of trusting in God wholeheartedly—He will not let us fall.

INTERNALIZING THE MESSAGE

On November 16, 2011, CBS News released a story on their website with the following headline: "Australian diplomat, playing a game of trust, dies in fall-off terrace."

Julian Simpson and several other people wanted to see the lights of the Empire State Building. While on a terrace on the seventh floor of an apartment building, a disagreement broke out between Julian and another man. Thirty-year-old Simpson leaned over the ledge to play the trust game, hoping to show his trustworthiness.

The friend, James Waugh, told police he held out his arm to catch Simpson, but the diplomat let his grip and toppled over the ledge about 135 m, coming to a stop on a second-story landing outside the building. He was pronounced dead at the scene (cbsnews.com). The harrowing ordeal illustrates the limitations of our trust in other humans (if not the limits of our human wisdom).

There will be people in our lives whom we can trust, and we endeavor to reciprocate by being trustworthy for them. But there is only one who is perfect in all His ways. Proverbs tells us we are to trust in the Lord. He does all things well, and His timing is perfect.

Trust is easy when we feel close to God. It is easy when we can hear His still small voice and see His plan clearly. It can be considerably harder when we realize we are commanded to trust Him even when

we do not understand what He is doing in these times, trust becomes inconvenient.

Like Abraham and Noah discerned, learning to trust God is a process. Faithful obedience to the Word of God was a pivotal part of the learning process for them, as it is for us. It is likely we have made the mistake of trusting the wrong people in our lives. It is even more likely we have trusted ourselves to our own attainment.

We must learn from our trust falls and failings and remember that the only one we can trust completely and without inhibition is the Lord Jesus Christ. We often find it easier to trust Him with our future than we do our present—with the eternal more so than the temporal. We must trust Him with both.

Tragedy arises when trust is betrayed. When we try to lean on something that is not reliable, true, able, or strong enough to hold us, it never works out in our favor. The Bible is definitive on whom we can trust: "Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy path" (Proverbs 3:5-6).

What about you? Is there something you are withholding from God? Is there an area of your life that has been off-limits to the Lord? He has proven Himself faithful to His covenant and to those walking with Him in covenant. Let the God of Noah, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob be God in your life today.

LEGEND

The following icons and boxes are used to aid leaders in navigating the content.



Shows a video component is available in the Adult Resource Kit to help illustrate the lesson information



Indicates an image is available in the Adult Resource Kit to help illustrate the lesson information

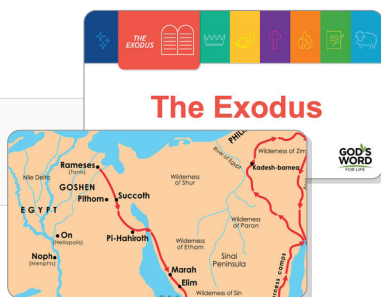
DIGITAL RESOURCE KIT

The Adult Resource Kit offers a wide array of materials to help expand the impact of each lesson. From videos that inspire discussion to social media tools to help encourage adults to join your group or class, this kit provides tools to help leaders grow their group and make teaching time more effective. Some resources include:



A Video to Accompany Each Lesson to Prompt Discussion or Further Thought

A Powerpoint to Accompany Each Lesson



ALSO FEATURING SMALL GROUP TEACHING OUTLINES, HANDOUTS FOR STUDENTS, SOCIAL MEDIA GRAPHICS, AND MORE!

DAILY DEVOTIONAL GUIDE



Becoming lifelong Apostolic disciples takes more investment than just an hour on Sunday or Wednesday. Now you can dig into God's Word every day. This guide gives an overview of the biblical text presented in the Lesson Guide each week and is then divided into smaller portions for daily study. Each day offers brief insight about the Bible passage, a devotion that challenges readers to apply Scripture, and then space to reflect and pray over the principles presented.

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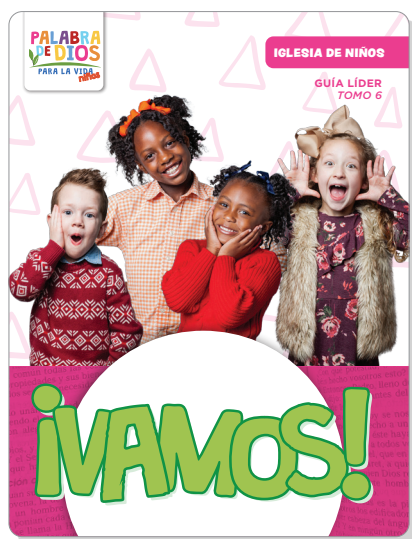
LA PALABRA DE DIOS PARA LA VIDA



La Palabra de Dios para la Vida es el nuevo material de Escuela Dominical para adultos. ¡Diseñado y traducido por apostólicos! El Guía de Lecciones es un tesoro de conocimiento apostólico de las Escrituras y una herramienta de estudio y enseñanza indispensable. También viene incluido con recursos adicionales: imágenes para la enseñanza, PowerPoints, imágenes para las redes sociales y hojas de estudio para los estudiantes. Incluye 13 lecciones.

¡VAMOS!

¡VAMOS! es la solución perfecta para las iglesias que ministran a un grupo de niños de 5 a 12 años. Está diseñado para presentar actividades y opciones de enseñanza para atraer a un rango de edades diversos. Se puede usar de varias maneras, incluso como plan de estudio para la iglesia de niños si tiene un formato de grupo grande entre semana o el domingo. También es una gran herramienta para ministrar en un lugar donde tiene un pequeño número de niños en una sola clase con amplios rangos de edad. Se proporcionan varias opciones de actividades para que ¡VAMOS! pueda adaptarse a sus necesidades únicas.





FALL 01

SEPTEMBER 07, 2025

LESSON TEXT

Genesis 1-2

FOCUS VERSES

Genesis 1:27-28

²⁷So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them.

²⁸And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth.

TRUTH ABOUT COVENANT

God created the world for us and wants to be in covenant with us.

Creation



COVENANT CONTEXT

Upon creating the world, including a Paradise for humanity to dwell, God invited us into a covenant relationship with Him.

SG *TEACHING OUTLINE*

Icebreaker: Growing up, how did your family divvy up typical household chores, such as mowing the grass, doing the dishes, or taking out the trash?

Teacher Tip: Connect the group's answers and indicate that in today's lesson we will talk about our responsibilities as part of the family of God.

Lesson Connection: Share the Lesson Connection.

I. HUMANITY IN CREATION

- A. God, the Only Creator
- B. Adam and Eve, the Crown of Creation
- C. I will embrace the relationships and roles God has created for me.

DISCUSS: *How can you use your two greatest skills or abilities for the work of God?*

II. HUMANITY IN THE GARDEN

- A. Adam, the Lonely Man

DISCUSS: *Why is fellowship (especially with those of "like precious faith") so important?*

- B. Eve, the Perfect Helper **V**

DISCUSS: *In addition to marriage, in what other areas of life are partnership-style relationships beneficial?*

- C. I will be a help to everyone.

DISCUSS: *How can we better serve one another so we can better serve God's mission for our local church?*

III. CREATION AND COVENANT

- A. Creation, a Two-Step Process
- B. Life in Covenant
- C. I will accept God's invitation into covenant.

Internalizing the Message **I**

DISCUSS: *How could lessons you learned while doing chores help you in areas where you struggle in your walk with God?*

PRAYER FOCUS

Lead the group in prayer and consider the following topics of focus:

- For us to learn to serve God motivated by gratitude and a desire for a deeper relationship with Him
- For God to help us find ways to use our gifts to support one another and advance the Kingdom

LESSON CONNECTION

“It’s time to do your chores.” There are few more dreaded words in a child’s vocabulary. The word *chore* has become synonymous with drudgery and boredom. Perhaps you’ve heard a coworker complain, “Man, getting that report completed was such a chore.” In American society, household chores have been predominantly women’s domain. As late as 2015, the US Bureau of Labor Statistics reported that women still spent twice as much time on household chores as men (businessinsider.com). However, that is changing, especially as automation takes on a more prominent role in domestic life. For example:

- It is estimated that seventy-eight million American households had a robotic vacuum cleaner as of 2024 (coolest-gadgets.com).
- As of 2014, 72 percent of American households used automatic car washes (up from 47 percent in 1994).
- As of 2010, American household spending on “food away from home” surpassed spending on “food at home,” rising to 50.2 percent (USDA Economic Research Service).

As much as most of us grew up hating—or at least trying to get out of—chores, they became a fundamental part of our core family memories. Many times they served as unofficial “rites of passage.” Remember the first time your parent gave you the responsibility to mow the lawn or to drive to the store to pick up some milk? Doing chores is a key part of growing up.

According to the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, “Children who do chores may exhibit higher self-esteem, be more responsible, and be better equipped to deal with frustration, adversity, and delayed gratification,” all key components of “greater success in school, work, and relationships.” In ways we could never articulate in the midst of all our complaining, our household chores told us we belonged and had a job to do. To put it another way, chores gave us identity, purpose, and even security, all of which are fundamental to a healthy outlook on life.

Today’s lesson will focus on the biblical account of Creation, especially on the roles and responsibilities God assigned to Adam and Eve within it. Contrary to the “cosmic accident” modern evolutionary theory, the Bible teaches that humanity was created for a distinct and noble purpose within a carefully-ordered creation wrought by the hand of our loving God for our enjoyment and for His glory.

While it is almost a certainty there were aspects of “garden keeping” Adam and Eve may not have found all that enjoyable, life in the original Eden was the apex of humanity’s existence and is still our model for God’s highest purpose for human life. If we are ever to recover from the trauma of the Fall, we must look back to that original story for guidance and hope.

BIBLE LESSON

I. HUMANITY IN CREATION

A. God, the Only Creator

To understand the claims of the Genesis 1 Creation story, we must first consider a bit of the cultural background. No idea like Darwin's theory of evolution existed when Moses recorded the Creation story. No one believed the universe "just happened" after a "Big Bang"; everyone knew God created everything that existed. Furthermore, given the vastness and variety of creation, it was impossible (so Moses' Egyptian contemporaries thought) that this was all the product of one deity; surely it had to be the product of multiple divine beings working in concert. As those deities worked around the cosmic clock, almost all ancient creation myths contain some version of a battle between the gods and the forces of chaos, usually depicted as some sort of monster, like a great sea dragon.

But every one of these faulty assumptions is upended in the first few verses of Genesis 1: "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth"—all by Himself (Genesis 1:1). There is no mention of any other deities partnering in the project. That's the first shock, setting up an even greater surprise: "And God said, Let there be light: and there was light" (Genesis 1:3). No sea dragons, no bloody battle—just one God who spoke, and it happened just as He said.

B. Adam and Eve, the Crown of Creation

But this story of Creation reserves its greatest surprise for the end. It presents God as building His creation layer upon layer. First came the alternation of light and darkness, called "day" and "night" (the passage of time), then the sky, then the sea and land, and so on. At the end of each stage, God called it good. God was clearly pleased, but He still kept working.

Finally on the sixth day, after He had spoken skies and stars and plants and trees into being, God scooped up a handful of His newly formed earth (Hebrew *adamah*) and began to sculpt it into an "image" of Himself, male and female, that He called human (Hebrew *adam*). Then the story declares: "And God saw every thing that he had made, and, behold, it was very good" (Genesis 1:31). Only then did He stop working and rest.

Clearly God, who had been working tirelessly for days on end, had achieved something significant. In fact we must assume He rested on the seventh day not because He was tired but because He had achieved His primary goal: to make someone in His image and likeness with whom He could have a covenant relationship.

Let's talk about this word *covenant*. Maybe you've heard it around the church or from Christians in general, but what is it? A covenant means a sacred pact between two parties where each makes a binding commitment of what they will contribute to create a holy relationship. This year we're going to be studying how all of the Bible points toward God's desire to be in this special covenant relationship with us.

If you wonder what motivated God to create in the first place, it was a desire for fellowship—to have someone to love and to be loved in return. To signify the uniqueness of humanity’s relationship with Him, God granted them dominion, sharing His authority so they could rule with Him, caring for creation in their role as His representatives.

C. I will embrace the roles and relationships God has created for me.

What is true of those first two humans—Adam and Eve—is true of every one of us. We are all created for a relationship with God and a unique role within the world He has made for us. We all have a list of “chores”—tasks assigned to us and to no one else. But these are not mundane things like taking out the trash or washing the dishes—things anyone else could do. No, these are things we were specifically designed to do, things only we can do.

DISCUSS: *How can you use your two greatest skills or abilities for the work of God?*

II. HUMANITY IN THE GARDEN

A. Adam, the Lonely Man

At the end of Genesis 1, God was clearly chuffed with everything (as the British would say). Everything He had done was good, and the overall result was very good, and as we enter Genesis 2, God turned His attention to building a home for His image bearer, Adam. This home was the famed Garden of Eden, earth’s first and last true Paradise. Given the idyllic setting, it was all the more alarming when God suddenly pronounced: “It is not good that the man should be alone” (Genesis 2:18). Adam was created in God’s image so he could share fellowship with God, but that meant Adam also needed fellowship with another human—one who was like him.

DISCUSS: *Why is fellowship (especially with those of “like precious faith”) so important?*

B. Eve, the Perfect Helper

- ❑ It seems Adam himself may not have realized this was a problem . . . yet. But God, who as Creator can never be perplexed by any problem, already had a plan in place. God brought before Adam all the creatures He had made, probably not to see if one would work as Adam’s companion—God knew none would—but to let Adam know that no one but God could provide a suitable companion. Eve was a divine gift to Adam, perfectly matched to meet his needs. This is emphasized in a couple ways: First, Eve was created from Adam (specifically, from his side). In a catchy hook to the world’s first love song, Adam called Eve “bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh” (Genesis 2:23).

Second, Eve was created as Adam’s help, who was meet (matched) to him. This phrase has been corrupted in some circles into a compound word “helpmeet,” which risks glossing over the crucial reason for God creating Eve. In his commentary on Genesis, John Skinner notes that the word translated “meet” literally means “in front of him,” that is “corresponding to him” (John Skinner, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary*

on Genesis). The emphasis is on Eve's equality to Adam; she was Adam's partner, not his servant.

At key points in the Book of Psalms, this term "help" becomes an image of God's covenantal relationship with humanity. For example, in Psalm 54:4, the psalmist cried out: "Behold, God is mine helper." Even more famously, Psalm 46:1 declared: "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble." Adam was not the only one created in the image of God; Adam and Eve together (male and female) comprised the totality of God's divine image. In fact, God called them together "Adam." (See Genesis 1:27; 5:2.)

DISCUSS: *In addition to marriage, in what other areas of life are partnership-style relationships beneficial?*

C. I will be a help to everyone.

In the same way God shared His dominion over creation with humanity, calling us into a covenant partnership with Him in caring for His gift of creation, Adam and Eve were called to live in covenant relationship with one another, likewise partnering and sharing power and responsibility. Adam and Eve were incomplete without each other; they needed to work together to fulfill the massive task allotted to them: keeping God's gift of the Garden.

In the same way, the mission and calling God has given us is not designed to be fulfilled on our own, but as part of His body, the church. Remember, Jesus' command to go and make disciples was given corporately to all the disciples, not just to Peter or Jesus' inner circle. The Great Commission is a group project (Matthew 28:19). Not only do I need to rely on my brothers and sisters to help me achieve my goals, but more importantly, I need to be the kind of brother (or sister) who supports others in their pursuit of God's purpose.

DISCUSS: *How can we better serve one another so we can better serve God's mission for our local church?*

III. CREATION AND COVENANT

A. Creation, A Two-Step Process

In his book entitled *Ancient Near Eastern Thought and the Old Testament*, John Walton points to the two-step process of separating and then naming in Genesis 1. By creating clear distinctions, God gave the empty void definite forms. Then, by assigning specific names, He gave those new forms distinctive functions. At first God created light by separating light from darkness. God then named the light "day" and the darkness "night" (Genesis 1:4–5). In modern scientific terms, God created the space-time continuum.

The separation and naming process continued: the waters under the heaven were separated from the waters above, creating heavens and seas. Then the waters below were gathered together, so dry land (called "earth") appeared (Genesis 1:9–10). In the

latter half of Creation week, the function of these new forms was made clear; they were to be homes for different creatures. Some scholars even argue that Genesis 1 gives us a rather advanced understanding of plants and animals, especially in its time.

B. Life in Covenant

Although the word “covenant” is not found in the Creation story, it is clear God was already establishing His desire to be in covenant with His people. This covenantal way of life described in the rest of the Old Testament is the only way to live harmoniously with God’s creation. Like the rest of His creation, life in covenant is marked first by acts of separation and then by acts of naming.

Examples abound throughout Scripture. In Genesis 12 God called Abram to separate himself from his pagan culture by leaving his “country, . . . kindred, and . . . father’s house” (Genesis 12:1). However, even after Abram obeyed, God still gave him and Sarai new names in order to mark the couple’s new function as nation-makers even though they would be barren for a long time. Millennia later, from the window of an upper room likely overlooking the Temple courtyard, a newly Spirit-filled and emboldened former fisherman named Peter called his hearers to separation from the world through repenting of their sins and taking on themselves the name of Jesus through water baptism (Acts 2:38).

C. I will accept God’s invitation into covenant.

These examples highlight another important reality of salvation: covenant with God is corporate and individual. As with the call to Abraham, the call to covenant is extended to each individual person. The choice to join God in covenant relationship will always come to the individual; no one else can make that choice for you. However, as with Peter’s new-birth message, accepting God’s individual call brings each individual into fellowship with the body of Christ. Covenant teaches us that we have more than just a personal relationship with Jesus Christ (as vital as that is); we also have a relationship with His body, the church, a relationship that is also vital to our spiritual health.

God’s gracious invitation to covenant relationship with Him and His church is a saving call because it is simultaneously a call “*out of*” sin and the depravity of a fallen world and a call “*into*” a renewed life established on God’s original purpose and design (covenant). Without both aspects, we cannot experience true salvation; we will either become completely isolated from the world or totally assimilated into it. But when we enter into covenant with God, we receive both an identity and a responsibility that allow us to be, as Jesus said, “in” the world but not “of” the world (John 17:14-16).

Teacher Option: Share the information below or a story of your own to illustrate the value of turning from anything that would break covenant with God.

INTERNALIZING THE MESSAGE

DISCUSS: How could lessons you learned while doing chores help you in areas where you struggle in your walk with God?

What is the worst chore in the world? Andrew, an East Coast father of an elementary school student, thinks he has discovered it. It all came about when his daughter came down with a miserable cough and a significant fever. As Andrew took care of her, he wondered aloud how she had become so sick. Soon he learned that his seven-year-old daughter had been selected to walk sick students from class to the school clinic. This father was more than a little frustrated to discover his daughter had been guiding hacking, flu-ridden students to the clinic the first several weeks of school as the kids swapped viruses and bacteria with each other. Surely his daughter was doing the worst chore in the world. Andrew successfully lobbied to have her chores exchanged for something more OSHA-compliant.

- I** In her 2015 TED Talk, Julie Lythcott-Haims, former Dean of Stanford University, boldly asserted: “Professional success in life . . . comes from having done chores as a kid.” All parents know the tricky part is how to motivate their children to do their chores. There are two main approaches: transactional and relational. In the transactional approach, the child earns points, stars, or even money they can exchange for rewards or privileges. This system relies on extrinsic motivation: the child isn’t doing chores because chores are good; the child is doing chores for a reward. Over time this approach makes children more selfish and unwilling to help “for free” (parentingforbrain.com).

However, it is possible children with strong relationships with their parents will do chores just to spend time with

Mom or Dad. This seems to be the default setting of early childhood. Many young toddlers enjoy pretending to do chores, and research has shown that children as young as fourteen months can offer help spontaneously without seeking a prize or reward. Usually a transactional system guarantees faster results, but once the list of chores is finished, that child will stop helping unless an additional or greater reward is offered. A relational approach takes more time and effort on the parents’ part, but it builds tighter family bonds and better character in the long run. Children learn generosity and kindness.

God gave Adam and Eve a really big chore. But by inviting them into a covenantal relationship, God chose the relational approach to motivating them; God walked with Adam in the Garden “in the cool of the day.” God did not want Adam and Eve to care for the Garden simply for the reward of eternal life; He wanted them to do so just because He wanted to spend time with them because He loved them.

The same is true today. Yes, God has a “chore” for you—a job, a calling, a responsibility for which He has specifically designed you. But God doesn’t just love you for what you can do for Him; He loves you because you are you. You are His child, loved with a love as deep as Calvary and as passionate as Pentecost. He wants to be in relationship with You, to be with you through life’s thick and thin, to partner with you in the call He has for you to answer, to celebrate your successes, and to help you grow stronger through the setbacks. He’s just waiting for you to say yes to Him today.



FALL
02

SEPTEMBER 14, 2025

LESSON TEXT

Genesis 3-4

FOCUS VERSE

Genesis 3:15

And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.

TRUTH ABOUT COVENANT

Humanity broke covenant with God, but God provided grace.

The Fall of Humanity



COVENANT CONTEXT

After living for some time in close, covenant relationship with God, His crowning creation, Adam and Eve, chose sin and broke covenant with Him. Genesis 3 offers the first promise of a Messiah to restore humanity to right relationship with God.

SG *TEACHING OUTLINE*

Icebreaker: Based on your observations or even experiences within a family, what would you say is the most damaging outcome of a divorce, and what are the keys to a lasting marriage?

Teacher Tip: Connect the group's answers to show how Adam and Eve's covenant relationship with God was broken because of sin.

Lesson Connection: Share the Lesson Connection.

I. LIFE IN THE GARDEN

A. A Perfect Home **I**

DISCUSS: *As you recall a time you felt God's presence in the strongest way, how did that change your life?*

B. A Single Commandment **V**

DISCUSS: *What problems arise when people "choose their own truth," and what are some good ways to respond to those who make such claims?*

C. I will not let my desire for understanding destroy my ability to trust God.

II. TEMPTATION IN THE GARDEN

A. The Serpent Deceived Eve

DISCUSS: *What are some dangerous ways people add to or take away from God's Word in their lives?*

B. Adam and Eve Rebelled

C. I will recognize the subtle ways rebellion can creep into my life.

DISCUSS: *What are some of the more subtle ways temptation can manifest in our lives, and how can we resist it?*

III. LIFE OUTSIDE THE GARDEN

A. Sin's Immediate Consequences

B. Sin's Ongoing Consequences

C. God's Promised Messiah

D. I will repent when I break covenant with God.

Internalizing the Message

DISCUSS: *What broken relationship lies at the heart of our current social crisis, and how does the gospel provide an answer for it?*

PRAYER FOCUS

Lead the group in prayer and consider the following topics of focus:

- For God to help us to trust Him, even when we don't understand
- That we would repent when we break our covenant with God

LESSON CONNECTION

She sits at the kitchen table, eyes rimmed red and wet with tears. Her heart feels like it is being slowly crushed in a vise. Questions whirl through her mind with such speed that she cannot form the words to ask them: *What went wrong? Why didn't she see it coming? Was there anything she should have done differently?* Meanwhile, her husband—ex-husband (she'll have to get used to saying that at some point)—sits across the table, eyes completely dry and face expressionless. Between them on the small table under the unforgiving fluorescent light sits a pile of documents filled with intimidating legalese and the glaring phrase “Divorce Proceedings” brazenly splashed across the top page.

Suddenly behind her, she hears a quiet, “Mama? What’s wrong? Why are you crying? Why are Daddy’s suitcases by the door? Where is he going?” A new wave of heart-rending sobs fills the small kitchen as the little girl in pink bunny pajamas pads across the floor to her mother’s waiting arms. More questions surge into her mind: *What will I tell the kids? How will I explain that Daddy doesn’t love Mommy anymore? How are we going to be able to make it without him?*

Scenes like this (and its reverse) happen every day, many times a day, in North America. The law firm Terry & Roberts in Pearland, Texas, reports the following stunning statistics:

- There are approximately eighty-six divorces *every hour* in the United States.
- It is estimated that 41 percent of first marriages will end in divorce.
- Almost 60 percent of second marriages and 73 percent of third marriages also end in divorce.
- The average lifespan of a first marriage that ends in divorce is only eight years.

But statistics cannot capture the emotional and relational scars on spouses and children when their family unit is shattered. Psychologists say the emotional pain and grief of a divorce is similar in intensity to the death of a loved one; perhaps the key difference is it is more difficult to achieve a sense of “closure” in divorce than in death, as the departed spouse is still living and custody and child support battles can linger for years. No wonder Jesus said of the sanctity of marriage: “What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder” (Matthew 19:6).

Tragically, God’s blissful covenant relationship only lasted one chapter in our Bible before sin separated Adam and Eve from God. Divorce is just one of a myriad of sinister effects of sin’s entrance into humanity, but it may be a prime example of sin’s most disastrous and devastating consequence—ruined relationships. Because of sin, we are condemned to live estranged—from God, from one another, and even from all we were created to be. Instead of the innate security and peace of a happy home, many today find themselves barraged with fear, worry, and anxiety as they face an unknown future without a spouse or parent there to support them. All this pain came because of one disastrous day in God’s gift of the Garden of Eden.

BIBLE LESSON

I. LIFE IN THE GARDEN

A. A Perfect Home

Though many vistas of breathtaking beauty exist on earth, none of them can compare with the beauty that was the Garden of Eden. However, our typical depictions of humanity's first dream home are often drawn on two subtle but important misconceptions. Rather than the Garden being in Eden, the Bible is clear that Eden was in the Garden. Genesis 2:10 states: "And a river went *out of Eden* to water the garden" (italics added). Thus, the lush garden with its luscious fruit trees and gorgeous flowers actually surrounded this place known as Eden, which formed the Garden's center and source of its water supply.

Our second misconception relates to the Garden's size. Many artists depict Eden I as relatively small, perhaps a large flower garden or an orchard. However, Genesis states the Garden was home to *four* rivers: the Pison, the Gihon, the Hiddekel, and the Euphrates (Genesis 2:10–14). To require so much water, the garden must have been massive. We should imagine Eden at least on the scale of a national park like Yellowstone or Banff.

However, the most astounding feature of the Garden is captured in what, for us, is an unimaginable claim: "And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed" (Genesis 2:25). Their nakedness is a visible sign of their perfect innocence and safety. The Garden God gave them provided all their physical needs; their companionship together in the work of keeping the Garden met their emotional and relational needs; and their open, face-to-face fellowship with God met their spiritual needs. Eden was a place of perfect, God-intended human wholeness. It was the truest picture of *shalom*.

DISCUSS: *As you recall a time you felt God's presence in the strongest way, how did that change your life?*

B. A Single Commandment

While the Bible doesn't use the term *covenant* in the first few chapters of the Bible, we have seen the elements of covenant at work as God desired to forge a deep, lasting relationship with His people. And, of course, part of forging a covenant involves both parties agreeing to binding terms.

Even in the Garden, life under God's blessing was not without these terms; even in our perfected state, humanity was designed to serve and obey God. God's one prohibition was spelled out in Genesis 2:16–17: "Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, though shalt not eat of it." And He added the accompanying warning: "For in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die."

What might that forbidden knowledge of good and evil have been? Given their innocence, some scholars suggest Adam and Eve didn't know right from wrong. But this seems to mistakenly present Adam and Eve not as innocents but as simpletons. Adam and Eve most certainly had enough moral understanding to recognize that obeying God's command was right and disobeying His command was wrong.

- ▼ The Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil did not offer moral consciousness—the ability to *know* right from wrong—but moral autonomy—the right to *decide* what was right and wrong for themselves. This right was forbidden to humanity because God wanted them to trust Him as their loving Creator to make those decisions for them.

DISCUSS: *What problems arise when people “choose their own truth,” and what are some good ways to respond to those who make such claims?*

C. I will not let my desire for understanding destroy my ability to trust God.

“Curiosity killed the cat,” they say. God gave us inquiring minds to help us grow to understand His ways and deepen our relationship with Him. He made us with the desire to understand, but as has been wisely noted, truly understanding the ways of God usually requires first “standing under” His sovereign authority. Sometimes our desire to know the “whys” and “hows” is the biggest enemy of our ability to trust in God and His wisdom. Even when the “why” and “how” escape us, the “what” of serving God (His commandments and expectations) has been made clear in His Word. Do you trust Him enough to obey when you don't fully understand?

II. TEMPTATION IN THE GARDEN

A. The Serpent Deceived Eve

The Bible does not record how long Adam and Eve made their home in the harmony of the Garden, but on that fateful day when Eve arrived at the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, she encountered the devil in the form of an evil serpent. He had apparently invaded from the wilds beyond the Garden's borders. We are told he was more crafty than the beasts of the field, alerting us to his evil intentions (Genesis 3:1).

The serpent's first words raise suspicion, turning God's commandment into a question: “Hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?” (Genesis 3:1). The devil was focused more on one prohibition than all the privileges God had granted them. God told Adam he and his wife could eat freely of every tree of the Garden, except one (Genesis 2:16–17). Eve's initial response was a perfect objection to the serpent's false claim: “We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden.” Then she proceeded to add: “But of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat it, *neither shall ye touch it*, lest ye die” (Genesis 3:2–3, italics added). God never said they could not touch the tree. How might Eve have arrived at this interpretation? Did Adam relay an amended version to protect Eve? Did Eve “overcorrect” in her attempt to defend God's honor? Only God knows what happened in the Garden, but the enemy soon realized Eve did not know exactly what God had said.

DISCUSS: *What are some dangerous ways people add to or take away from God's Word in their lives?*

B. Adam and Eve Rebelled

The serpent's trap was set. If Eve was no longer certain of God's commandment, how could she be certain of the consequence of disobeying it? Then the serpent twisted God's words to an outright contradiction: "Ye shall not surely die" (Genesis 3:4; See also Genesis 2:17). Then he followed up with a Satanic lie: "Your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil" (Genesis 3:5).

In the end, Adam and Eve chose to eat the fruit. They wanted to take on God's role of deciding what was right and what was wrong. To describe this intentional divorce from God as "the fall of humanity" makes it sound like it were a disaster that happened to humanity rather than something humanity did. No words are adequate to describe the height of our proud rebellion, thinking we could "set the rules" in God's own Creation, when we are nothing more than dirt—literally.

Tragically, Adam and Eve were conned into rebelling against God by the serpent's offer that they would be "as gods" (Genesis 3:5). But the opening of the Creation story shows us that Adam and Eve were already made "in the image of God." The serpent literally tempted them with something they already possessed—the likeness of God.

C. I will recognize the subtle ways rebellion can creep into my life.

The tragedy of temptation is two-fold. First, it works in such a way that, even though we are deceived, we remain responsible for our actions. The serpent never forced Adam and Eve to eat the fruit; they chose to do so. The second tragedy is the too-late realization that temptation offers mere counterfeits of glorious gifts God has already given. Illicit sex is just a cheap copy of the joys of committed marriage; drugs and alcohol are just junk versions of the enthusing power of God's Spirit. Temptation is always mirage and counterfeit, actively stealing from us the good gifts God has already given.

Today we need to open our eyes to the ways temptation can draw us away from the clear commands of God into the murky waters of deciding good and evil for ourselves. The serpent's opening teaches us that rebellion starts with a question that discounts God's provision and focuses on His prohibitions, leading us to doubt God's always-good intentions for us. Don't let deception rob you of your trust in God.

DISCUSS: *What are some of the more subtle ways temptation can manifest in our lives, and how can we resist it?*

III. LIFE OUTSIDE THE GARDEN

A. Sin's Immediate Consequences

Sure enough, as soon as Adam and Eve ate the fruit, their eyes were opened but only to the realization that they were completely naked and vulnerable. Instead of being

enlightened, Adam and Eve were blanketed in shame. When God arrived, they hid themselves from the all-seeing, all-knowing God of Creation. Don't miss the irony.

Adam and Eve also hid from each other, even before they hid from God, by creating aprons of fig leaves to cover themselves. In Genesis 2:23, Adam affectionately described Eve as “bone of my bones” and “flesh of my flesh”; then in Genesis 3:12, he disdainfully called her “the woman whom thou gavest to be with me.” Instead of ruling together over creation, Adam would “rule over” Eve (Genesis 3:16). Finally, the earth from which Adam was made was now an adversary rather than an ally. Instead of bringing forth food, it would bring forth “thorns and thistles” (Genesis 3:18). Breaking covenant with God cursed Adam, Eve, and all creation.

B. Sin's Ongoing Consequences

The ultimate consequence was exile from the Garden, especially from unhindered access to the presence of God. Yet even in this act, there was mercy: by limiting access to the Tree of Life, God prevented Adam and Eve from being eternally separated from Him. The story took a darker turn when their son Cain murdered his brother, Abel, out of jealousy. God gave Cain a chance to “redo” his offering and warned him that his anger made him vulnerable to sin's control. In spite of this, Cain still chose to murder Abel. One generation after Adam and Eve ate forbidden fruit, humanity spiraled all the way to premeditated murder. The consequences of sin often destroy the innocent as well as the guilty.

C. God's Promised Messiah

But God shone brilliant light through that deep darkness. God made His first messianic promise of salvation through the seed of a woman, who would bruise the serpent's head (Genesis 3:15). This promise was sealed by the sign of God covering Adam and Eve's nakedness with the skins of an innocent substitute. God symbolically and temporarily removed their shame as a foreshadowing of what this promised “seed” would finally and fully accomplish.

D. I will repent when I break covenant with God.

That promised seed of the woman has already come. Jesus' shed blood provides the final covering for all our sin and shame. Forgiveness and cleansing are available to all who hear and heed God's call to covenant. Learn a warning from Cain's jealous rage: Do not reject the opportunity to repent and escape sin's dominion.

Teacher Option: Share the information below or a story of your own to illustrate the value of turning from anything that would break covenant with God.

INTERNALIZING THE MESSAGE

A 2019 article in the journal *World Psychiatry* by Brian D’Onofrio and Robert Emery documents the destructive effects of divorce (and unmarried cohabitation) on children. The increased risks include lower grades and higher dropout rates; disruptive behaviors, including substance abuse; depression; risky sexual behavior; and poverty. Even apparently resilient children “often report painful feelings or encounters, such as worrying about events like graduations or weddings when both parents will be present.” Concluding the survey, they warn: “Marital instability presents not a single risk factor, but a cascade of [consequences] for children.” In our fallen world, sometimes divorce is forced upon Christians who do not desire it, and sadly its effects are real and lasting on everyone involved.

While the illustration is not a one-for-one comparison, the pain of severed human relationships should remind us of the pain of severed covenant with God. Sin’s lasting effects become abundantly clear when we stop thinking of sin as just mistakes and missteps and consider its impact on “ruined relationships”—with God, with one another, and even with all creation. Divorce, childhood cancer, and the threat of global nuclear war are all linked together as calamitous after-effects of sin’s sinister entrance. No wonder Paul described the mission of the church as a “ministry of reconciliation” (II Corinthians 5:18)—a ministry of healed relationships.

The gospel makes it possible to be restored to right relationship with God. By God forgiving and cleansing our sins

and filling us with His Holy Spirit, we are enabled to walk in renewed fellowship with our Creator. The new birth restores us to our identity as being in the image of God and enables and empowers us to fulfill our created purpose as members of His body, the church.

God’s intention is not simply to restore our relationship with Him but also to bring us into proper relationship with one another. The welcoming of Gentiles into the Jewish Book of Acts church is a prime example of this push toward interpersonal reconciliation. Paul’s declaration that in Christ, “there is neither Jew nor Greek, . . . neither bond nor free, . . . neither male nor female” destroys all barriers of racism, classism, and sexism in the body of Christ (Galatians 3:28). In Christ, strangers are now friends, enemies are now brothers.

Our world is right to recognize the dangers that divisions pose to society, but these divisions are not recognized as ultimately rooted in spiritual issues; they are constantly attributed to physical or mental causes. Proposed solutions come in economic, political, and sociological packaging—all humanistic answers. But unless and until we recognize the spiritual root of our societal problems, we are destined to stumble down the road to ultimate destruction. That is why God has raised up His church in this last hour with the message of true and lasting salvation: “Be ye reconciled to God” (II Corinthians 5:20). Restored to right relationship with God, we will find the power to restore all other broken relationships.

DISCUSS: What broken relationship lies at the heart of our current social crisis, and how does the gospel provide an answer for it?



FALL
03

SEPTEMBER 21, 2025

LESSON TEXT

Genesis 6–10

FOCUS VERSES

Genesis 9:11–13

¹¹And I will establish my covenant with you; neither shall all flesh be cut off any more by the waters of a flood; neither shall there any more be a flood to destroy the earth.

¹²And God said, This is the token of the covenant which I make between me and you and every living creature that is with you, for perpetual generations:

¹³I do set my bow in the cloud, and it shall be for a token of a covenant between me and the earth.

TRUTH ABOUT COVENANT

God made a covenant promise that He would never again destroy the earth with a flood.

Noah and the Flood

I WILL NOT LIVE
IN FEAR FOR

GOD IS IN
CONTROL.

COVENANT CONTEXT

When humanity's sin reached its boiling point, God promised to wash the world of wickedness, but He extended grace to righteous Noah and provided a way of escape from the Flood. God splashed a rainbow across the sky as a token of His covenant to never again destroy the earth with a flood.

SG *TEACHING OUTLINE*

Icebreaker: What is the scariest storm or natural disaster you have ever experienced?

Teacher Tip: Connect the group's answers to help them feel how afraid Noah may have felt during humanity's first storm.

Lesson Connection: Share the Lesson Connection.

I. THE WORLD AFTER THE FALL

- A. Evil Runs Rampant
- B. A Righteous Remnant
- C. I will resist the pressure of the world and walk in covenant with God.

DISCUSS: *In what ways do you feel pressure from your surroundings to walk with the world instead of walking with the Lord?*

II. THE FAITHFULNESS OF NOAH

- A. A Prophesied Savior
- B. Noah Found Grace through Obedience **I**

DISCUSS: *What changes do you need to make in your life to be more obedient to the voice of God and His Word?*

- C. I will commit to obedience even when I do not have full understanding.

DISCUSS: *Do you sometimes find it hard to believe and obey God, regardless of your level of understanding? If so, why?*

III. THE FAITHFULNESS OF GOD

- A. Faithful in Judgment **V**

DISCUSS: *Do you sometimes have difficulty reconciling the judgment of God with the love of God? If so, why?*

- B. Faithful in Salvation and Restoration
- C. I will not live in fear, for God is in control.

DISCUSS: *In what areas of your life do you need to relinquish control to God? How has fear kept you from doing so?*

Internalizing the Message

PRAYER FOCUS

Lead the group in prayer and consider the following topics of focus:

- For God to help us walk by faith and not by fear
- For God to help us be constantly aware of His covenant promise

LESSON CONNECTION

Late one night, long after the family had gone to bed, a father was startled awake by a rustling sound coming from the closet by his side of the bed. Groggy but alarmed, he held his head up slightly off the pillow and listened to see if the disturbance was part of a frightening dream or, worse yet, a frightening reality. Just as he was about to lower his head back to his pillow, he heard the sound again. This time it was a scratching sound. Fully awake now and with adrenaline coursing through his veins, he threw off the covers and fumbled to turn on the lamp.

Coupled with the noise from the closet and the father's less-than-quiet response to it, his wife awoke. Fear gripped them both as they pondered their next move. What kind of critter could have gotten into their house? Had one of the children left a door or window open? Was there a hole in the roof or an opening in the floor? Every worst-case scenario flooded their minds.

After some harried, intense deliberation—and though they could not see the source of the noise—they logically concluded it was a mouse or a rat. With newfound confidence the father devised a plan. He would push a stack of shoeboxes against the wall, pinning the intruder, while the mother retrieved an empty container to capture, transport, and rid the house of the rodent, returning their home to peace and quiet (and them back to bed).

As the mother ran to the kitchen, the father put his plan into motion. He began shoving shoeboxes against the back of the closet wall. He pushed and pushed, but the noise grew even louder. The mother returned with her tools, but she found the frustrated father still fumbling with the boxes, which were now bending under constant pressure. The plan was not working.

Concerned that the commotion would wake the kids, the mother went to check on their son, whose bedroom was closest to theirs. When she entered his room, she began to panic. The boy's beloved pet hamster, Buddy, was not in his cage. The lid was ajar with the food dish and toys positioned close enough to allow Buddy to climb up, pop the lid off the cage, escape, and roam—roam down the hall to the closet in the adjacent bedroom.

Thankfully, her scream reached the father's ears just before his last full-throttled attempt to pin the mouse or rat or whatever in with the shoeboxes. They opened the closet doors and pulled back the boxes to reveal Buddy, wedged in the corner of the closet having survived by the grace of God and a thin barrier of baseboard. He was shaken, but unharmed, and quickly returned to his habitat, where the family placed a heavy book on top of his enclosure.

How often do our fears prove to be unfounded? Worst-case-scenario thinking can plague our minds. There is often more to the story—more than we can see in the moment. Faith is not always a walk in the park; sometimes it is more like a walk in the dark. In these moments, we must remember we are in covenant with the one who knows all, sees all, and commands us many times to “fear not.”

BIBLE LESSON

I. THE WORLD AFTER THE FALL

A. Evil Runs Rampant

Adam and Eve could not have fully understood the ongoing consequences of their disobedience—that is until one of their sons murdered the other. Sin is destructive. The first six chapters of the Bible tell a sordid story about the progressive spiral of sin. The decision to violate the one commandment in the peaceful Paradise of the Garden progressed with devastating speed to the condition described in Genesis 6:5: “And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.” Great wickedness and continuously evil imagination—this description paints a bleak and discouraging picture indeed.

Thousands of years later, humanity is still navigating a world where sin abounds. Many news headlines today portray an equally dark picture of our world. Strife, abuse, animosity, greed, envy, pride, theft, and murder reveal that sin’s destructive presence is still running rampant through humanity. It is wreaking havoc and leaving nothing but pain, regret, and hopelessness in its wake. The continuous and relentless nature of sin’s effects can belie the empty soul’s longing for its Creator. Mercifully, the apostle Paul, an expert in the law of God and the consequences of disobedience, declared: “But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound” (Romans 5:20).

B. A Righteous Remnant

The picture Genesis 6:5 paints of humanity at that time does not inspire much hope. But not all hope was lost, not for those who chose to live faithfully in covenant with God. The Bible identifies certain individuals—a righteous remnant—such as Enoch who “walked with God” (Genesis 5:24). Despite his surroundings, Enoch had such a close relationship with God that one day the Lord just took him. God simply rescued Enoch from the wickedness of the world. The writer of Hebrews 11:5 described the scenario like this: “By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death; and was not found, because God had translated him: for before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God.”

What faith . . . what a testimony! Throughout history there has always been a righteous remnant living in an unrighteous world. Adhering to God’s Word even when those around us are not joins us to that growing remnant. One day just like Enoch, the righteous remnant will be translated from the world in an event called the rapture of the church. Until that day, may our testimony be the same—that we pleased God.

C. I will resist the pressure of the world and walk in covenant with God.

Though his story only fills a few lines on a few pages of Scripture, Enoch’s testimony still speaks to humanity. Interestingly, his covenant relationship with God is defined

by walking. He walked with the Lord. He was not perfect and he faced temptation, yet his desire was to please the Lord and follow His ways. Psalm 37:23 states: “The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord: and he delighteth in his way.” God has always concerned Himself with ordering humanity’s steps, even in a wicked world.

Sin remains a force in our world. Pressure to conform to it through temptation will require our resolve to resist. But we are not alone. We have God’s Word to guide us, His Spirit to empower us, and a great cloud of witnesses (including Enoch) encouraging us to walk in covenant with our covenant-making and covenant-keeping God.

DISCUSS: *In what ways do you feel pressure from your surroundings to walk with the world instead of walking with the Lord?*

II. THE FAITHFULNESS OF NOAH

A. A Prophesied Savior

Scripture reveals another member of the righteous remnant who, in the midst of rampant wickedness, walked in covenant with God. Noah arrived on the scene of history accompanied by a prophecy from his father Lamech, declaring Noah would “comfort us concerning our work and toil of our hands, because of the ground which the Lord hath cursed” (Genesis 5:29). We see no indication Noah knew how he would fulfill this prophecy, or if he even knew about it at all. But we do know there was something special about Noah, something that separated him from the rest of the world.

God’s creation had turned its back on their Creator en masse. This rejection hurt the heart of God and caused Him to promise aloud: “I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth; both man, and beast, and the creeping thing, and the fowls of the air; for it repenteth me that I have made them” (Genesis 6:7). Thankfully that is not the end of the story. The next verse hints at hope: “But Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord” (Genesis 6:8). The picture paints God searching the world for even the slightest reason to extend grace. Then, God found Noah, whose prophetic birth announcement foreshadowed his purpose and God’s plan. Comfort had come to combat the curse.

B. Noah Found Grace through Obedience

Like Enoch, Noah walked with God. While the world devolved into unbridled wickedness, Noah remained faithful to the Lord. Noah’s obedience resulted in the salvation of his family and the preservation of the entire human race. The covenant relationship between God and humanity endured in the face of evil, thanks to one man’s obedience.

- ❶ God laid out in great detail the plans for the ark Noah was to build. God dictated its dimensions, the type of wood to be used, the locations of the window and door, and how the pitch was to be applied. The ark was supposed to be at least one hundred fifty yards long and three stories high. God’s desire and direction was for Noah and his family to prepare for what was to come. Faith requires obedience to God’s instructions as Noah did, without hesitation or reservation. “Thus did Noah; according to all that

God commanded him, so did he” (Genesis 6:22). Obedience is not complicated: God instructs and we obey.

DISCUSS: *What changes do you need to make in your life to be more obedient to the voice of God and His Word?*

C. I will commit to obedience even when I do not have full understanding.

Commitment is easier when we have a lot of details or previous experience with the person to whom we are committing, not so much when there are unanswered questions and parts we do not understand. God told Noah to build an ark, something that had never been done before. He was to build an ark because it was going to rain, also something that had never happened before. The rain was going to cause a catastrophic, worldwide flood, another brand-new experience for humanity. No one, including Noah, fully understood what was going to happen or how building an ark was going to save anyone. Yet Noah obeyed.

As the sole representative of the righteous remnant, Noah undoubtedly felt isolated. But because of his obedience, he was also insulated. When the rain came and the water rose, Noah and his family were safe in the ark. They had all the provisions they needed for the duration of the storm, its aftermath, and the subsequent rebuilding efforts. Lack of understanding did not inhibit Noah’s obedience. He trusted God, and God trusted him. Through Noah, God reaffirmed His covenant with humanity. Noah chose not to live in fear, but to trust in God’s faithfulness.

DISCUSS: *Do you sometimes find it hard to believe and obey God, regardless of your level of understanding? If so, why?*

III. THE FAITHFULNESS OF GOD

A. Faithful in Judgment

Yes, the Flood is a story of judgment, but it is also a story of mercy; it is a story of the faithfulness of God. Sin’s progressive effect on creation’s caretakers reached its inevitable conclusion—death. A just God could no longer allow wickedness to rule in the world. The earth which God originally declared to be “good,” was now described as “corrupt before God” and “filled with violence” (Genesis 6:11). Humanity’s wicked ways had to be judged. Humanity had broken its covenant with our Creator and thus warranted judgment.

The Flood accomplished its holy purpose of washing away sin, leaving the earth clean of sin and poised for re-creation. Our righteous God had saved the righteous remnant and simultaneously showcased His justice and mercy. Remember, humanity had broken their covenant with God; truth and righteousness demanded judgment on sin, but God provided humanity a way of escape: the ark. Noah’s stay in the ark proved God’s faithfulness to save and restore those who follow Him. V

DISCUSS: Do you sometimes have difficulty reconciling the judgment of God with the love of God? If so, why?

B. Faithful in Salvation and Restoration

Noah found God's grace through his obedience. Noah and his family weathered the wickedness of the world, stood firmly in righteousness, escaped the destruction of the Flood, and lived to replenish the earth. God was faithful to His word, faithful to Noah, and faithful to His covenant with humanity. God spoke to Noah and his sons saying: "And I will establish my covenant with you; neither shall all flesh be cut off any more by the waters of a flood; neither shall there any more be a flood to destroy the earth" (Genesis 9:11). We are living testaments to the fulfillment of this enduring promise.

God proved faithful in restoration. The Flood did not reverse the curse from the Garden of Eden; humanity still had to till the ground. Humanity still had free will to obey the Lord or give in to temptation. Sin was still lying at the door. As it is today, obedience was blessed—Noah blessed his sons Shem and Japheth for their righteousness, and Noah cursed his son Ham for his unrighteousness. Yet each man was used in God's restorative plan to repopulate the earth and set us on a trajectory toward the ultimate salvation and restoration with a new covenant in Jesus Christ.

C. I will not live in fear, for God is in control.

This story is not scribed in Scripture for us to fear; it is for us to hope. Each time it rains, we can look up and see the pages of Scripture come alive before our twenty-first-century eyes. "And God said, This is the token of the covenant which I make between me and you and every living creature that is with you, for perpetual generations: I do set my bow in the cloud, and it shall be for a token of a covenant between me and the earth" (Genesis 9:12–13). God splashed a rainbow across the sky as a token of His covenant with us that He will never again destroy the earth with a flood.

Our covenant-making and covenant-keeping God continues to prove Himself faithful. This assurance should free us from paralyzing fear. No matter what we hear or see on the news or online, God is in control. No matter which nation threatens another or who is in power in our nation, God is in control. We know how our story ends; we who are in covenant with God will reign and rule with Him. Let us live and act with the ever-present awareness that there is a God, and we are not Him. And let us follow God's Word and obey His oft-repeated command: "Fear not."

DISCUSS: In what areas of your life do you need to relinquish control to God? How has fear kept you from doing so?

Teacher Option: Tell the story below or share one of your own to illustrate our need to have faith in Jesus during life's storms.

INTERNALIZING THE MESSAGE

Every year just prior to the summer, the National Hurricane Center issues its forecast of projected storm activity for the upcoming hurricane season. In recent decades each annual forecast has bombarded the inhabitants of the southeastern United States from southern Texas to the Carolinas with words and phrases such as “potentially overactive,” “highly volatile,” “conditions conducive to storm development,” and the like. Throughout the heat of summer, people in hurricane-susceptible areas pay particularly close attention to the weekly tropical outlooks for any disturbances or areas of concern, which warn them to watch closely. Newscasters and prognosticators often issue the clichéd guidance to “prepare for the worst and hope for the best.”

Meteorologists monitor the conditions and weather patterns that make it possible for them to predict, with extraordinary accuracy, when and where a storm will form before it shows up on the radar screen. This ability is impressive, and for anyone who has ever ridden out a hurricane or suffered damage or displacement from one, it is valuable. Preparing for an oncoming storm can save lives and minimize property damage. Yet because of the inherent unpredictability of storms, even the most prepared individuals can experience fear, especially when a storm

rapidly intensifies and appears to be barreling straight for an area they call home.

Noah did not have the luxury of satellite imagery and radar apps on his smartphone. He had an even more trustworthy early warning system—the word of God. The Lord gave Noah a warning about the storm of all storms. He also gave Noah specific instructions on how to prepare for it. Obedience was crucial, the results inevitable. Exactly as God said, He brought floodwaters to the earth, destroyed His creation, and saved only those in the ark. He proved His control over creation while also proving His faithfulness to His word.

Before the rain fell for the first time in the history of the world, Noah had a choice to make: fear or faith? We have the same choice to make. With a horizontal gaze, we find ample reasons (or excuses) to fear. Sin's spiral is on full display; figurative and literal storms continue to batter us in what seems like seasonal cycles. Yet if we are walking in covenant with God through obedience to His Word, we only need to look up after the rain to be reminded of the faithfulness of God. We have nothing to fear, for God is in control. The next time fear rears its ugly head, raise yours a bit higher, fix your eyes on Jesus, and remember the rainbow. He who was faithful to Noah will be forever faithful to us.



FALL
04

SEPTEMBER 28, 2025

LESSON TEXT

Genesis 11-25

FOCUS VERSE

Genesis 12:2

And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing.

TRUTH ABOUT COVENANT

God promised Abraham he would become a nation and inherit the Promised Land.

Abraham and Isaac



COVENANT CONTEXT

As the world rebuilt after the Flood, they attempted to build a tower to keep God from scattering them once more, indicating they did not trust Him to keep His covenant. God called one man, named Abram, to enter into covenant with Him, even when it could cost him everything.

SG *TEACHING OUTLINE*

Icebreaker: In what area of life is it hardest to trust others?

Teacher Tip: Connect the group's answers to show the value of our trust in God who keeps His word.

Lesson Connection: Share the Lesson Connection.

I. BABEL AND UR

- A. Another Rebellion
- B. Another Savior

DISCUSS: *Have you ever felt led of the Lord to do something or make a firm decision when you did not have the full picture or all the details?*

- C. I will always hope in the gracious mercy of God.

DISCUSS: *Have you ever felt hopeless about a situation outside your control? How did the Word of God help you navigate those feelings?*

II. GOD'S COVENANT WITH ABRAHAM

- A. The Most Unlikely Choice
- B. Abraham Believed and Obeyed

DISCUSS: *Have you ever doubted a promise from the Lord, only to be reassured of it in a miraculous way?*

- C. I will seek encounters with God that renew my covenant relationship with Him. (V)

III. ABRAHAM'S FINAL TEST

- A. The Call to Mount Moriah

DISCUSS: *Has your faith ever been tested? How did you respond?*

- B. God's Final Provision
- C. Abraham's Final Act of Faith
- D. I will trust God with everything.

DISCUSS: *Have you had to put to death any promises in your own life? Has it worked out for the better? If not yet, do you believe it will?*

Internalizing the Message (I)

PRAYER FOCUS

Lead the group in prayer and consider the following topics of focus:

- For God to show us any area of our lives we need to surrender to Him completely
- For God to give us perfect peace about the present and the future when we trust Him

LESSON CONNECTION

The husband and wife could not contain their excitement. They were having another boy. Like the first time three years earlier, a few complications required surgery during delivery. The loud cry of a beautiful, healthy baby boy made those complications seem trivial. Mom's recovery went smoothly. Within a few days, the entire family made their return home to settle into a new normal. Mom and sons would stay home for the rest of the summer, with Grandma helping as much and as often as needed. Dad prepared for his return to work on Monday with an ample supply of pictures to proudly display.

Upon entering the office, he immediately sensed something was wrong. Of course he received the obligatory, but sincere, "Congratulations!" from his coworkers, but he could not shake the feeling that he was missing something. Something had muted the celebratory atmosphere he expected. It did not take long to figure out why. "Mark, can you come into the office for a minute, please?" his manager asked. Mark sat down and his manager continued, "As you know we are a startup company. We have been running on funds from our investors. I hate to have to tell you this now, but those funds are running out next week. We cannot pay you any longer. Your position will be eliminated."

His feelings changed so fast. He was happy; now he was devastated. The company had made him promises. They helped him plot out his career path. He even ignored other opportunities to start with this startup. Everything changed. Not only did the father have to immediately begin looking for another job, but he had to do so with his wife recovering from surgery, a three-year-old son who would soon have to have his tonsils removed, and a week-old baby. And all of them were depending on him to provide food, clothing, and everything else, not to mention the medical bills that had not yet started arriving.

Overcome with fear, worry, and anxiety, he tried to pray. He knew that, unlike him, God was not in a state of shock over this situation. His words quickly morphed into tears. Just then he remembered his last conversation with his grandmother in the nursing home a few years ago, just weeks before she died. They had talked about living for God, and when he asked her favorite Bible verse, in a cogent moment she replied, "I don't remember where it is, but I've always liked the one that says 'I was young and now I am old, but I have never seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread.'" His grandmother's paraphrase of Psalm 37:25 instantly became an anchor.

Mark had always trusted God with his family and finances, and trusting God proved fruitful. Between job interviews, Mark helped at home. The insurance covered more of the medical bills than he expected. By the end of the summer, he had a job offer with a higher salary and more benefits than the one he had lost.

Have you ever been in a similar situation? Can you trust God when you cannot track God (understand God)? It is helpful to remember that nothing catches Him off guard. As Paul rightly wrote: "All things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose" (Romans 8:28).

BIBLE LESSON

I. BABEL AND UR

A. Another Rebellion

The floodwaters had washed away wickedness from the earth, but humanity's propensity to sin remained. God desired the descendants of Noah to "be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth" (Genesis 9:1). Instead, those called to replenish rebelled. Their stated goal is noted in Genesis 11:4: "Let us make us a name, lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth." Seemingly unaware of God's covenant and knowingly disobedient of His command, the people set out to establish for themselves a permanent residence with a man-made tower at the center—a source of pride and protection from future floods.

Yet again, humanity deserved full and final judgment. And yet again, God chose to bestow mercy instead. In another example of undoing what He had done initially, the one who brought order to disorder in the days of Creation introduced disorder to the rebellious people by confusing their language. They were unable to communicate with one another, so they had no choice but to stop their ill-advised tower building program and spread out over the earth as the Lord had commanded them to do in the first place. God continued to prove Himself faithful to His covenant despite what humanity deserved.

B. Another Savior

As the population of the replenished world increased, so did sin. Another flood was justified. Perhaps the first few times it rained, they breathed a sigh of relief when the rain stopped falling short of a flood. But after each thunderstorm, arched in the sky as if suspended from heaven itself, hung a rainbow as a sign of God's covenant. It reassured humanity that God was faithful to His promise. Free will remained one of God's greatest gifts to humanity. Those who willingly obeyed the Lord reaped the blessings. Prior to the Flood, Noah found grace in the eyes of God, and his obedience brought salvation for himself, his family, and the animal kingdom. Generations later, God's call for obedience was heeded by another man—Abram.

"Now the Lord had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee" (Genesis 12:1). We learn a few verses later: "So Abram departed, as the Lord had spoken unto him" (Genesis 12:4). Abram heard a command from God, and he obeyed that command without knowing exactly where he was going. His obedience resulted in a covenant with a promise from God to make him a blessing to all nations.

DISCUSS: Have you ever felt led of the Lord to do something or make a firm decision when you did not have the full picture or all the details?

C. I will always hope in the gracious mercy of God.

We can be eternally grateful God does not give us what we deserve. Truthfully, we deserve judgment; He gives us mercy. We deserve death; He gives us life. Like a judge allowing a guilty person to go free, the mercy of God allows us to escape the death penalty of sin.

But since God is holy, He cannot just ignore sin; someone has to pay the penalty and suffer the sentence we deserve. The gospel—the beautiful covenant God’s Word keeps pointing toward—teaches us that God Himself took our sins and our sorrows on Himself. He paid our penalty; He suffered our sentence. The covenant blessings of God go beyond a spiritual pardon. Not only do we not get what we deserve because of His mercy, but we get what we do not deserve because of His grace. Jesus announced: “I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly” (John 10:10).

DISCUSS: Have you ever felt hopeless about a situation outside your control? How did the Word of God help you navigate those feelings?

II. GOD’S COVENANT WITH ABRAHAM

A. The Most Unlikely Choice

In Genesis 17:5, God renamed Abram as “Abraham,” a name that means “father of many nations.” Ironically, when God first called them, Abraham and Sarah were advanced in age and childless—not the optimistic scenario for a multitude of descendants. But God proved yet again that He can make something out of nothing. God cured Sarah’s barrenness and gave her their promised son, Isaac. What Abraham and Sarah hoped would be an unveiling shortly after receiving the promise, proved to be more of a slow, twenty-five-year unfolding of God’s prophetic word as they walked in covenant with Him.

God promised the following to Abraham: “And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing; and I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed” (Genesis 12:2–3). The rest of the Bible’s grand story invites readers to observe Abraham’s journey of faith as God’s fulfillment of the Abrahamic covenant unfolds with each faith-filled step. Thanks to Abraham’s obedience and God’s faithfulness, we remain beneficiaries of God’s plan to bless the nations through Abraham.

B. Abraham Believed and Obeyed

Believe and obey are action words. Like Noah, Abraham put feet on his faith. When God told Abraham to go, Abraham went. As Abraham walked with God, God continued to reiterate and refine His covenant. Not surprisingly, Abraham battled fear and doubt throughout this long journey. He even sired a son named Ishmael when God did not

answer as quickly as Abraham had hoped. During one moment of doubt, God instructed Abraham to look up toward heaven and count the stars. This was enough reassurance for Abraham. “He believed in the Lord; and he counted it to him for righteousness” (Genesis 15:5–6).

DISCUSS: *Have you ever doubted a promise from the Lord, only to be reassured of it in a miraculous way?*

The sign of the covenant for Noah was a rainbow in the sky; for Abraham and his descendants, it was circumcision. God commanded: “And ye shall circumcise the flesh of your foreskin; and it shall be a token of the covenant betwixt me and you” (Genesis 17:11). Then, God unfolded another prophetic page in His great master plan: “But my covenant will I establish with Isaac, which Sarah shall bear unto thee at this set time in the next year” (Genesis 17:21). Abraham obeyed immediately; he and his entire household were circumcised.

C. I will seek encounters with God that renew my covenant relationship with Him.

Thanks to Abraham’s faithful obedience, this multi-generational covenant blessing reverberates still today. Abraham’s relationship with God serves as an example of how God desires to interact with humanity. He directs; we follow. He has a master plan for all of humanity collectively, but it unfolds in our lives individually.

The New Testament opens with these words: “The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham” (Matthew 1:1). When Abraham looked up at the night sky to count the stars, little did he know that one of his descendants would be Jesus Christ, God manifested in flesh, the “bright and morning star” (Revelation 22:16). All nations of the earth are blessed through the salvation offered in Jesus Christ, a salvation obtained through belief in and obedience to His gospel—His death, burial, and resurrection. V

III. ABRAHAM’S FINAL TEST

A. The Call to Mount Moriah

Abraham’s walk of faith was not always easy. After Abraham received his promised son, God instructed Abraham to take Isaac up to Mount Moriah and sacrifice him as a burnt offering. Child sacrifice was a deplorable but common practice among the pagan tribes of the surrounding area, but never had the God of creation commanded such an act. Was Abraham willing to do for his God what pagans did for theirs? Abraham gathered the materials for the sacrifice, and when Isaac asked about the lamb, in a bold prophetic statement of faith Abraham announced: “My son, God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt offering” (Genesis 22:8).

By this point in Abraham’s covenant walk with God, he had learned to trust God completely. The writer of Hebrews provided insight into Abraham’s perspective. “By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac: and he that had received the promises offered up his only begotten son, of whom it was said, That in Isaac shall thy seed be called: accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead”

(Hebrews 11:17–19). How could a father obey a command to sacrifice his promised son? Abraham had unshakable faith that the God who gave him his son could raise his son back to life.

DISCUSS: *Has your faith ever been tested? How did you respond?*

B. God's Final Provision

God honored Abraham's faith, and the angel stopped him before he could sacrifice his son. As this relieved father of the faithful lifted up his eyes, he saw a ram caught in the thicket. Truly the Lord had provided a sacrifice. In that moment, Abraham glimpsed God as Jehovah-Jireh, the Lord who provides.

In beautifully prophetic form, this episode foreshadowed a future moment when God incarnate, Jesus Christ, would willingly offer Himself at Calvary as a sacrificial lamb for the sins of humanity. He quite literally provided Himself as a sacrifice—the only sufficient substitute for the death humanity rightly deserved. Abraham believed God could raise his promised son after death; Jesus' empty tomb proved Abraham's faith was justified. The promised Son of God rose victorious over death after three days.

Peter made it clear while preaching at the Temple that the Abrahamic covenant was fulfilled through Jesus Christ and sealed with the promise of the Spirit. "Ye are the children of the prophets, and of the covenant which God made with our fathers, saying unto Abraham, and in thy seed shall all the kindreds of the earth be blessed. Unto you first God, having raised up his Son Jesus, sent him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities" (Acts 3:25–26).

C. Abraham's Final Act of Faith

One wise man or woman said, "A faithful man walks by faith in the present while preparing for the future." Years later, Abraham's sweet Sarah died, and Abraham once again proved his exemplary faith. He purchased the cave of Machpelah in the Promised Land as a place to bury her. Generations later, Jacob charged his sons to bury him there as well. Over four centuries later, when the Israelites eventually made it into the Promised Land, they did so by following in Abraham's footsteps. In a final act of faith, Abraham purchased land and therefore staked a claim of faith on the promise of God.

D. I will trust God with everything.

Abraham was human. He dealt with impatience, doubt, and frustration—like we do—while waiting for God's promises to come to pass. Being in covenant with God does not always mean everything will make perfect sense. We must remind ourselves that God does not call us to understand; He calls us to trust. God proves Himself trustworthy every day with each new sunrise. With His Spirit inside us and His Word to guide us, we have every reason to put every season into His nail-pierced hands. They hold us well. Speaking of Jesus, the writer of Hebrews wrote: "And again, I will put my trust in him" (Hebrews 2:13). Is there an "and again" step you need to take today?

DISCUSS: *Have you had to put to death any promises in your own life? Has it worked out for the better? If not yet, do you believe it will?*

Teacher Option: Tell the story below or share one of your own to illustrate the value of trusting in God wholeheartedly—He will not let us fall.

INTERNALIZING THE MESSAGE

I On November 16, 2017, *CBS News* released a story on their website with the following headline: “Australian diplomat, playing a game of trust, dies in fall off terrace.”

Julian Simpson and several other people wanted to see the lights of the Empire State Building. While on a terrace on the seventh floor of an apartment building, a disagreement broke out between Julian and another man. Thirty-year-old Simpson leaned over the ledge to play the trust game, hoping to show his trustworthiness.

The friend, James Waugh, told police he held out his arm to catch Simpson, but the diplomat lost his grip and toppled over the ledge about 1:35 a.m., coming to a stop on a second-story landing outside the building. He was pronounced dead at the scene (cbsnews.com). The harrowing ordeal illustrates the limitations of our trust in other humans (if not the limits of our human wisdom).

There will be people in our lives whom we can trust, and we endeavor to reciprocate by being trustworthy for them. But there is only one who is perfect in all His ways. Proverbs tells us we are to trust in the Lord. He does all things well, and His timing is perfect.

Trust is easy when we feel close to God. It is easy when we can hear His still small voice and see His plan clearly. It can be considerably harder when we realize we are commanded to trust Him even when

we do not understand what He is doing. In these times, trust becomes inconvenient.

Like Abraham and Noah discovered, learning to trust God is a process. Faithful obedience to the Word of God was a pivotal part of the learning process for them, as it is for us. It is likely we have made the mistake of trusting the wrong people in our lives. It is even more likely we have trusted ourselves to our own detriment.

We must learn from our trust falls and fails and remember that the only one we can trust completely and without inhibition is the Lord Jesus Christ. We often find it easier to trust Him with our future than we do our present—with the eternal more so than the temporal. We must trust Him with both.

Tragedy ensues when trust is betrayed. When we try to lean on something that is not reliable, true, able, or strong enough to hold us, it never works out in our favor. The Bible is definitive on whom we can trust: “Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths” (Proverbs 3:5–6).

What about you? Is there something you are withholding from God? Is there an area of your life that has been off-limits to the Lord? He has proven Himself faithful to His covenant and to those walking with Him in covenant. Let the God of Noah, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob be God in your life today.



FALL
05

OCTOBER 5, 2025

LESSON TEXT

Genesis 25-36

FOCUS VERSES

Genesis 32:27-28

²⁷And he said unto him,
What is thy name?
And he said, Jacob.

²⁸And he said, Thy
name shall be called
no more Jacob, but
Israel: for as a prince
hast thou power with
God and with men,
and hast prevailed.

**TRUTH ABOUT
COVENANT**

God changed Jacob
and called him to be
the unlikely leader of
the twelve tribes of
Israel.

From Jacob to Israel

I WILL SEE
MYSELF AS

GOD SEES
ME.

COVENANT CONTEXT

As we continue deeper into Genesis, we discover God was faithful to His covenant promise to Abraham to bless him with many descendants. Abraham's son Isaac had twin boys, and God invited the younger Jacob to be the father of the twelve tribes of Israel, from whom we'll see God's people quickly multiply.

SG *TEACHING OUTLINE*

Icebreaker: If you have a brother or sister, what is your funniest story of sibling rivalry?

Teacher Tip: Connect the group's answers to set up today's lesson about Jacob and Esau's intense sibling rivalry.

Lesson Connection: Share the Lesson Connection. **I**

I. JACOB AT WAR WITH ESAU

- A. A Struggle from Birth
- B. Jacob Stole the Blessing
- C. I will never attempt to forcibly take what God has promised to freely give me.

DISCUSS: *What problems do you need to submit to God before you make the situation worse than it already is?*

II. JACOB AT WAR WITH HIMSELF

- A. Jacob's Retreat
- B. Jacob's Defeat
- C. I will allow God to use my life circumstances to teach me how to follow Him.

DISCUSS: *What lesson(s) does God want to teach you through your current circumstances?*

III. JACOB AT WAR WITH GOD

- A. Jacob's Confession **V**

DISCUSS: *What do you need to confess to God so you can experience His transformation?*

- B. Jacob's Transformation

DISCUSS: *Have you had a life-changing encounter with God? If not, ask God to give you such an experience.*

- C. I will see myself as God sees me.

DISCUSS: *How can you more fully embrace the new identity you have in Christ?*

Internalizing the Message

PRAYER FOCUS

Lead the group in prayer and consider the following topics of focus:

- For God to help us see ourselves as He sees us
- For God to help us be faithful examples of His transforming power

LESSON CONNECTION

Sibling rivalries can create gripping storylines. We see many examples of siblings who support one another personally and professionally celebrate each other's successes and enjoy lifelong friendships. And then . . . some siblings just cannot seem to get along, even in the best of circumstances.

- I Sisters Olivia de Havilland and Joan Fontaine just could not get along. Both were accomplished actresses during the mid-twentieth century, but neither seemed to appreciate her sister's successes. Their rivalry, which was downright nasty at times, seemed to reach back into their childhood. According to the *New York Post*, when de Havilland was in elementary school, she was asked "to write a make-believe last will and testament." De Havilland reportedly wrote: "I bequeath all my beauty to my younger sister, Joan, since she has none." In another incident, the teenage de Havilland broke her younger sister's collarbone during a fight.

In 1942 Fontaine got a taste of revenge when both sisters were nominated for an Academy Award for Best Actress. Much to de Havilland's chagrin, Fontaine won. Four years later, de Havilland won her own Oscar. When her younger sister approached to offer congratulations, de Havilland snubbed her. "I went over to congratulate her as I would have done to any winner," Fontaine wrote. "She took one look at me, ignored my hand, clutched her Oscar and wheeled away."

Sadly the sisters apparently never reconciled their differences. When their mother died in 1975, they even feuded at the funeral, with de Havilland reportedly attempting to prohibit Fontaine from attending. Four years later, both sisters attended the Oscars ceremony but refused to sit together. In the late 1980s, the two inadvertently booked adjacent rooms at a Beverly Hills hotel. When Fontaine learned her sister was staying next door, she immediately checked out of the hotel (nypost.com).

Fontaine summed up the sisters' fractured relationship in a 1978 interview when she said of de Havilland, "I don't see her at all and I don't intend to," adding, "I got married first, got an Academy Award first, had a child first. If I die, she'll be furious, because again I'll have got there first!" (seattlerep.org).

Thankfully, sibling rivalries featuring this level of vitriol are the exception, not the norm. But when sibling relationships go south, things can get ugly in a hurry. Perhaps it is not surprising that the first recorded murder was between two brothers. Cain ended his brother Abel's life in an apparent jealous rage when God accepted Abel and his sacrifice while rejecting Cain and his sacrifice. Rather than repenting, Cain surrendered to his darkest impulses. This account warns us that sin, such as jealousy and pride—when left unrepented—has disastrous consequences and ruins even the closest relationships.

BIBLE LESSON

I. JACOB AT WAR WITH ESAU

A. A Struggle from Birth

Genesis 25–36 shares the account of a long-running feud between two men, Jacob and Esau. They were Isaac and Rebekah's twin sons, but a birthday was about the only thing these two had in common. The roots of the conflict between Jacob and Esau extended back to their birth, as recorded in Genesis 25:21–26. Their mother, Rebekah, had been unable to bear children until God miraculously intervened. Her pregnancy was more difficult than expected because “the children struggled together within her” (Genesis 25:22). Sensing something unusual was happening in her womb, Rebekah asked God for insight. He told her: “Two nations are in your womb, Two peoples shall be separated from your body; One people shall be stronger than the other, And the older shall serve the younger” (Genesis 25:23, NKJV).

When Rebekah finally gave birth, Esau arrived first, followed by Jacob. Ominously, Jacob came out of the womb gripping his brother's heel. The name *Jacob*, which literally means “heel grabber,” would prove to be a dark part of Jacob he wrestled with much of his life.

B. Jacob Stole the Blessing

Isaac and Rebekah's favoritism intensified the brothers' rivalry. Esau was a skillful hunter, a true outdoorsman, which made him his father's favorite, while Jacob preferred to stay close to home, which endeared him to his mother. Rebekah's preference for Jacob eventually inspired her to concoct a plan to help her youngest son swindle his older brother.

As the firstborn son, Esau was entitled to both the birthright (a double portion of the family inheritance) and his father's blessing (the pronouncement of covenant benefits). Jacob caught Esau in a moment of weakness and convinced him to trade his birthright for a bowl of pottage. Later Rebekah assisted Jacob in an elaborate ruse to trick Isaac, who was nearly blind from age, into pronouncing the blessing over Jacob rather than over Esau. When Esau discovered his younger brother's trickery, he was furious. His only comfort was the thought he would soon murder Jacob and reclaim what his crafty baby brother had stolen.

C. I will never attempt to forcibly take what God has promised to freely give me.

God had promised Rebekah that her older son would serve the younger (Genesis 25:23), a revelation she no doubt had shared with Jacob. Perhaps Rebekah and Jacob viewed this promise as justification for their manipulative and deceptive tactics against Esau. To use a modern idiom, Rebekah and Jacob apparently believed “the end justifies the means.”

When God promises something, He does not need our help to fulfill His word, especially when our idea of “help” includes unethical and immoral actions such as lying and deceit. Rebekah and Jacob took matters into their own hands, resulting in shattered trust and a lonely fugitive escape to a foreign land. It would be years before Jacob could safely return home.

DISCUSS: *What problems do you need to submit to God before you make the situation worse than it already is?*

II. JACOB AT WAR WITH HIMSELF

Being at war with your sibling is bad, but it's even worse when you are at war with yourself. You may be able to distance yourself from others, but you cannot outrun yourself. As the old saying goes, “No matter where you go, there you are.” This was Jacob's problem: he could run from his brother, but he could not outrun his own character flaws. His selfishness that brought him into conflict with Esau would cause him further trouble in the future. Eventually Jacob would need to stop running and confront his personal shortcomings. But that day had not dawned yet; it was still a long way off.

A. Jacob's Retreat

Jacob packed his bags and hit the road, grateful to be temporarily beyond the reach of his brother's wrath. Jacob probably didn't realize it, but God also used the incident to isolate him from his mother's dishonest influence. One night, as he lay alone in the darkness, perhaps thinking fondly of home, God appeared to Jacob in a vision and gave him a promise: “Behold, I am with thee, and will keep thee in all places whither thou goest, and will bring thee again into this land; for I will not leave thee, until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of” (Genesis 28:15). Although Jacob felt his life was nearly over, God had him right where He wanted him.

The vision and beautiful promise were only the beginning. God had more lessons to teach Jacob before the promise would be fulfilled. Jacob—the con man, deceiver, trickster, huckster, supplanter—was about to meet his match. His wily uncle Laban, who lived in Padanaram, would soon show his nephew how it felt to be on the receiving end of those dirty tricks.

B. Jacob's Defeat

Jacob found a pleasant surprise in Padanaram: Rachel, his cousin, whom Genesis 29:17 describes as “beautiful and well favoured.” Jacob was smitten at first sight. He quickly cut a deal with Rachel's father, Uncle Laban, promising to serve him for seven years for the privilege of marrying his daughter.

Laban no doubt sensed Jacob's weakness when it came to Rachel, so Laban conned Jacob into first marrying Rachel's older sister, Leah. In exchange, Laban exacted seven more years of work from his nephew. When it came to Rachel, Jacob proved to be pretty easy prey. He was married to a wife he didn't love, and the wife he did love proved to be barren. Since the Jews often measured blessings by children and land, Rachel appeared to be more cursed than blessed.

The frustrations of infertility led to conflict in Jacob and Rachel's marriage (Genesis 30:1–2). Leah was bearing him children, but Rachel was not, so Rachel sent her handmaid to be a surrogate mother for her. Leah followed her sister's lead, and they fought for Jacob's love and affection. His wives and father-in-law were cunning manipulators, and Jacob found himself tangled in webs of family deceit. Eventually Jacob outfoxed his father-in-law and skipped town with his wives, children, and a large portion of Laban's personal wealth. Once again, Jacob was on the run.

C. I will allow God to use my life circumstances to teach me how to follow Him.

Jacob did not realize it, but God was using these less-than-pleasant circumstances to teach him valuable lessons. Most importantly, Jacob learned that schemes and manipulation may seem to help you get ahead in the short term, but only God can give you blessings that truly satisfy. Following Rachel's desperate pleading, God answered their prayers and gave the couple a son (Genesis 30:22–24). They named their miracle baby Joseph, and he was his father's favorite child. Jacob was the target of sibling rivalry due to favoritism, and he was perpetuating that same feuding in his own sons.

God does not need our help. He asks for our faith, but He doesn't need us to speed Him up (like Abraham tried) or to trick and deceive (like Jacob tried). Part of walking by faith is trusting that God knows what He's doing, even when we don't, and that He will keep His word in His time. As we live in covenant with God, trust God. The one who made you a promise will keep His promise because He is our covenant-making, covenant-keeping God.

DISCUSS: *What lesson(s) does God want to teach you through your current circumstances?*

III. JACOB AT WAR WITH GOD

Although God had blessed Jacob in Padanaram, Jacob still had important lessons to learn. True to form, Jacob “stole away” while Laban was distracted by the task of shearing sheep. When Laban learned of his son-in-law's departure, Laban pursued and overtook Jacob in the mountains. Even then, God shielded Jacob from Laban's rage. The two men entered an uneasy truce, with Jacob pledging to care for Laban's daughters while Laban agreed not to harm his son-in-law.

A. Jacob's Confession

Jacob had gotten Laban off his back, but God was not done settling accounts with this crafty sheepherder. God had pronounced His intention to bless Jacob, but Jacob needed to come clean about his personal failures first. On the eve of his reunion with Esau, Jacob seemed to recognize that much of the trouble he had endured during the previous decades was a result of his own sinfulness. Even so, God had kept the promises He made to Jacob at Bethel. Jacob cried out to God, acknowledging: “I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies, and of all the truth, which thou hast shewed unto thy servant” (Genesis 32:10).

- ▼ That night God engaged Jacob in a divine wrestling match on the banks of the Jabbok River. This night would change his life and align him with the covenant God had made his father, Isaac, and his grandfather Abraham. Jacob demanded a blessing from God, and God responded with an unusual question: “What is thy name?” Jacob responded with an honest admission: My name is Jacob. Since Hebrew names were often assigned because of their meanings, when Jacob told his name, he also told of his nature: con man, deceiver, trickster, huckster, supplanter.

DISCUSS: *What do you need to confess to God so you can experience His transformation?*

B. Jacob’s Transformation

God’s response to Jacob’s honesty transformed history. “Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel: for as a prince hast thou power with God and with men, and hast prevailed” (Genesis 32:28). No longer would Jacob be known as a conniving schemer who cheated others to get ahead. Now he was Israel, the patriarch of God’s chosen people, a man invited into covenant relationship with God and His people by God’s grace.

As Jacob reflected on this encounter with God beside the Jabbok, he no doubt remembered how his grandfather, Abraham, who had been given the name Abram at birth, had entered a covenant with God. When Abram was ninety-nine years old, God changed his name to Abraham (meaning “father of many nations”), a sign God would fulfill His previous promise to give Abram a son. (See Genesis 17.) Isaac, Jacob’s father, had been that promised son and the heir of Abraham’s covenant with God. Isaac had also been promised many descendants as part of God’s covenant (Genesis 26:24). Like his grandfather and father before him, Jacob could now claim his own life-transforming encounter with God.

DISCUSS: *Have you had a life-changing encounter with God? If not, ask God to give you such an experience.*

C. I will see myself as God sees me.

In time, the lineage of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob produced the Messiah: Jesus Christ (Matthew 1:1). Jesus was the ultimate fulfillment of God’s promise to Abraham that all the nations of the earth would be blessed through the patriarch (Genesis 22:18). We have the privilege of entering into covenant with Jesus through the blood He shed for us at Calvary (Hebrews 13:20). He graciously gives us a new name—His name—when we are baptized, and He empowers us with new life through His Holy Spirit.

Because of Jesus, our sin and accompanying shame are erased and replaced with hope for today and the promise of an even greater tomorrow. As we embrace and live out what God’s Word says about us, we will recognize we are sons and daughters of the King of kings—royal children who have power with God. We are no longer who we were; by God’s grace, we are living to be who our Creator created us to be.

DISCUSS: *How can you more fully embrace the new identity you have in Christ?*

Teacher Option: Tell the story below or share one of your own to illustrate how God recreates us when we are in covenant relationship with Him.

INTERNALIZING THE MESSAGE

You may be familiar with the marketing term *rebranding*, a strategy the *Oxford Dictionary* defines as “the act of changing the way that an organization, business, company, or product appears to the public.” Many companies have undergone rebrands, including several iconic brands. A few years ago, Dunkin’ Donuts dropped the second half of the company’s name and is now known only as “Dunkin’,” a nod to the fact the fast-food chain sells more than donuts. More dramatically, billionaire Elon Musk purchased the popular social media platform Twitter in late 2022 and soon renamed the company “X,” a decision that left many marketers scratching their heads.

Sometimes celebrities or high-profile business leaders attempt to create a new image for themselves. One of the most famous examples is Alfred Bernhard Nobel, the Swedish chemist who invented dynamite and made a fortune selling explosives and military armaments. According to popular history, Nobel experienced an epiphany of sorts when his brother, Ludwig, died in France. A French newspaper erroneously believed Alfred had died, and they published an unflattering obituary that labeled the munitions magnate as a “merchant of death.” A biographer wrote that Nobel “became so obsessed with the posthumous reputation that he rewrote his last will, bequeathing most of his fortune to a cause upon which no future obituary

writer would be able to cast aspersions.” That cause was the Nobel Foundation, which awards annual prizes to scientists, authors, activists, and others who, in the words of Nobel, “shall have conferred the greatest benefit on mankind” during the preceding year (history.com). Intentional or not, Nobel’s rebranding effort worked. More than a century after his death, his name is most closely associated with the famed Nobel Prize.

Thankfully you do not need a large fortune or an army of marketing experts to undergo a successful “rebrand.” You also don’t need a tummy tuck, facelift, new wardrobe, or even a new name. (Have you noticed that celebrities who change their names often fail to change their behavior?) Real change begins on the inside as God shines His light on the darkest chambers of our hearts.

Paul celebrated this change when he wrote: “If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new” (II Corinthians 5:17). When we embrace God and His Word and we respond to His invitation to live in covenant with Him, He gives us a new name, a new identity, and a new community. Through Him we inherit new and better promises (Hebrews 6:12). Others may not understand what has happened to us, but as we embrace our new identity, they will recognize God is working in us, and many will respond by seeking Him.



FALL
06

OCTOBER 12, 2025

LESSON TEXT
Genesis 37-50

FOCUS VERSE
Genesis 50:20
But as for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive.

TRUTH ABOUT COVENANT
God empowered Joseph to live faithfully for Him in unfavorable circumstances.

Joseph

I WILL NOT BE
**DISTRACTED
BY DETOURS**
ON THE
**JOURNEY TO
MY PURPOSE.**

COVENANT CONTEXT

Jacob's favorite son Joseph was betrayed by his brothers and sold into slavery, but God was with him and eventually promoted him to second-in-command in the land of Egypt. Through Joseph's faithfulness, God preserved His covenant He had made with His people.

SG *TEACHING OUTLINE*

Icebreaker: If you could dream one dream over again, what might it be about?

Teacher Tip: Connect the group's answers to the impact Joseph's dreams had on him and the entire nation of Israel.

Lesson Connection: Share the Lesson Connection. **I**

I. JOSEPH'S MANY HARDSHIPS

A. Betrayed by Brothers

DISCUSS: *How might envy undermine your ability to be faithful to God and to others in your present circumstances?*

B. Faced with Hardships

C. I will trust God though I face hardships as I journey toward my purpose.

DISCUSS: *Can you point to a time in your life when hardship and difficulty proved to be part of God's plan? How did you discover it was part of God's plan?*

II. JOSEPH SUCCESSFULLY LIVED FOR GOD IN EGYPT

A. Maintained His Integrity **V**

B. Faithful and Forgiving

DISCUSS: *How do forgiveness and faithfulness work together? How does unforgiveness undermine faithfulness?*

C. I will remain humble and persevere just as Joseph did.

DISCUSS: *What biblical promises encourage you during difficult times?*

III. FAITHFULNESS PRESERVED THE COVENANT

A. A Tense Reunion

B. Faithfulness Wins the Day

C. I will live in covenant even in a hostile environment.

DISCUSS: *Why do you think faithfulness is more valuable than talent, intelligence, or education?*

Internalizing the Message

PRAYER FOCUS

Lead the group in prayer and consider the following topics of focus:

- For God to help us to be faithful in the face of difficulty and temptation
- For character and integrity so our lives will honor God

LESSON CONNECTION

I Jan Borysovych Koum was born in Kyiv, Ukraine, back when the country was part of the Soviet Union. The Koums were poor, and Jan was raised in a home with no running water. The school he attended as a child did not have an indoor bathroom. Koum recalls that he and his classmates had to go outside in the freezing cold of Soviet winters to use the restroom.

In 1992 when Koum was sixteen, he and his mother relocated to Mountain View, California. Mountain View is located in California's Silicon Valley, a region that already was a hub of technological advancement in the early 1990s. Although they were surrounded by wealth, Koum and his mother struggled, relying on food stamps and welfare to supplement their low-paying jobs. Koum began teaching himself about computers. He wasn't a great student (Koum admits he barely graduated from high school), but he did enroll at San Jose State University. He also landed a job in cybersecurity at Ernst & Young, one of the so-called Big Four accounting firms. During this time Koum met Brian Acton, who worked at Yahoo. Soon afterward, Koum also landed a job at Yahoo, and he and Acton spent the next nine years working together at the search engine giant.

In late 2007, Koum and Acton decided to take time off and travel across South America. When they returned to California the following year, Koum and Acton both applied for jobs with the social media platform Facebook, which was just getting started. Neither was hired. In January 2009 Koum bought an iPhone. At the time, Apple's App Store was only seven months old, but Koum quickly recognized its significance. In late February, Koum launched a business that would offer a new communications app for smartphones called "WhatsApp." Acton joined the startup shortly thereafter and became one of WhatsApp's cofounders.

It didn't take long for WhatsApp to become popular with smartphone users, especially those outside the United States. By 2012 WhatsApp had caught the attention of Facebook founder Mark Zuckerberg, whose company had declined to hire either Koum or Acton in 2008. After two years of negotiations, Zuckerberg agreed to purchase WhatsApp for \$19 billion. As an acknowledgment of the financial struggles he and his mother faced in earlier years, Koum symbolically signed the acquisition agreement on the door of the welfare office where they once received assistance (businessinsider.com). Though he was born into poverty and political oppression, Koum is now one of the wealthiest men in Silicon Valley. WhatsApp continues to be extremely popular with an estimated two billion users in 180 countries as of mid-2024.

Rags-to-riches stories such as Koum's often have us daydreaming about what could happen in our own lives. But we don't usually think of the years of struggle, poverty, and uncertainty individuals such as Koum endured on their way to success. The Bible offers its own version of a rags-to-riches story in Genesis 37–50. Joseph, one of the twelve sons of Israel, went from favorite son to slave to prisoner. Then in a dramatic turn of events, he became the second-in-command over one of the most powerful nations on earth. Joseph persevered through several injustices, and his life serves as a witness to the power of faithfulness in the face of difficulty.

BIBLE LESSON

I. JOSEPH'S MANY HARDSHIPS

Living in covenant does not exempt us from tough times, as the story of Joseph illustrates. Genesis 37 introduces the teenage Joseph with signs pointing to troubles he will face in ensuing chapters. As we explored in last week's lesson, his brothers hated him because Jacob made no attempt to hide that Joseph was his favorite son. The sight of the multicolored coat Jacob gifted Joseph made his brothers seethe with envy. Finally, Joseph had two dreams in which the members of his family bowed down to him. After he shared those dreams with his family, his brothers hated him even more.

A. Betrayed by Brothers

Considering all this—and what we have already learned about envy and sibling rivalry—it is not surprising that Genesis reports Joseph's brothers “conspired against him to slay him” (Genesis 37:18). They caught him and threw him into a dry well to die. Reuben, the oldest brother, planned to come back later and save him, but another brother, Judah, suggested they sell Joseph as a slave to Midianite merchants. To cover their evil, they stripped Joseph of his precious coat, dipped it in goat's blood, and presented it to their father, leading him to believe his favorite son had been mauled by a wild animal. Their father believed their lie and immediately withdrew into grief. Sin continued to scar humanity and ruin relationships.

For just twenty pieces of silver—the price of a slave—Joseph's brothers committed one of the Bible's most despicable acts of betrayal. To compound their evil, these brothers were all descendants of Abraham. They had been called by God to live in covenant with Him and each other. But their envy and hatred caused them to forget who they were supposed to be, and they sold their own brother because they were jealous of him.

DISCUSS: *How might envy undermine your ability to be faithful to God and to others in your present circumstances?*

B. Faced with Hardships

Surprisingly, Joseph did not spiral into self-pity, nor was he consumed with a desire for revenge—even after such a painful betrayal. After a brief interlude, Genesis shines the spotlight back on Joseph, informing us the Midianites sold him to an Egyptian officer named Potiphar, the captain of Pharaoh's guard. Some scholars believe Potiphar was Pharaoh's personal bodyguard or even led Pharaoh's executioners. Joseph decided to make the best of a terrible situation, and he faithfully served Potiphar. Genesis 39:2 records the faithfulness of God to a faithful Joseph: “The LORD was with Joseph.”

C. I will trust God though I face hardships as I journey toward my purpose.

Joseph could not have realized it at the time, but his betrayal and slavery were part of a much larger plan God had in place for Abraham's descendants. God was using Joseph

to eventually save his entire family from a deadly worldwide famine. He chose Joseph for this difficult task because He knew the young man's character would not crack under the tremendous pressures he would face in the meantime. Although his brothers displayed their depravity through betrayal and deception, Joseph remained faithful.

Like Joseph, we will not understand the full scope of what God is doing in our lives until we reach Heaven. Meanwhile, we must trust that God knows what He is doing and He will ultimately redeem our sufferings for His glory. Like the apostle Paul, we can trust that "all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose" (Romans 8:28).

DISCUSS: *Can you point to a time in your life when hardship and difficulty proved to be part of God's plan? How did you discover it was part of God's plan?*

II. JOSEPH SUCCESSFULLY LIVED FOR GOD IN EGYPT

Somehow Joseph never forgot he had a responsibility to the God who had called him and his family to live in covenant with Him. This understanding empowered him to respond to every difficulty by walking in faithfulness and integrity. God honored Joseph by blessing everything he did. Whether in Potiphar's house or, later, an Egyptian prison, "the LORD was with Joseph, and shewed him mercy, and gave him favour" (Genesis 39:21).

A. Maintained His Integrity

Suddenly, the story turned against Joseph yet again. He "was handsome in form and appearance," and he soon caught the eye of Potiphar's wife. She repeatedly attempted to tempt him, but Joseph refused her advances. One day she would not be ignored. When the two were alone in the house, Potiphar's wife brazenly made advances toward Joseph. Rather than caving to temptation, Joseph fled from the house.

She was outraged. He had refused her, ignored her, and now he had spurned her. She wove a tale that he tried to take advantage of her, and her husband threw Joseph into prison. Joseph should have been applauded; he was imprisoned. But we read the familiar, comforting refrain of God's faithfulness: "The LORD was with Joseph." Many people would have caved to the pressure and justified their sin as a bit of payback for all their trouble. Not Joseph—he was committed to living with integrity before God,

 regardless of the consequences.

B. Faithful and Forgiving

Though he was imprisoned on a false accusation, Joseph refused to give in to despair. He served his prison sentence like he had served when he was enslaved in Potiphar's house: work hard, trust God, and see what happens. The keeper of the prison soon recognized that Joseph was not an ordinary prisoner and began assigning him the care and oversight of other prisoners. Once again, "the LORD was with him, and that which he did, the LORD made it to prosper" (Genesis 39:23).

This did not mean everything went Joseph's way while he was in prison. When two of his fellow inmates dreamed, Joseph correctly interpreted their dreams. The butler was released just as Joseph promised, but he forgot Joseph for two long years. Once again, Joseph refused to succumb to resentment. Instead, he remained faithful to his prison duties and to God.

DISCUSS: *How do forgiveness and faithfulness work together? How does unforgiveness undermine faithfulness?*

C. I will remain humble and persevere just as Joseph did.

Joseph's example of humility and perseverance in the face of betrayal and injustice reminds us of our responsibility to do the same. Jesus warned His followers: "In the world ye shall have tribulation" (John 16:33). Like Joseph, Jesus was betrayed by a close friend and imprisoned on false charges. As His followers, we can expect people to treat us unfairly. They may lie on us, falsely accuse us, even betray us. Things will not always work out for the best, at least in the short term.

But Jesus did add these words of encouragement: "Be of good cheer; I have overcome the world" (John 16:33). Jesus lived with integrity and stayed faithful to His mission, even when it meant suffering and dying on a cross for other people's sins—including ours. In the same manner, Jesus empowers us to persevere in the face of injustice and hardship. In the end, we can say along with Paul who was also falsely accused, "Thanks be unto God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ" (II Corinthians 2:14).

DISCUSS: *What biblical promises encourage you during difficult times?*

III. FAITHFULNESS PRESERVED THE COVENANT

The bulk of the Book of Genesis is dedicated to sharing how God established and preserved His covenant with Abraham and his descendants despite peoples' many missteps. No matter how faithless they were, God remained faithful. Genesis 37–50 detail how God used Joseph to preserve this covenant and God's chosen people despite betrayal, lies, sexual temptation, and injustice. In the same way, God can and will preserve His people today if we remain faithful.

A. A Tense Reunion

After those two years, Pharaoh himself had a dream, and the butler finally remembered Joseph. Pharaoh called for Joseph, he interpreted the dream, gave the glory to God, and Joseph was promoted to be Egypt's second-in-command. After suffering as a slave and enduring an undeserved prison sentence, Joseph was ruling in the palace. But he did not have much time to celebrate. A famine that would soon consume the land was lurking, and Joseph only had seven years to implement an economic policy that could save Egypt from starvation (Genesis 41:30).

Unbeknownst to Joseph, this famine would force an awkward family reunion. When blight destroyed the crops in Canaan, Jacob and his sons looked to Egypt for food.

Jacob's sons headed south to buy food, only to find themselves standing before the brother they had once betrayed . . . awkward.

Joseph once again proved why God chose him. Instead of raining down revenge, Joseph showed his brothers kindness and mercy. He invited them to live out the famine with him in Egypt, and soon Joseph was embracing his father, who had spent years mourning the death of his favorite son. God had brought the covenant family back together. And Joseph perfectly, faithfully expressed to his brothers his understanding in God's grand story: "But as for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive" (Genesis 50:20).

B. Faithfulness Wins the Day

Joseph certainly possessed an abundance of talent, intelligence, and skill, but it was his godly character and integrity—his faithfulness to God—that allowed him to overcome. He faithfully submitted his skills and talents to the hands of God, and God promoted Joseph when the time was right.

In the end, Joseph's faithfulness allowed his family to survive famine and reunite after years of separation. Rather than ending with sadness and regret, Genesis closes on a hopeful note. As Joseph lay on his deathbed following a long and faithful life, he left his family with a parting word of encouragement: "God will surely visit you, and bring you out of this land unto the land which he sware to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob" (Genesis 50:24).

C. I will live in covenant even in a hostile environment.

We live in a hostile environment, surrounded by sin, sickness, and suffering. Talent, intelligence, and skill are valuable, but they are not enough to overcome the challenges of our present age. Faithfulness is still the key to success. "Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful," Paul wrote in I Corinthians 4:2. The best and the brightest do not always have what it takes, but the one "that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved" (Matthew 24:13).

Keep standing. Stay faithful. Do not be distracted by life's inevitable detours. Don't be resentful when you're treated unfairly. Do not compromise your obedience to God's Word just because it appears to be the easiest option. The same God who preserved Joseph will preserve you. One day soon you will find yourself standing beside Joseph and many others like him, listening as the Master says, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord" (Matthew 25:21).

DISCUSS: *Why do you think faithfulness is more valuable than talent, intelligence, or education?*

Teacher Option: Tell the story below or share one of your own to illustrate how God develops our character through difficult times.

INTERNALIZING THE MESSAGE

The world of business brims with stories of talented young entrepreneurs with tremendous talent and ambition who were ultimately undone because they lacked character. One recent example is the downfall of Theranos, a consumer healthcare technology company launched in 2003 by Elizabeth Holmes, a nineteen-year-old Stanford dropout. Holmes claimed her company had technology that would revolutionize healthcare by making it possible to test for a wide range of illnesses using just a single drop of blood. Investors poured money into the firm, with Theranos reaching an estimated valuation of \$10 billion. As the company's founder, Holmes was worth an estimated \$4.5 billion.

Eventually it became clear Theranos was little more than a sham. Media outlets began publishing articles questioning Holmes's claims about what her company's technology could accomplish. She pushed back in high-profile media appearances and with legal threats, but soon government agencies such as the Food and Drug Administration began releasing the results of investigations proving the skeptics were right. Investors sued, and Holmes went from billionaire to broke overnight. She was eventually convicted of fraud and sentenced to eleven years in prison. Holmes's meteoric rise and dramatic downfall have become the subject of books, podcasts, and even a television miniseries.

Rapid promotion like Holmes enjoyed often ends in a dramatic fall. Life's struggles and difficulties, though unwelcome, help us develop the character we need to manage life's blessings. Seventeen-year-old Joseph lacked the wisdom and skills necessary to manage the Egyptian economy while rescuing his family from famine. Thirty-year-old Joseph had spent years proving himself in undesirable circumstances. His character had been tested. He had resisted temptation when it seemed it would have been easier to give in. He had been faithful in small matters. When God needed someone to rescue a family and preserve a nation, He knew He could trust Joseph.

What about us? Are we resisting the character development God is attempting to achieve in us by refusing to submit to seemingly humble circumstances? Do we grumble and complain because life is often more difficult than we imagine it should be? Do we struggle to be faithful in small matters? If so, God will not be able to use us in a greater capacity because we will not have the strength of character we need to withstand the pressures that come with higher levels of service.

Do not get distracted or discouraged: God has you right where He wants you. He is testing you, shaping you, forming you into the person He wants you to be. When He is finished, you will be "perfect and complete, lacking nothing" (James 1:4, NKJV). And you will be ready to fulfill God's purpose for which He created you.



FALL
07

OCTOBER 19, 2025

LESSON TEXT

Exodus 1-4

FOCUS VERSES

Exodus 3:13-14

¹³And Moses said unto God, Behold, when I come unto the children of Israel, and shall say unto them, The God of your fathers hath sent me unto you; and they shall say to me, What is his name? what shall I say unto them?

¹⁴And God said unto Moses, I AM THAT I AM: and he said, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you.

TRUTH ABOUT COVENANT

God heard Israel's cry for a deliverer and raised up Moses.

The Birth of Moses

I WILL
CRY OUT
TO GOD
IN TIMES
OF CRISIS.

COVENANT CONTEXT

This week we begin to explore the Book of Exodus, which picks up after the death of Joseph with God's people in Egyptian bondage. Our study of Exodus will reveal that God always has a plan to save His covenant people, pointing ahead in striking parallel to our new covenant.

SG *TEACHING OUTLINE*

Icebreaker: What crisis in your life has driven you to prayer and a desperate cry to God? How did He respond?

Teacher Tip: Connect the group's answers to set up the story of the children of Israel crying out to God while enslaved in Egypt.

Lesson Connection: Share the Lesson Connection.

I. CIRCUMSTANCES CHANGE

A. Israel in Egypt

DISCUSS: *If you were an Israelite in Egypt during that time, what warning signs would have indicated to you that times were quickly changing?*

B. Enslaved in Egypt

DISCUSS: *What do you think it would have taken for Israel to cry out to God for His help? Why does it sometimes take us longer than it should to cry out to God?*

C. The Desperate Cry

D. I will cry out to the Lord when I need deliverance.

II. THE BIRTH AND LIFE OF MOSES

A. Moses' Childhood

DISCUSS: *What other stories in Scripture or Bible verses help you trust God in nearly impossible situations?*

B. Exile in the Desert

C. I will allow the Lord to work everything out in His way and in His timing.

DISCUSS: *What actions are you taking that may be forcing the will of God? How can you change your behaviors and patiently wait on Him?*

III. COVENANT NAME AND CALLING

A. The Burning Bush **V**

B. The Shepherd

DISCUSS: *Are you giving God excuses for why you cannot accept His call on your life? If so, what are they?*

C. Through faith in God, I will respond to God's call to live in covenant.

Internalizing the Message **I**

PRAYER FOCUS

Lead the group in prayer and consider the following topics of focus:

- For God to help us understand He is waiting and listening for our cry
- For God to show His power and might as we begin to walk in covenant with Him

LESSON CONNECTION

In the closing days of World War II, Allied bombings of the munitions factories around Essen, Germany, became more and more frequent and fierce. When the air raid sirens sounded, armed guards would rush to bomb shelters, leaving the enslaved laborers (often Jewish and female) to huddle in the rubble and take their own chances.

On March 11, 1945, at the height of an endless bombardment, Elizabeth Roth and five companions decided to make their escape. They crept to the barbed wire surrounding the factory where they worked, crawled through a gap, and made their way across an empty field to a hill overlooking the town where they hoped to find a hiding place.

There, on the verge of freedom, one of the girls lost her nerve. She quietly turned back, recrossed the field, crawled back through the wire, and returned to the wreckage of the factory. The next day, along with five hundred other female workers, she was loaded onto a train and sent to Buchenwald to the gas chambers.

In recounting this story, William Manchester remarks, “It is a common phenomenon among escapees; the known, however ghastly, seems preferable to the unknown.”

“Who would do such a thing?” you might ask. “What sane person would make such a tragic decision?”

The answer is “we would.”

Like Elizabeth and her friends, we know what it’s like to be imprisoned in a broken world. We’ve been there, living amid the wreckage, cowering beneath the consequences of our own failure and surrounded by our shattered lives, ruined relationships, and failed hopes. Although we know its heartaches and pain, we are often more comfortable in that environment than in a place of freedom and hope. Many people are so used to their spiritual bondage, they do not even have a desire to cry for help. It often takes an escalation of our situation to bring us to the point of crying for deliverance. We must be careful we are not so content in our crisis that it stifles our cry for help. God sees our crisis but is waiting on us to make a decision and move forward asking for His help.

What about you . . . are you in a comfortable crisis? Has contentment stolen your cry? Do not continue to live enslaved by sin when God is simply waiting on your cry. His ears are open now, and His desire is to deliver you.

BIBLE LESSON

I. CIRCUMSTANCES CHANGE

A. Israel in Egypt

Israel's story in Egypt began as a rescue. After those first few awkward encounters between Joseph and his brothers, the following years settled into a state of comfort. They were given the best land for their flocks and herds. Joseph's high status provided protection and prominence. They were blessed, fruitful, and lived comfortably. (See Exodus 1:7.) However, comfort is not necessarily an indicator we are living in covenant with God, but most of us prefer comfort over sacrifice. Abraham understood. The borders of the Promised Land were only limited by how much Abraham was willing to walk (Genesis 13:17). Since Egypt was outside those borders, Israel was away from their covenant land, although they were living rather comfortably. The Israelites were so at ease in Egypt, they never noticed when their comfort turned into crisis.

Exodus tells of Egypt's harsh treatment of Israel: "And they [the Egyptians] made their [the Israelites] lives bitter with hard bondage, in mortar, and in brick, and in all manner of service in the field: all their service, wherein they made them serve, was with rigour" (Exodus 1:14, emphasis added). Although they were enslaved, they did not yet cry out to God. God's covenant people seemed to silently bow beneath the taskmasters' whips. Although many former inmates live free and never return to incarceration, stories abound of inmates who reoffend when they are released because they were more familiar with living in custody than living free.

DISCUSS: *If you were an Israelite in Egypt during that time, what warning signs would have indicated to you that times were quickly changing?*

B. Enslaved in Egypt

However, as we have learned, the Jews considered land and children as signs they were blessed by God. Although they were enslaved hundreds of miles from their covenant land, they continued to multiply and bear children. In fact, they were so fruitful that the Egyptians were fearful they may take over. So, Pharaoh decreed the unthinkable. Exodus 1:15–22 describes a grisly horror no parent should ever endure: Pharaoh demanded the death of all Hebrew newborn boys. Even amid this widespread grief, the writer of Exodus did not record that the children of Israel cried out to their covenant God for help.

DISCUSS: *What do you think it would have taken for Israel to cry out to God for His help? Why does it sometimes take us longer than it should to cry out to God?*

C. The Desperate Cry

Strangely, thirty-one verses in our Bible come and go without one verse detailing one cry to God. Over forty years—an entire generation—passed before we come to the

cry God had been waiting on since Israel first set up camp in Egypt: “And it came to pass in process of time, that the king of Egypt died: and the children of Israel sighed by reason of the bondage, and they cried, and their cry came up unto God by reason of the bondage” (Exodus 2:23). Israel had had enough, they cried out to God, and God heard them and remembered His covenant with them. He was about to set them free.

D. I will cry out to the Lord when I need deliverance.

The lyrics of an older song read, “If you’ve tried everything and everything has failed, try Jesus.” Perhaps the author did not know Jesus as he or she was trying “everything” to satisfy their soul or to salve their sorrow, but we don’t have to try everything before we try the Lord. Learn from the children of Israel in Egypt. Don’t allow thirty-one verses or forty years to come and go; don’t even allow forty minutes; cry out today to Jesus. He will hear and He will answer because we are in covenant with Him, and He always keeps His promises.

II. THE BIRTH AND LIFE OF MOSES

A. Moses’ Childhood

In the middle of Pharaoh’s diabolical edict to kill all the male children, two Israelites of the tribe of Levi—Amram and Jochebed—found themselves expecting their third child. Some may have callously asked them, “What does it matter if this child lives? You already have two other children, and one is a son.” However, the Bible is clear there was something special about this baby boy. Acts 7:20 in the English Standard Version states it in a wonderful way: “At this time Moses was born; and he was beautiful in God’s sight.”

Moses’ mother, Jochebed, realized he was special, and she hatched a plan to save him. She took a basket made of papyrus reeds, waterproofed it with tar and pitch (much like Noah’s ark), and laid her son in the basket. Then she gently laid the basket holding her baby boy along the reeds of the Nile River. Jochebed sent her daughter Miriam to make sure nothing happened to Miriam’s three-month-old brother.

As Miriam watched him float down the river, she noticed a group of ladies who had come to the river to bathe. One of those ladies was a princess in Egypt, one of Pharaoh’s daughters. Miriam watched and listened as the entourage picked up the basket, and Miriam heard her baby brother cry. He was still alive. One of the ladies remarked, “This is one of the Hebrews’ children.” Miriam ran to the women and asked, “Would you like me to find a Hebrew nurse for this little baby?” And surprisingly, Pharaoh’s daughter said, “Yes.”

Miriam ran home, told her mother the story, and Pharaoh’s family paid Jochebed to nurse her own son while under federal protection. The one Pharaoh was so fearful would lead a revolt against him was under his protection and would soon be living in his own house. Only God could orchestrate such a reversal, but God was answering His covenant people’s cries for deliverance, and He was raising up this young man Moses to be their deliverer.

DISCUSS: *What other stories in Scripture or Bible verses help you trust God in nearly impossible situations?*

B. Exile in the Desert

Moses spent the formative years of his life raised as Egyptian royalty. He lived in the palace, ate at Pharaoh's table, and learned the language, customs, and beliefs of the Egyptian culture. However, all those influences were unable to destroy his true identity as an Israelite. The lessons his mother planted were deeply embedded in Moses' heart and mind. This knowledge led to an inner struggle that revealed itself in an outward action: Moses killed an Egyptian who was hurting an Israelite.

When Moses realized the Jews and Egyptians knew what he had done, he fled for his life into the desert. A polished prince ran out of Egypt into the desert and toward his destiny. He married, raised a family, and worked as a shepherd. This occupation was considered an abomination to the Egyptians. (See Genesis 46:34.) Moses, who still presented as an Egyptian according to his family by marriage (Exodus 2:19), found himself working in the lowest of occupations. He gave up his status for a shepherd's staff. Instead of a mighty deliverer, we find a depressed, defeated, and disillusioned man. But not for long.

C. I will allow the Lord to work everything out in His way and in His timing.

We often focus much of our prayers on finding the will of God for our lives. However, the timing of God is as important as knowing the will of God. Isaac was the promised seed, but Abraham and Sarah did not wait for God's timing; instead, they tried to force the will of God. Jesus was the promised "Lamb slain from the foundation of the world," but His arrival had perfect timing. (See Galatians 4:4; Revelation 13:8.) Allowing God to work His perfect will in our lives includes patiently waiting on the fulfillment of His perfect timing. When we cry out to God for deliverance, let us wait patiently for God's perfect timing for it to come to pass. He will deliver according to His time.

DISCUSS: *What actions are you taking that may be forcing the will of God? How can you change your behaviors and patiently wait on Him?*

III. COVENANT NAME AND CALLING

A. The Burning Bush

On a day that seemed like any other, Moses was shepherding his father-in-law's sheep when he suddenly saw a miracle in the making: a burning bush that was not burning up. Then the miracle intensified. God called Moses by name and called him to lead God's covenant people out of Egyptian bondage and into the covenant land He had provided for them.

God's divine call to Moses frightened him. He was a wanted man in Egypt; he could not return there. And he certainly could not demand Pharaoh let God's people go. Moses would have done well to hide from Pharaoh; why would he seek Pharaoh out? Further, the people of Israel were not loyal to him because he was raised as an Egyptian, not

a Hebrew. This was all wrong. If it was to be all right, Moses needed assurances. He needed to know God’s name so he could share God’s name with the children of Israel.

God revealed His covenant name as I AM. “And God said unto Moses, I AM THAT I AM: and he said, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you” (Exodus 3:14). Moses needed God’s signature, and God gladly signed.

When declaring, “I AM THAT I AM,” God proclaimed He would be everything the Israelites needed and everything the Egyptian gods were not. In that holy moment, God revealed and affixed His covenant name, revealing Himself as the self-sufficient one who is always present, always working, and all powerful.

B. The Shepherd

Perhaps the last forty years were beginning to make sense. Moses had lived and worked as a shepherd, leading sheep from one pasture to another. That could not have been what his mother had in mind when she told him how special he was. Or could it? God was raising up a man who could lead His people out of Egypt and back to Canaan much like a shepherd leads sheep. Moses would no doubt apply some of the same principles he had learned to this new flock of more than a million Israelites. Although Moses felt woefully inadequate to the task, God would not accept his excuses because

V Moses was not going in his own power; he was going in the power of I AM. So are we.

DISCUSS: Are you giving God excuses for why you cannot accept His call on your life? If so, what are they?

C. Through faith in God, I will respond to God’s call to live in covenant.

We are not that different from Moses. All of us are called by God to live in covenant with Him. Further, we are called by God to lead people closer to Him and what He has for them. Each of us could present our armload of excuses to God, but He already knows them because He already knows us. And He knows we are not trusting in our own power; we are trusting in His. God is just waiting on your response to His invitation to live and serve in covenant with Him. When we say yes, we will become the conduit for the I AM to reveal who He is to our world. Like the Israelites, we will walk in a new freedom and protection as we respond to His holy invitation to live in covenant relationship with Him.

Teacher Option: Tell the story below or share one of your own to illustrate how our God hears our cry and responds to us because He loves us.

INTERNALIZING THE MESSAGE

On a cold October evening in the nation of Uganda, Enoch was walking with his friend along the road when they heard a cry. At first, they thought it was a cat since the sound was coming from a drainage pipe running beside a waste pile. However, the longer they listened, they realized they were hearing a baby crying. They didn't want to be charged with hurting a child, so they each ran in different directions—Enoch to get his mother and his friend to the nearest store.

When Enoch and his mother, Gladys, returned, they found a baby in a plastic bag, which had been pushed to the edge by the trash. They did their best to comfort the child while rushing to the local police station for help. However, all the resources of the police's family unit were closed, and they asked Gladys if she could keep the baby overnight. Returning home with the baby, Gladys cared for her by washing, feeding, and holding her against her chest all night long to warm her little body.

In the morning, Gladys made a second attempt to surrender the baby to the family unit of the local police, but she had learned the person she needed to talk to was in another town. Again Gladys was

asked to continue to care for the child. A week later, Gladys returned for a third time to the police station, where she was asked if she would be willing to foster and adopt this child. Her heart leaped for joy. Without hesitation, she answered, "I wanted nothing less than to take her with me; I was not going to let her be abandoned a second time." Gladys and her husband, along with their four additional children, adopted the baby, naming her Miracle.

We are much like Miracle. We do not realize we are in a crisis until we find ourselves abandoned and alone. Miracle could do nothing to help herself except cry. She did not have the ability to free or save herself; she needed someone to rescue her. Her consistent cry caught the attention of someone who wanted to and was able to help.

No matter what you are facing, God is always listening. Do not be ashamed that you cannot save yourself. Do not worry about how loud or how long you need to cry. Your cry is crucial to your salvation. God is listening, and He will pick you up, clean you up, and adopt you. Your hope is waiting; you just need to be willing to cry out to Him. **I**



FALL
08

OCTOBER 26, 2025

LESSON TEXT
Exodus 4-15

FOCUS VERSES

Exodus 6:6-8

⁶Wherefore say unto the children of Israel, I am the LORD, and I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, and I will rid you out of their bondage, and I will redeem you with a stretched out arm, and with great judgments:

⁷And I will take you to me for a people, and I will be to you a God: and ye shall know that I am the LORD your God, which bringeth you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians.

⁸And I will bring you in unto the land, concerning the which I did swear to give it to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob; and I will give it you for an heritage: I am the LORD.

TRUTH ABOUT COVENANT

God delivered His covenant people.

The Exodus



COVENANT CONTEXT

When Israel cried out to God, He delivered His covenant people after a series of ten devastating plagues on Egypt. God brought them to the Red Sea where He set them free and drowned their enemies on their way to the Promised Land.

SG *TEACHING OUTLINE*

Icebreaker: What is the most unlikely victory you have seen, either between teams or armies?

Teacher Tip: Connect the group's answers to point to a most unlikely victory between the enslaved nation of Israel and the formidable army of Egypt.

Lesson Connection: Share the Lesson Connection.

I. MOSES APPROACHED PHARAOH

- A. Pharaoh's Hard Heart **V**
- B. Pronouncing Judgment

DISCUSS: *Why are we sometimes hesitant to believe God can forgive anyone of their sin? How can we remind ourselves He can and will forgive us when we repent?*

- C. I will faithfully declare God's covenant.

II. GOD'S ACTS TOWARD PHARAOH

- A. The Plagues

DISCUSS: *If you were one of Egypt's magicians, would you have tried to make matters worse by adding to the plagues? How would you have responded?*

- B. The Passover

DISCUSS: *In what ways do we apply the blood of Jesus over our own lives? How do you explain that to someone new in their faith?*

- C. I will trust God for safety by living in covenant.

III. THE EXODUS

- A. The Cloud and the Fire

DISCUSS: *What passages of Scripture give you direction when you don't know which way to go?*

- B. The Red Sea Crossing **I**

- C. I will follow God as He leads me into closer covenant relationship.

DISCUSS: *What obstacles have you overcome that resulted in a closer connection with God?*

Internalizing the Message

PRAYER FOCUS

Lead the group in prayer and consider the following topics of focus:

- For God to soften our hearts and open our ears to hear His voice
- For God to increase our faith and trust in Him to deliver us

LESSON CONNECTION

Kim Duk-Soo and his father, a pastor of forty-two years, were found by North Korean soldiers as they hid in the family cellar on November 20, 1950. His father had instructed him that no matter what, they could not tell a lie to save their lives; they needed to trust in God for deliverance. They were taken to prison and told they would be executed the next morning. Separated from his father, Kim was approached by a captain who asked the question, “Are you a Christian?” Although his desire to lie was strong, Duk-Soo remembered the words of his father, “Trust in God to deliver.”

He boldly replied, “Yes, I am a Christian.” The captain, looking stealthily around, moved closer to him and whispered, “I am a Christian too. I used to be a Sunday school teacher before the war. You must escape tonight. I will help you.” Duk-Soo fled that night, having to leave his father, who was surrounded by heavy guards. Duk-Soo made his way to an American base in South Korea, where he played organ in the chapel services. Although his deliverer came unexpectedly clothed in a North Korean soldier’s uniform, Duk-Soo was thankful God had delivered him.

The hardest part of deliverance is waiting for God’s timing and plan to be perfectly executed. The Israelites never expected their deliverance to come through a polished prince of Egypt. However, they had to trust that God was working out His plan for their freedom. Like Kim Duk-Soo, the Israelites did not have the power to save themselves.

Are you facing a situation only God can deliver you from? Trust in God. This will be a difficult test of your patience, but God knows how to make a way of escape for His people. Instead of focusing on your circumstances, focus on developing your trust. Read verses in the Bible that speak about trust. Study the passages where God came through for His people. Verbally declare your trust that God is listening and working on your behalf. Trust knows God is able, no matter what your situation looks like.

BIBLE LESSON

I. MOSES APPROACHED PHARAOH

A. Pharaoh's Hard Heart

Moses, the shepherd-turned-deliverer, was about to march into Pharaoh's royal court to answer God's call. The Lord revealed this would not be easy because Pharaoh's heart would be hard. (See Exodus 4:21.) The Lord knew what Moses did not yet know: this was not a contest between Pharaoh and Moses but between Pharaoh and God.

Pharaoh's response pitted him against God, not just against Moses. "Who is the LORD, that I should obey his voice to let Israel go? I know not the LORD, neither will I let Israel go" (Exodus 5:2). Not only did Pharaoh dismiss God, but Pharaoh deprived God of His due worship. Pharaoh's action of keeping the Israelites enslaved announced to God that Pharaoh's projects were more important than God's people giving Him praise. Pharaoh's hardened heart manifested as an increased burden upon the Israelites. Pharaoh made their lives more miserable.

Pharaoh was waging a war against Almighty God, a war he could not win. Soon all Israel and Egypt would witness as God's mighty hand broke Pharaoh's yoke and delivered God's people. When Moses first asked Pharaoh to let God's people go into the wilderness to worship God, Pharaoh hardened his own heart (Exodus 7:13). During a few more visits, Scripture records again that Pharaoh's heart was hardened. (See Exodus 8:15, 19, 32; 9:7, 34–35.)

Finally, the LORD accelerated the process and hardened Pharaoh's heart. (See 9:12; 10:1, 20, 27.) In their book *When Critics Ask*, authors Norman Geisler and Thomas Howe write, "The sense in which God hardened [Pharaoh's] heart is similar to the way the sun hardens clay and also melts wax. If Pharaoh had been receptive to God's warnings, his heart would not have been hardened by God."



B. Pronouncing Judgment

Throughout this story, God continuously told Moses how it would all happen. His ultimate plan was setting His covenant people free, but the path was filled with difficult obstacles. Pharaoh's stubbornness against God brought God's judgment down on him and the nation of Israel. However, God prepared Moses and the Israelites each step of the way. (See Exodus 4–12.) The Israelites had the same choice as the Egyptians: heed the voice of God and obey or harden their hearts and rebel. In other words, God was willing to forgive the Egyptians if they would have repented because God's judgment is to bring us to repentance so He can forgive us.

We read a merciful verse in I Chronicles 4:17–18: "And Mered's wife bore Miriam, Shammai, and Ishbah the father of Eshtemoa. . . . And these were the sons of Bithiah the daughter of Pharaoh, whom Mered took" (NKJV). Bithiah is a Hebrew name meaning "daughter of Jehovah," but she was originally born as a daughter of Pharaoh. However, at some point, she chose to leave Egypt and marry an Israelite. She may have

left with Moses when he led Israel out of Egypt. This daughter of Pharaoh became a daughter of the covenant because she turned to God and God forgave her.

DISCUSS: *Why are we sometimes hesitant to believe God can forgive anyone of their sin? How can we remind ourselves He can and will forgive us when we repent?*

C. I will faithfully declare God's covenant.

The Bible details God's covenant with humanity. It reveals not only our obligations but also His. Therefore, when Moses spoke to the children of Israel and they did not believe, and then he spoke to Pharaoh and he did not believe, Moses could have thrown in the towel. But at that moment God began to rehearse the covenant again before Moses. Repeatedly God promised "I will" and then declared what He was going to faithfully do to fulfill His part of His covenant. (See Exodus 6:6-8.) When the people doubted, God began to rehearse His portion of the covenant before them.

Open your Bible and declare God's Word over your life. Rehearse His promises. Incorporate them into your daily conversations. There is power when you faithfully and consistently declare God's covenant over yourself. Why not start right now? Make a list of His promises and then say them out loud, beginning each sentence with the words, "God will."

II. GOD'S ACTS TOWARD PHARAOH

A. The Plagues

Pharaoh dismissed Moses' command. He would not release the Jews, and God wasted no time in beginning the barrage of judgments. Although correlations exist between the gods of Egypt and each plague, the plagues were not necessarily a direct attack on each individual Egyptian god. Egypt served hundreds of gods. Jehovah was showing His people and the Egyptians that He is the I AM and everything their gods were not.

Egypt relied on their Nile River as a life source, but God turned its life-giving water into blood. Fish died, the river stank, and the Egyptians could not drink the water. Then God multiplied frogs in Egypt until frogs were everywhere, even in their ovens and their beds. After these two plagues, Pharaoh's magicians were somehow able to duplicate them, and Pharaoh hardened his heart and chose not to listen. (See Exodus 8:15.)

DISCUSS: *If you were one of Egypt's magicians, would you have tried to make matters worse by adding to the plagues? How would you have responded?*

For a while Pharaoh felt like he was evenly matched with God, but that was about to change. God chose to do what only He can do: create. From the dust (one of His favorite building materials) He formed lice. The magicians could not answer. They confessed: "This is the finger of God" (Exodus 8:19.) The judgments progressively worsened to swarms of flies, to the death of cattle (the first instance of death as judgment) to boils (the first instance of judgment directly on humanity). After the boils, the magicians

could no longer stand in the presence of Moses. The boils were on the magicians and all the Egyptians (Exodus 9:11).

Then God rained down hail to destroy Egypt's crops and locusts to destroy what the hail did not. And then He blanketed Egypt in darkness, but there was abundant light where Israel lived. Through it all, God proved His mighty hand as He systematically decimated the pride and prosperity of Egypt and revealed Himself as the I AM.

B. The Passover

The last plague was the most severe: the death of all firstborn sons and firstborn male animals. This plague was universal. Israel was not exempt from it, but God provided a way of deliverance for them. The head of each household was to slay a lamb and smear its blood on the doorposts of their homes as a sign they were obedient to these terms of the covenant. When the LORD came through Egypt that night, He would pass over (hence the name of the festival Passover) and spare the firstborn males. (See Exodus 12:13.) Much like in the Garden of Eden, a substitute sacrifice paid the price for sinful humanity.

God was hinting toward a day the spotless Lamb of God, Jesus Christ, would shed His blood to forgive us of our sins. As early as the Old Testament books of Genesis and Exodus, God was pointing to the gospel. Blood has always covered and revealed those who walk in covenant with God. God had always planned to come incarnate to lay down His life. Revelation 13:8 declares Jesus Christ as the "Lamb slain from the foundation of the world." Through the gospel, we have a new covenant plan of salvation for all. (See John 3:3-5; Acts 2:37-39.) When we apply the blood of Jesus Christ to our hearts through the gospel, our lives are covered, and we are revealed to be bearers of the covenant.

DISCUSS: *In what ways do we apply the blood of Jesus over our own lives? How do you explain that to someone new in their faith?*

C. I will trust God for safety by living in covenant.

Just like the Israelites had no power to win a war against the Egyptians to set themselves free, we cannot save ourselves. We need the precious, sinless blood of Jesus Christ, shed for all people for all time, to save us. We respond to His glorious gospel when we repent of our sins and God forgives us; we are baptized in water in the name of Jesus Christ, and He washes our sins away and writes His name on our lives; and we are filled with His Holy Spirit, adopted into His covenant family as His children. Then, and only then, we are able to live free because we have chosen to live in covenant with the Creator.

III. THE EXODUS

A. The Cloud and the Fire

The Egyptians awoke in the middle of the night to find their firstborn dead. They could have repented and applied the blood of a lamb to their home, but they chose not to. Pharaoh called for Moses and demanded he leave and take all the Hebrews with him.

In one night, the Israelites walked out of Egypt free from slavery, carrying the spoils of a war they did not fight. The Lord appeared to them in a pillar of cloud to lead them by day and a pillar of fire so they could continue to travel at night. (See Exodus 13:21–22.) When we live in covenant with God, He faithfully guides us by His Spirit and His Word.

DISCUSS: *What passages of Scripture give you direction when you don't know which way to go?*

B. The Red Sea Crossing

Not long after Israel left Egypt, they ran into their first obstacle. They stood staring at the Red Sea, too deep to walk through and too wide to walk around. Suddenly Pharaoh and his army were chasing them to bring them back to bondage. God's people began to cry out once again for God to save them—and He did. Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, God divided the sea into walls of water, and Israel walked across the dry bed of the Red Sea.

- ❑ Egypt pursued Israel into the sea, and God had them right where He wanted them. Once Israel was safe on the other side, Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and the Lord sent the water walls crashing down and drowned the Egyptians. It seems providential that the one Pharaoh was trying to drown in the Nile ended up causing him to drown in the Red Sea. And God—and only God—got the glory.

C. I will follow God as He leads me into closer covenant relationship.

Israel's rescue from Egypt was not the end; it was only the beginning. God was calling them toward a closer relationship with Him. Soon, the nation of Israel will learn the terms of that covenant relationship as Moses prepares to climb a familiar mountain: Mount Sinai. There God called Moses to lead His people and hear from God again exactly what it means to be in covenant with the Almighty. Israel may not have known those terms quite yet, but they did know the God they served delivered them with a strong hand from the most powerful nation in the world.

In a similar way, God wants to have a closer relationship with each of us. No matter what battle we are fighting or foe we are facing, our God is able to deliver us and set us free to serve Him with our whole heart. He asks us to put all our faith in Him and trust He will bring us out of bondage and into right relationship with Him. He did it for Israel; He will do it for us.

DISCUSS: *What obstacles have you overcome that resulted in a closer connection with God?*

Teacher Option: Tell the story below or share one of your own to illustrate the value of doing what we can do and trusting God to do what we cannot.

INTERNALIZING THE MESSAGE

It was an extremely foggy evening with ground visibility at zero percent. The young pilot was experiencing difficulty landing his small plane since he could not see the runway. After expressing his concern, the control tower informed him they would use radar to help him land. He was thankful and began to express his profound gratitude until he suddenly remembered there was a tall pole directly in his flight path. Overcome with panic, he radioed the tower and anxiously reminded them of the pole in his way. A blunt reply came back: “You obey instructions; we will take care of the obstructions.”

Like the control tower, God only needed the Israelites to obey His instructions. He knew every obstruction standing in the way of their deliverance. He knew the hardness and resistance of Pharaoh’s heart. God saw the Red Sea before them before they ever got there and the Egyptian army closing in behind them

before the Egyptian army ever got there. None of those obstacles concerned Him. He only needed the Israelites to place their trust in Him and keep following the cloud by day and the fire by night. Only God knew what was waiting for them on the other side—complete deliverance, safety, and a full covenant relationship with Him.

Like the young pilot, we often tell God all about the obstacles rather than trusting Him to deliver us. However, our trust is all God needs. Rather than focusing on all the difficulties before you, choose to trust God today. Take a moment and tell God out loud how much you trust Him. You may need to change the way you pray. Rather than reminding God of the obstacles He already knows are there, begin to declare like Moses, “I will stand still and see the salvation of God.” Stand firm and say, “I trust You to deliver me.”



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NOVEMBER 02, 2025

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LESSON TEXT

Exodus 19-40

FOCUS VERSE

Jeremiah 31:33

But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people.

**TRUTH ABOUT
COVENANT**

God created a plan to dwell among His people.

Sinai and the Tabernacle

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COVENANT CONTEXT

Israel camped at Mount Sinai where God called His name over them and entered into a covenant with them through the Ten Commandments. However, they broke their covenant with Him through idolatry, yet God continued to faithfully keep His promises to His people.

SG *TEACHING OUTLINE*

Icebreaker: How many of the Ten Commandments can you name? Can you name them all in order?

Teacher Tip: Connect the group's answers to emphasize the Ten Commandments as the conditions of God's covenant with Israel.

Lesson Connection: Share the Lesson Connection.

I. TABLETS OF STONE

A. The Ten Commandments

DISCUSS: *Why do you think there are more commandments dealing with our relationships with one another than with God?*

B. Covenant Obedience

DISCUSS: *How does our view of holiness change when we realize it is our response to God's grace rather than an attempt to earn God's grace?*

C. I will live holy because God has saved me.

II. THE TABERNACLE

A. Instructions for the Tabernacle **I**

DISCUSS: *Have you orchestrated your life so God is comfortable living in the middle of your life? If not, how will you do so?*

B. The Portable Tabernacle **V**

C. The Golden Calf

DISCUSS: *What gods might we have in our lives to replace or even represent God? How can we remove these?*

D. I will make God's presence the center of my life.

III. GOD'S NEW DWELLING PLACE

A. On Our Hearts

B. In Our Hearts

C. I will live in covenant with God from the inside out.

DISCUSS: *Why is it important that we live holy from the inside out?*

Internalizing the Message

PRAYER FOCUS

Lead the group in prayer and consider the following topics of focus:

- For God to help us keep all the covenants He has established
- For God to make us aware of His presence and for us to make following Him our priority

LESSON CONNECTION

Ludwig Nommensen traveled to begin missions work with a tribe in Southeast Asia. The village chief welcomed him and said, “You have two years to learn our customs and convince us you have a message worth hearing.” After two years, the tribal leader was confused and perhaps a little angry. The tribe had some of the same laws prior to the missionary coming and preaching to them.

“We already know what is right,” the chief explained. “We too have laws that say we must not steal, or take our neighbor’s wives, or tell lies.” The missionary smiled. “That’s true. But my God supplies the power needed to keep those laws.” That startled the chief. He asked, “Can you really teach my people to live better?”

Ludwig knew he couldn’t, but Jesus Christ could and would if they would follow Him. The chief invited the missionary to stay another six months, and Ludwig Nommensen preached the gospel and taught villagers how the Holy Spirit works in the lives of Christians. “You can stay as long as you want,” the chief finally announced. “Your religion is better than ours, for your God walks with men and gives them strength to do the things He asks” (benbergren.com).

God did not just give the children of Israel all the laws and then leave them to figure it out on their own. He also gave them the Tabernacle plan. This plan showed them God would dwell in the midst of them, giving them the power to daily obey God’s commands.

Do not only seek a life of commandments. Desire a connection with God’s Holy Spirit. The Spirit produces the power within us to give us the strength to walk daily in obedience to God’s commands.

BIBLE LESSON

I. TABLETS OF STONE

A. The Ten Commandments

Although there was a shorter path to lead Israel from Egypt back to the Promised Land, God knew the people might be afraid if they had to battle with their new neighbors. Therefore, God led them to take a different path where He showed His glory and gave them the laws of the covenant. The Decalogue (Ten Commandments) laid out the instructions from God teaching His people how to be holy like Him. While they were enslaved in Egypt, the Israelites were exposed daily to Egyptians worshiping hundreds of gods and treating their fellow humanity like property. Israel needed to learn how to rightly worship God and respect one another. The Ten Commandments were the founding documents establishing a covenant relationship with God and with each other.

The first four commandments taught them how to walk in covenant with God by placing no other gods before Him; not carving, bowing down to, or serving any graven image; not taking the Lord's name in vain; and finally, honoring the Sabbath Day established from the days of Creation. The final six commandments revealed their love and respect for each other as God's crowning creation made in God's own image. They were taught to honor their parents, not to murder, not to commit adultery, not to steal, not to bear false witness, and not to covet anything or anyone belonging to someone else. God's covenant depended not only on how we honored Him but how we honored each other as well.

DISCUSS: *Why do you think there are more commandments dealing with our relationships with one another than with God?*

B. Covenant Obedience

As the newly freed nation of Israel stood at the foot of the mountain, they thought of how God shared these Ten Commandments with them. Each of the commandments was a call to obey—do what pleases God and shun what does not. But God was not just giving them rules to live by; He was inviting them into close covenant relationship with Him. If they would keep these commandments, He would dwell right in the middle of them. He had already saved them from Egypt and was leading them back to their covenant land in Canaan.

Lest Israel get the cart before the horse, God was calling them to live holy and keep His commands to be holy because He had saved them, not so He would save them. In a similar way, God saves us when we are born again through the gospel. And He calls us to live holy as He is holy because He saved us; our covenant obedience is our response to His amazing grace.

DISCUSS: *How does our view of holiness change when we realize it is our response to God's grace rather than an attempt to earn God's grace?*

It is easy to congratulate ourselves for obeying certain commandments while we may be breaking others. We say we love God with all our hearts and do not take His name

in vain, but what if we dishonor our parents or covet our neighbor's cars, house, or even wife? We may be proud that we have never committed a murder or adultery, but if we are not honest, we may still be breaking other of His commandments. The Ten Commandments are like a sheet of glass: they are either broken or not; they cannot just be partially broken. According to James 2:10: "For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all." We must check our lives against *all* the commandments and not only the ones we find easy to obey.

C. I will live holy because God has saved me.

These Ten Commandments and the other laws God gave Moses at Mount Sinai showed Israel how to approach their holy God. The choice to obey is easy when we realize all God has done for us. He chose us. He redeemed us. How easy it is to choose to live holy because God is our Savior. And as we conform to His holy nature, we have unfettered access to His holy presence, and He has unlimited access to our lives. Today choose to be transformed by living a holy lifestyle, and you will open the door of access between you and God.

II. THE TABERNACLE

A. Instructions for the Tabernacle

- ❶ Since Adam and Eve fell to temptation in the Garden of Eden, God's greatest desire has been to dwell among humanity again. From the moment He chose Abraham and separated him from the world, God was strategically moving toward dwelling in the middle of His chosen people. After freeing them from Egypt and delivering His commandments for them to keep, God revealed His plan to live among the people. (See Exodus 25:8.) He gave Moses a rather detailed plan for each part of a place called the Tabernacle.

God was so specific, He chose the materials, drew the blueprints, selected the builder, and even hired the artisans for the furnishings. (See Exodus 25:10–31:11.) And God's decision to place the Tabernacle directly in the center of the camp was an overt signal that He must be in the center of their lives. All twelve tribes of Israel surrounded the Tabernacle. After such a long time, God was finally once again where He longed to be: right in the middle of His people.

DISCUSS: *Have you orchestrated your life so God is comfortable living in the middle of your life? If not, how will you do so?*

B. The Portable Tabernacle

The Tabernacle was portable, not permanent. In Numbers 7:1–9, Moses took the offerings of the princes of the tribes and distributed the wagons and oxen among the Levites for the specific purpose of carrying the Tabernacle wherever they traveled. God assigned unique parts of the Tabernacle to each division of the tribe of Levi and gave them specific instructions on how to carry out their duties. (See Numbers 3–4.) The Lord made the Tabernacle portable because He wanted the Israelites to remember they were on a journey to the Promised Land, but they had not arrived yet. Many years later, when they were established in the Promised Land, God allowed them to build

the Temple, a permanent place of worship. However, until that day, His plan was a temporary, portable place for His presence to dwell. V

C. The Golden Calf

But the story turned dark in Exodus 32. While Moses was on the mountain hearing from God, the children of Israel were already breaking their covenant with God. They demanded Aaron make them a god they could worship because they didn't know what had happened to Moses. He had been on the mountain for weeks. Was he coming back? Was he still alive? They were impatient, persistent, and ready to worship, so Aaron instructed them to bring all their gold to him. He fashioned their gold into a golden calf, and the people danced unrestrained and unclothed as they worshiped a calf. They cried out: "These be thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt" (Exodus 32:4).

God's people had fallen again. They committed a similar sin as Adam and Eve. The serpent in the Garden had tempted Eve with the promise of becoming as a "god," asking her to replace God with herself. This was the same lie the enemy peddled to the impatient Israelites. Despite all the miraculous provisions and protection Jehovah had worked for them, the devil convinced them to make themselves gods to lead them.

This account is a warning to us today. God had already warned the Israelites regarding key aspects of the covenant: do not make gods to replace or even represent Him. (See Exodus 20:3, 4, 23.) While standing beside the mountain engulfed in smoke and fire, rumbling with thunder and lightning, they had become so distant from God that they broke their covenant with Him.

DISCUSS: *What gods might we have in our lives to replace or even represent God? How can we remove these?*

D. I will make God's presence the center of my life.

God's desire for us today is the same as with Israel in their day. He wants to be in the very center of our lives. We cannot allow ourselves to become so familiar with feeling the presence of God that we no longer respect Him, revere Him, fear Him. Everything we do must be centered around, "What pleases You, God?" We must daily renew our covenant with God by making His presence the center of our lives.

III. GOD'S NEW DWELLING PLACE

A. On Our Hearts

The children of Israel had the Ten Commandments God Himself had chiseled on tables of stone, which they kept in a beautiful, gold-overlaid chest called the Ark of the Covenant. But that covenant was looking toward a brighter day when He would write a new covenant, and it would be different—it would be better—than the old. He would write this new covenant on the fleshy tables of our hearts and minds. Jeremiah foretold of a day when the covenant would be within us and written on our hearts. (See Jeremiah 31:31–34.)

Ezekiel declared the writing of the covenant upon our hearts would come by the Spirit. (See Ezekiel 11:19, 36:25–27.) The writer of Hebrews used these prophecies to remind us that through the outpouring of God’s Spirit, we are living in the brilliantly bright day of this new covenant. When we experience the gospel—the death, burial, and resurrection—by God’s grace through our faith in God’s Acts 2:38 plan of salvation, we enter this new covenant. Unlike Pharaoh, God is permitted to replace our hardened hearts with new ones willing to be in covenant relationship with Him.

B. In Our Hearts

It must have sounded scandalous to the Jews the first time they heard it, but one day God was not going to dwell in a portable Tabernacle or a permanent Temple. Under this new covenant, we become the tabernacle, the dwelling place of God. Jesus promised in John 14:23 that when anyone loves Him and keeps His words, He would come and make His home with them. God moves in and dwells within humanity.

Our relationship with Him makes our bodies a “holy temple” and a “habitation of God.” Paul declared in I Corinthians 3:16–17: “Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are.” When you submit your life, obey God’s new covenant plan, and are filled with His Spirit, your body becomes the new tabernacle, the new dwelling place for God. God lives in your heart and protects and leads your life.

C. I will live in covenant with God from the inside out.

The choice is ours to begin a covenant relationship with God today. It starts on the inside and shows up on the outside. Although we are born at war with God because of our human nature, we are changed from the inside out when we are born again: when we repent of our sins, are baptized in the name of Jesus Christ, and filled with His Spirit. Living in covenant with God gives Him full access to our lives: what we love, whom we worship, how we worship, how we spend our time, how we dress, what we watch or listen to, how we talk, what we text or type—everything. We obey His commands, not to earn His grace, but because He has saved us by His grace. Let us live in covenant with the God who came from Heaven to earth to be in covenant with us.

DISCUSS: *Why is it important that we live holy from the inside out?*

Teacher Option: Tell the story below or share one of your own to illustrate the value of trusting God's Word over our own feelings.

INTERNALIZING THE MESSAGE

A Navy aviator was returning his plane to the aircraft carrier following a mission when he suddenly began experiencing vertigo (a dizzy, confused state of mind caused by an imbalance in the inner ear). His senses became confused, which is dangerous when landing a plane on a carrier in the middle of the night in the ocean. His senses told him he was flying upright, but when he looked at his instruments, they showed him flying upside down. Everything he was doing was backward according to instruments on the plane, but in his mind, he was flying correctly.

He immediately realized he was going to have to make a choice about which was correct. He could continue to rely on his senses, or he could depend on the faithful instruments of the plane. He recalled that overriding his senses was the hardest thing he had ever done. The struggle in his mind almost overwhelmed him. He lived to tell this story, so you can breathe easier and figure out which choice he made.

This was the condition of the Israelites upon leaving Egypt. Their senses were

all askew. They felt they were going in the right direction, but they were still upside down when it came to becoming the people God intended them to be. God had to take them to Mount Sinai and begin to show them the instrument panel by which to guide their lives. If they could learn to follow the guidelines God gave them, they could right their course and make it safely to their final destination.

What is controlling your choices today: your own senses or the unfailing principles established in the Word of God? We must not give in to our thoughts that we are going in the right direction when in truth our lives could be completely upside down. Instead, we look to God's Word as our instrument panel. We allow it to tell us whether we are flying in the right direction and can safely make it to our destination or if we are headed for destruction. Quit only following your senses and begin to read the instrument panel God has freely given us. Allow God's Word to guide your life, and you will arrive safely at the Promised Land.



FALL
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NOVEMBER 09, 2025

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LESSON TEXT

Numbers 13-33

FOCUS VERSES

Numbers 14:30-31

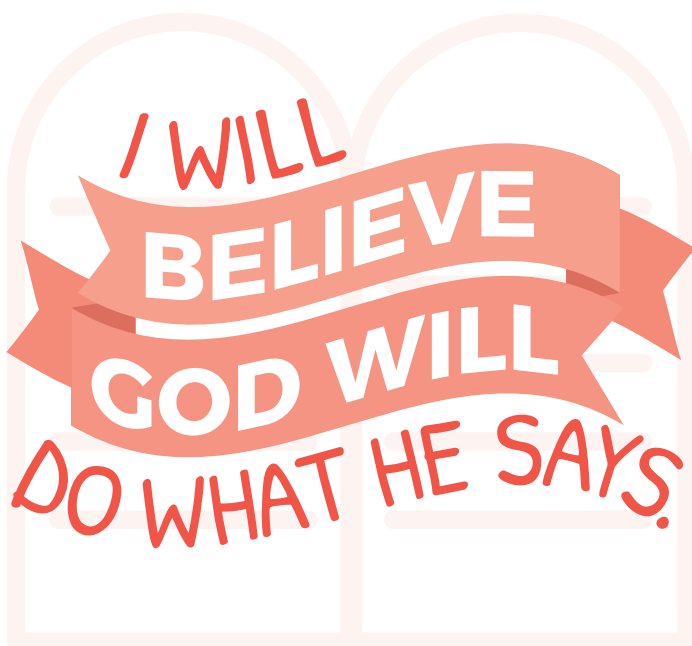
³⁰Doubtless ye shall not come into the land, concerning which I swear to make you dwell therein, save Caleb the son of Jephunneh, and Joshua the son of Nun. ³¹But your little ones, which ye said should be a prey, them will I bring in, and they shall know the land which ye have despised.

**TRUTH ABOUT
COVENANT**

God desires His covenant people to believe His promises.

The Wilderness Wanderings

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COVENANT CONTEXT

As we conclude our study of Exodus and move past Leviticus (instructions for covenant worship) to the Book of Numbers, we learn that being faithful and faith-filled is key to walking in covenant with God. The children of Israel did not trust God and gave in to fear when God called them to claim the Promised Land, so God led them to wander in the wilderness until their generation—and their doubt—died off.

SG *TEACHING OUTLINE*

Icebreaker: Recount a time you were in the minority in a group but you were right. How did it feel to know right and wrong are not swayed by numbers?

Teacher Tip: Connect the group's answers and show that God is attracted to faith, not just large numbers or popularity.

Lesson Connection: Share the Lesson Connection.

DISCUSS: *Do you speak more about your problems or your God?*

I. THE TWELVE SPIES

- A. On a Mission
- B. Back with a Bad Report

DISCUSS: *What comes to mind when you think of a slanderous report? How can slander hinder what God wants to do?*

- C. I will believe God will keep His promise, no matter how I see myself.

II. THE FAITHLESS GENERATION

- A. Rebellion and Plan to Return
- B. Wandering in the Wilderness **I**

DISCUSS: *If God made you the same deal as He made Moses, how would you have responded?*

- C. By God's grace, I will never return to what God has delivered me from.

III. A FAITHFUL GENERATION

- A. Joshua and Caleb **V**

DISCUSS: *Who are people like Joshua and Caleb in your life? How can you be a Joshua or Caleb in someone else's life?*

- B. The Pentateuch and the Promised Land
- C. The Lord will be my God, and I will be part of His covenant people.

Internalizing the Message

DISCUSS: *What needs to be made right in your life in order for your world to also be right?*

PRAYER FOCUS

Lead the group in prayer and consider the following topics of focus:

- For God to increase our faith so we can place our trust in Him to lead us to our promise
- For God to cover our mouths so we will speak by faith instead of speaking slanderous reports about God

LESSON CONNECTION

A missionary spent a great deal of his life traveling around the world, much of it for a missions agency. He spoke of a time when he visited and stayed for a while in an extremely remote, forested part of India where people lived very primitively. He was interested in something called missiology, which partly deals with how to take the gospel to other people groups. A key concept in missiology is learning what impacts the culture of the group you are trying to reach and understanding what matters to them and what they value.

After being there for a while and having many conversations, this missionary spoke with the chief elder. Through a translator he asked: “What are the five worst things people can do?” He expected an answer of murder or assault or some such crime many could consider the most heinous. But when the chief elder listed his top five worst offenses, his first was slander. The missionary asked, “Really? You would put slander ahead of murder?” The elder answered, “Yes. If you kill a man, you have killed him. He is gone. If you slander him, try to deceitfully destroy his reputation, you have killed him while he yet lives.”

When the children of Israel spoke a slanderous report concerning the Promised Land, they were chipping away at the reputation of their living God. He had proven Himself to them repeatedly since they left Egypt, and now at the brink of the Promised Land, they were declaring Him unable to deliver on His promise. Their lack of faith caused them to miss what God had prepared for them, and for many of them it became a sentence of death.

We must speak faith and not doubt about our God. He can deliver; He has already proven it. When you face overwhelming obstacles, do not slander the God who has already shown He is able to deliver you.

DISCUSS: *Do you speak more about your problems or your God?*

BIBLE LESSON

I. THE TWELVE SPIES

A. On a Mission

The children of Israel were ready to claim the Promised Land. They had followed the cloud from the Red Sea to Mount Sinai, and now they stood on the brink of fulfilling a promise given to Abraham hundreds of years earlier. God instructed Moses to choose a leader from each tribe and send them as spies into the land. Moses sent them on a reconnaissance mission to gather information about the number and strength of the people, the condition of the cities, and the productivity of the land. This was already their land by covenant promise; God simply wanted them to see how great their new home was.

B. Back with a Bad Report

God knew all the facts before He sent them on the spy mission. He knew the people were strong, the cities were fortified, and the children of Anak lived there. God never needed the Israelites to tell Him the condition of the Promised Land; this was an exercise of faith for Israel. They returned carrying the bounty of the land. It was so abundant, one bunch of grapes had to be carried on poles between the shoulders of two men. (See Numbers 13:23, 27.) However, these men could only see the obstacles. The Bible says ten men brought back a bad report. The King James Version translates it as “an evil report” (Numbers 13:32).

According to many sources, the Hebrew word is even stronger: it means a slanderous or defamatory report. With this account, these spies were not just sharing their opinion, they were slandering and defaming God with this report. Remember, the land already belonged to Israel; it was their Promised Land. God’s purpose was to show them the beauty and abundance He had prepared for them. They were going to live in cities they had not built and eat from vineyards they had not planted. So for them to only focus on the enemy was an insult to God—the same God who had brought them through the Red Sea and destroyed their last enemy completely. How could they doubt that He would once again deliver the land He had promised to them?

DISCUSS: *What comes to mind when you think of a slanderous report? How can slander hinder what God wants to do?*

C. I will believe God will keep His promise, no matter how I see myself.

Our conversation matters. We must be careful that when we speak of situations in our lives, we are not slandering our God. If He has promised us, then it will come to pass because His Word is sure. When we face an obstacle, we must magnify our God more than our problem. Our victory begins with our words. (See Proverbs 18:21.) Ten men spoke death into a camp of thousands, not just because they believed themselves to be like grasshoppers, but more importantly, they believed the enemy thought the same. (See Numbers 13:33.) They spoke defeat about themselves, convinced the enemy also

saw them as defeated. The power of ten brought a death sentence upon thousands. Only two men, Joshua and Caleb, continued to have faith in God to be their strength. Our faith in God overcomes our fear, and our conversation has consequences of good and bad. Choose today, no matter the circumstances you are facing, no matter how you see yourself, to speak about the greatness of your God more than about your enemy.

II. THE FAITHLESS GENERATION

A. Rebellion and Plan to Return

Those ten men's slanderous reports turned the hearts of most of Israel, and they spent the night in mourning. However, the next day they went a step further by rebelling against God and Moses, even planning to return to Egypt. (See Numbers 14:4.) Moses and Aaron fell to the ground because they understood this was not just a statement made in anger; this was an act of rebellion against God who had faithfully proven Himself to be their deliverer. The congregation's fear and anger were so inflamed, they conspired to stone Moses and Joshua to death (Numbers 14:10). That was all God could take. His glory appeared at the tent before the eyes of all Israel, and He was ready to pronounce judgment upon His own people.

Rebellion and rioting are two things God will not tolerate. And when the children rebelled and rioted, God immediately showed up. Be careful your lack of faith in the God who has proven Himself to you repeatedly does not lead to rebellion. You may not know how God will work it out, and that is okay. Remember, God does not always call us to understand, but He does call us to trust Him. Let us increase our faith daily by remembering who our God is and all He has done for us.

B. Wandering in the Wilderness

Israel was so discouraged that they wished they had died in Egypt where at least they could have been buried. They were convinced the Canaanites would kill them and prey on their wives and children. (See Numbers 14:3.) God shared His plan with Moses to destroy the entire congregation and begin anew with Moses. If Moses were leading Israel for his own fame, that was a perfect plan. He could be considered the father of the faithful, not Abraham. But Moses was not leading for his own namesake; he was leading for God's.

Moses interceded for God's people who wanted to stone him. What mercy! They wanted to stone Moses, and Moses prayed for them and reminded God that if He destroyed the nation of Israel, the nations around them would declare that destroying them was the only reason He delivered Israel from Egypt. Moses also reminded God of His great nature in that He was slow to anger, abounding in steadfast love, and forgiving of iniquity. (See Numbers 14:13–19.) The ten spies had already slandered God, and Moses did not want another nation to follow in their faithless footsteps.

DISCUSS: *If God made you the same deal as He made Moses, how would you have responded?*

The Israelites should have been thankful for a godly leader who stood between them and God's justifiable anger. God listened to Moses' plea and spared the nation, but there were severe consequences for their slanderous actions. The people, from the ages of twenty years old and upward, who saw God's glory and all the signs He had performed to deliver them from Egypt and did not believe or obey, were sentenced to die while they wandered in the wilderness. The only two who would be spared were the only two who believed—Joshua and Caleb. Additionally, God decided their little ones they declared would be prey, instead, would inherit and dwell in the land they had rejected. (See Numbers 14:31.) Forty years they wandered in the wilderness: one year for each day the spies spent in the Promised Land. The wilderness, which should have been a temporary place, became a permanent burial for them. I

C. By God's grace, I will never return to what God has delivered me from.

Today we stand, like the children of Israel, before a great promise. However, we cannot allow a lack of faith to destroy what God has designed for us. Many of us have testimonies of how God has delivered us from a life of destruction, misery, and no hope. We cannot forget God's mercy, miracles, and mighty hand that delivered us. If God has brought you out, then declare today by God's grace, "I will never return."

III. A FAITHFUL GENERATION

A. Joshua and Caleb

Against the majority opinion, Joshua and Caleb never broke covenant with God. They never lost faith in His power to give them the Promised Land. They never spoke or agreed with an evil report. And because of their faithfulness to God, He was faithful to them, delivering them from death in the wilderness and into a land full of blessings and promise.

Don't allow an evil report to turn your faith to rebellion, denying you the promises of God. Caleb declared they were well able to overcome the obstacles because it was their Promised Land. Even when he was eighty-five years old, he was ready to claim new land, building faith in others. (See Numbers 13:30; Joshua 14:10–12.) The power of keeping covenant with God is revealed as He keeps covenant with you and gives you all He has promised. V

DISCUSS: *Who are people like Joshua and Caleb in your life? How can you be a Joshua or Caleb in someone else's life?*

B. The Pentateuch and the Promised Land

Abraham received a covenant promise and a land. The Israelites received the Promised Land and a detailed document explaining how to remain in covenant with God: the Ten Commandments. In *The Handbook on the Pentateuch*, Dr. Chris Paris reveals God gave both apodictic (prohibitive) and casuistic (conditional) laws in this document to the people. Apodictic laws are absolute, while casuistic laws regard conditional situations. God had repeatedly experienced the inconsistency of sinful humanity. Therefore, the Pentateuch gave the Israelites a detailed plan to remain in covenant. Just before

Moses’ death, he delivered this to the people in written form and in a public address in the Book of Deuteronomy. His last message repeated the laws to help live in covenant with God while living in the prosperity of the Promised Land.

C. The Lord will be my God, and I will be part of His covenant people.

If we have obeyed God’s plan of salvation according to Acts 2:38, we are blessed to have the supernatural help of the Holy Spirit to walk in covenant with God. The laws from the Old Testament only written on tables of stone have now been written on our hearts. When we say yes to the Spirit, we declare the Lord will be our God. We enter a new covenant with Him. However, we must learn from the children of Israel and not allow a lack of faith to cause us to rebel against God. We must have the spirit of Joshua and Caleb and determine we will live according to God’s plan so we can be called God’s covenant people.



Teacher Option: Tell the story below or share one of your own to illustrate the importance of getting our relationship with God right before trying to change the world.

INTERNALIZING THE MESSAGE

One Saturday morning a minister was busily trying to prepare his sermon under difficult conditions. It was a rainy day, and his young son was restless and bored with little to do. Finally, in desperation, the minister picked up an old magazine and thumbed through it until he came to a large brightly colored picture. It showed a map of the world. He tore the page from the magazine, ripped it into little pieces, and scattered the scraps all over the living room floor, saying, "Son, if you can put this page together, I'll give you a dollar."

The minister hoped this challenge would take his son most of the morning, but ten minutes later he heard a knock on his door. His son had completed the puzzle. The minister was amazed to see his son had finished the project so soon with the pieces of paper neatly arranged and the map of the world back in order. "Son, how did you get that done so fast?" "Oh," said the boy, "it was easy. On the other side was a picture of a man. I just put a piece of paper on the bottom, put the picture of the man together, put a piece of paper of top, and then turned it over. I figured if I got the person right, the world would be right." His father smiled and handed his

son a dollar. "Not only have you earned that dollar, but you've given me my sermon for tomorrow: 'If a person is right, his world will be right.'"

The Old Testament covenant was a great document to guide the behavior of the Israelites in their relationship with God and with others. However, as wonderful and detailed as it was, it could not accomplish what it was created to do. Why not? Because humanity was not right. Humans needed to be changed from the inside out so they could learn to obey the covenant laws. When God rewrote the laws onto the hearts of humanity through the infilling of His Spirit, new people, new creations were born. These new people were right. The law of God was written on their hearts, and they were able to live right through His Spirit. When we allow God's covenant to lead our lives, we will want to be in right relationship with God and with others.

Instead of focusing on putting the world together right, let's focus on getting ourselves in covenant with God. As the young boy so wisely said, "If a person is right, his world will be right."

DISCUSS: What needs to be made right in your life in order for your world to also be right?



JUDGES
AND
KINGS



FALL
11

NOVEMBER 16, 2025

LESSON TEXT

Joshua 1-6

FOCUS VERSES

Joshua 1:5-7

⁵There shall not any man be able to stand before thee all the days of thy life: as I was with Moses, so I will be with thee: I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee.

⁶Be strong and of a good courage: for unto this people shalt thou divide for an inheritance the land, which I swore unto their fathers to give them.

⁷Only be thou strong and very courageous, that thou mayest observe to do according to all the law, which Moses my servant commanded thee: turn not from it to the right hand or to the left, that thou mayest prosper whithersoever thou goest.

TRUTH ABOUT COVENANT

God walks in covenant with those who reverently fear Him.

Crossing the Jordan River

I WILL SEEK
GOD'S
MERCY
FOR MY
LIFE.

COVENANT CONTEXT

After our study in the Book of Numbers, we move past Deuteronomy (Moses' final instructions on covenant faithfulness) into the section of the Bible known as the Historical Books. Beginning with the Book of Joshua, they record the children of Israel's continued pursuit of the Promised Land. Today's study of God's mercy to a Gentile named Rahab shows His willingness to extend His covenant beyond the Jews.

SG *TEACHING OUTLINE*

Icebreaker: What is a life hack you can share to help others?

Teacher Tip: Connect the group's answers to set up the story of God extending His covenant to someone outside of Israel.

Lesson Connection: Share the Lesson Connection.

I. GOD'S PROMISES TO JOSHUA AND ISRAEL

- A. The Covenant to a New Generation **I**
- B. Israel's Agreement
- C. I will respond to God's covenant with a commitment to obey.

DISCUSS: *No matter your spiritual heritage, how can you ensure you pass along God's principles to the next generation?*

II. RAHAB ENTERS COVENANT

- A. Rahab in Jericho

DISCUSS: *When reading this story, how do you feel knowing God wanted to show grace to Rahab?*

- B. A Covenant with Rahab

DISCUSS: *How does the color scarlet help foreshadow the new covenant God would one day make with everyone, not just the Jews?*

- C. God will extend His covenant to anyone who seeks relationship with Him.

III. MARCHING INTO VICTORY

DISCUSS: *If you were an Israelite soldier, how do you think you would have responded to God's battle plan against Jericho?*

- A. Rededicated to Covenant
- B. Jericho's Walls Fell **V**
- C. I will follow God's battle plan, which may defy human logic and reason.

DISCUSS: *Think of a time when God's plan did not seem to make sense. How did you respond? How did God come through?*

Internalizing the Message

PRAYER FOCUS

Lead the group in prayer and consider the following topics of focus:

- For God to help us trust in Him even when things do not make sense
- For God to help us to be obedient to Him

LESSON CONNECTION

A man walked into a bookstore and asked the clerk to direct him to the self-help books. The clerk replied, “I could, but that would defeat the purpose, now wouldn’t it?” Many people go to bookstores, search the library, or shop online for self-help books. The genre is as old as ancient Egypt. Throughout time, authors have written self-help books, and these types of documents remain a fixture in the daily lives of many people.

Self-help books can provide advice on weight loss, dating relationships, the path to riches, and numerous other topics. Some series like *Chicken Soup for the Soul* inspire readers with stories of other people’s successes. These testimonials play on the idea: “If I can do it, anyone can do it.” Despite all the claims, readers may wonder whether self-help authors are bona fide experts or snake oil salesmen whose only true success is convincing a large number of people to buy their books. Of course, success depends on whether readers follow the advice given.

Statistics may reveal the lack of true help in the self-help genre. Around 80 percent of people who buy self-help books have bought other personal improvement literature, raising the question whether they actually improve or they just want to. Despite their seemingly profound desire to change, many readers may only read the first twenty pages of a book; others may simply leave the manual on the shelf to collect dust. Nevertheless, purchasing one of these books can improve someone’s outlook on life. Perhaps self-help books provide a temporary feeling of euphoria while failing to deliver on long-term prosperity. Different self-help books have achieved fame. In 1859, *Samuel Smiles’ Self-Help* had the distinction of outselling numerous books, including *Darwin’s Origin of the Species*. The only book that outpaced it to claim the top spot was the Bible (publishingperspectives.com).

While self-help books may have some value, the Bible serves as the premiere text for improving an individual’s life. The Book of Proverbs offers tried-and-true wisdom to apply in our lives. The narratives of the Bible show us the faithfulness of God and provide both inspiring and cautionary tales of numerous individuals. Love stories like Ruth and Boaz or the Song of Solomon reveal the power of romantic love and the beauty of living in covenant relationship.

The Bible covers all the major subjects present in the self-help section, yet the Bible is so much more than a self-help book. The Bible not only provides a blueprint for this life but also a way to inherit eternal life. Self-help books typically focus on this life only and may lead readers down the wrong path by encouraging them to seek riches when they should be seeking the kingdom of God.

Nevertheless, the Bible and self-help books have something in common: following the plan makes all the difference. Those who fail to obey the truths of the Bible will not improve. However, those who embrace the words of life and truth in the Word of God will find prosperity and success far greater than any self-help book can ever offer.

BIBLE LESSON

I. GOD'S PROMISES TO JOSHUA AND ISRAEL

When the Almighty makes a promise, He extends His blessings to future generations. While some people fearfully state, "We are just one generation away from losing out with God," others boldly proclaim, "May the next generation do even greater things than my generation." One generation should not simply pass the baton to their children; they should give them a running start to maintain momentum and create enthusiasm.

A. The Covenant to a New Generation

Part of God's promise was giving Israel an abundant, beautiful land they could call home. I Joshua had observed that land of plenty with his own eyes. While his generation failed to appreciate his vision, the next generation would wholeheartedly buy into the promises of God. By installing Joshua as Moses' successor to lead Israel's new generation, God renewed His covenant promises to the descendants of those who had died in the wilderness, inviting the new generation into the same covenant with all its blessings and curses.

Hebrews 4:12 describes the Word of God as a two-edged sword. This sword could provide immeasurable blessings if the Israelites allowed the Lord to fight for them. However, defying the Almighty would cause them to reap the edge of the sword in a curse. That is not the result of chance; it is the result of choice. The Word of God provides every generation the opportunity to choose. Although God guarantees He will remain steadfast in His covenant, He also requires obedience. Thankfully, the generation Joshua led had the correct mindset.

B. Israel's Agreement

To inherit the promises, Israel agreed to follow the covenant and their leader Joshua. God once again summed up the immense blessings that awaited the Israelites who obeyed Him: "This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success" (Joshua 1:8). This verse hearkens back to Deuteronomy 6:4-9 when God commanded the Israelites to steadfastly keep the Book of the Law in their mouths by repeating the *Shema*: "Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is one LORD." They were to consistently meditate on the oneness of God and teach this principle to their children.

Understanding the oneness of God would greatly enrich Israel. Joshua 1:8 declares that the obedient Israelites would make their way prosperous and have good success by meditating on the Book of the Law. Although many books promise to improve people's outlooks and increase their financial portfolio, only one book can truly make all the difference and set people's hearts on seeking the right things in life: God's Word.

C. I will respond to God's covenant with a commitment to obey.

Like the Israelites, we must effectively respond to God's covenant. Some of our parents and grandparents may have faithfully followed the plan of salvation, others may have backslid, and still others may have never heeded the gospel. No matter our situation,

we must make our own personal commitment to the covenant invitation the Lord extends to us.

We must affirm our obedience to the Word of God—not merely with what we say, but with our hearts and minds fully devoted to the Lord. Obedience preserves the covenant. Without obedience, our relationship with the Lord suffers. Failing to obey will make us more like the faithless generation who died in the wilderness than their faithful offspring who conquered, inherited, and enjoyed the Promised Land.

DISCUSS: *No matter your spiritual heritage, how can you ensure you pass along God's principles to the next generation?*

II. RAHAB ENTERS COVENANT

Covenants often have an exclusionary nature. Not everyone receives an invitation to a covenant, just like many people may apply for a job, but only a select few will receive and accept an offer. Although many have criticized God's church for not being inclusive, the reality is God has always intended to bring more people into His covenant. These individuals, however, must be willing to follow the guidelines established in the covenant. In the end, people exclude themselves from the plan and purpose of God rather than the Lord denying them access to His blessings.

Rahab seemed to be excluded from this beautiful covenant with God. Her people in Jericho wanted to wait out the Israelites in the hope they would leave. In contrast, Rahab saw a great opportunity once she met two Israelite spies. As a prostitute, Rahab had met many men in her life. Her relationships with them were often shallow and sinful. But Rahab desired something more than temporary, unfulfilling relationships. Like everyone, Rahab longed to be in relationship with God and God longed to be in relationship with Rahab.

A. Rahab in Jericho

As the two Hebrew spies scoped out the land, they discovered Rahab, who sought a place among God's people. In Jericho, Rahab's reputation was not special. Men made lewd remarks about her. Married women despised her. Even if Rahab changed her life and lifestyle, she could not have easily repaired her reputation.

She seemed doomed. If the Israelites waged war against Jericho and won, she would surely die. If the Israelites left or lost, she would resume her hopeless life. But as grace would have it, Rahab found hope even amid fear. The testimony of the Israelite victory over the Egyptians and a providential meeting with two Israelite spies opened the door for the Lord to extend His covenant invitation to Rahab of Jericho.

DISCUSS: *When reading this story, how do you feel knowing God wanted to show grace to Rahab?*

B. A Covenant with Rahab

Joshua learned a lesson after ten spies returned with a slanderous recon report the first time they spied out the Promised Land. Perhaps that is why he only commissioned

two spies into Jericho. He deliberately chose two who would offer a realistic report motivated by accuracy and faith. They proved themselves to be markedly different from the ten spies in Joshua and Caleb's generation.

At first, Rahab might have assumed they were just like all other men, but they were different. They just needed shelter from the guards in Jericho who were chasing them. She helped them by not selling them out to the king. If the guards discovered she was harboring Hebrew spies, her life may have been in danger. Yet, Rahab refused to be shaken or stirred by the situation, allowing her to create a strong bond—a bond that would save her and her family. Rahab assisted the spies' escape by letting them down via a scarlet rope. She had saved their lives, and they were willing to save hers and her family. They instructed her to let down that same scarlet rope out her window when Israel invaded Jericho. And when the Israelite soldiers saw that scarlet rope, they would make sure no harm came to anyone inside that house.

This scarlet rope represented inclusivity. The spies entered a covenant with Rahab, extending God's mercy outside the Israelite community. The amazing testimony that preceded the Israelites caused Rahab to risk her life to aid the spies. She remembered hearing of God's miracle at the Red Sea even though the previous generation of Israelites had seemingly forgotten it. Rahab sought God's mercy, and her faith wrote her into the story of Jesus' own lineage. Rahab, the harlot of Jericho, created a legacy that exceeded her wildest dreams.

DISCUSS: *How does the color scarlet help foreshadow the new covenant God would one day make with everyone, not just the Jews?*

C. God will extend His covenant to anyone who seeks relationship with Him.

Perhaps you feel like Rahab, excluded from the plan of God because of sin. Or maybe you don't think you have the right family tree or connections to commune with God. We should replace our excuses with the powerful testimonies of others. If God extended His covenant to them, He will extend the same opportunity to us.

When we enter into a relationship with God, we join a group known as the church that is both exclusive and inclusive. The church is exclusive because God's covenant demands obedience to the plan of salvation in Acts 2:38. The church is inclusive because the promise is to anyone who will follow Jesus and take up the cross (Mark 8:34; Acts 2:39).

III. MARCHING INTO VICTORY

The two spies returned safely to Joshua excited for what they had heard in Jericho. They reported: "And they said unto Joshua, Truly the Lord hath delivered into our hands all the land; for even all the inhabitants of the country do faint because of us" (Joshua 2:24). Despite Jericho's formidable walls, its citizens' hearts were failing them for fear. The Israelites prepared to take Jericho. The Lord had commissioned a specific, albeit unusual, plan for victory. Israel would march around the city in silence for six days. On the last day, the Lord commanded them to march around the city seven

times. On the seventh time, they were to shout with a great shout. The war cry would bring victory, God would fell the walls, and they would capture the city.

The strategy must have seemed a bit absurd. Perhaps the Lord commanded His people to stay silent during their march so they did not sow doubt into others' minds. Speaking doubt had failed for Israel over forty years ago. Some people refer to walking the walk and talking the talk. The Israelites walked the walk, but they needed to leave the talking to God until He commanded them to shout for victory.

DISCUSS: *If you were an Israelite soldier, how do you think you would have responded to God's battle plan against Jericho?*

A. Rededicated to Covenant

Before Israel could wage war with Jericho, they had to cross the flooded Jordan River. The Jordan may have reminded them of the covenant God had made with Moses. Their forefathers stood staring at the Red Sea, but God parted those waters. Much like their forefathers, Joshua and his generation stood staring at the raging Jordan River which had overflowed its banks. But God was about to work a miracle to prove He was with Joshua just as He was with Moses. The Lord parted the waters of the Jordan River, and Israel once again marched through the water on their way toward the Promised Land.

B. Jericho's Walls Fell

- ▼ After they had marched for six days and seven times on the seventh, the impossible happened: the Lord felled the tall, thick walls of Jericho. Scholars describe the walls as so wide that people in Jericho lived in houses built into the walls. To prevent invaders from breaching, the people of Jericho could place all kinds of items inside the walls. Jericho was prepared, but the Lord thwarted every one of their strategic advantages because the Israelites obeyed.

C. I will follow God's battle plan, which may defy human logic and reason.

On many occasions, God will call on us to follow a specific, divinely orchestrated plan that at first glance may not seem to make much sense. In these instances, we need to rely on God, not on us. He has given us spiritual senses to have our ears open to hear the Word of God. We need to open our eyes and read the promises in Scripture that encourage obedience. We need to touch Heaven with our prayers. We need to be ready to receive the promise so we will taste and see that the Lord is good.

DISCUSS: *Think of a time when God's plan did not seem to make sense. How did you respond? How did God come through?*

Teacher Option: Tell the story below or share one of your own to illustrate the power of God's great mercy.

INTERNALIZING THE MESSAGE

We may hear people say, "It's a dirty job, but someone's got to do it." Sewer diving sounds like one of the most horrific jobs in the history of humanity. Some, however, prefer to spend their time, not by jumping into real sewers but by wading through online "sewers." Matt Earle made a great deal of money by fixing the reputations of people on the internet. He started out in marketing working for a bank in Bermuda. Pleased with his abilities, corporations tasked him with improving their reputations online.

These clients not only desired an emphasis on good news, but they also hoped to quell the negative publicity that arises from consumer complaints, harassment cases, and other problems. To take advantage of this emerging field, Matt founded Reputation.ca. When companies make a mistake, Matt provides them with a digital makeover.

Gone are the days when celebrities or companies simply hired a publicist or a good public relations firm to change things because the online world includes news and comments from a variety of sources. Image fixing has turned into a multi-million-dollar industry. With the price tag running from \$10,000 to \$20,000 for a good scrubbing, these

fixers are striking it rich. Some of the money goes to paying people to remove negative content.

If Rahab the harlot lived today, she might have wanted to hire someone to fix her image. No matter what she did, the stigma of her profession as a prostitute would seemingly always haunt her. Then one day she met two spies who could introduce her to God who would change her reputation forever. Nothing can change someone's reputation like being in the bloodline of Jesus Christ. Yes the power of the blood of Jesus cleanses us from all sin, but also think about the power of the bloodline of Jesus that improved Rahab's reputation. The precious blood of Jesus can change anyone's life and reputation for the better.

Many of us might want to change our reputation after committing a sin or making an ill-advised post online. No matter what we have done, we must seek God's mercy for our lives. Some might think it seems absurd that Jesus could change our reputation forever, so we must remember the story of Rahab. And to add something else that sounds irrational to this seemingly absurd idea, we must realize God's reputation-cleansing is free for us. Jesus paid for it with His blood.



JUDGES
AND
KINGS



FALL
12

NOVEMBER 23, 2025

LESSON TEXT

Ruth 1-4

FOCUS VERSES

Ruth 2:11-12

¹¹And Boaz answered and said unto her, It hath fully been shewed me, all that thou hast done unto thy mother in law since the death of thine husband: and how thou hast left thy father and thy mother, and the land of thy nativity, and art come unto a people which thou knewest not heretofore.

¹²The LORD recompense thy work, and a full reward be given thee of the LORD God of Israel, under whose wings thou art come to trust.

TRUTH ABOUT COVENANT

God's plan was always to come in flesh to redeem us.

Ruth and Boaz

I WILL
LOOK
TO JESUS
TO REDEEM ME.

COVENANT CONTEXT

Decades after living in the Promised Land, Israel suffered a severe famine that drove a man named Elimelech and his family to Moab. When his widow returned to Bethlehem with her Moabite daughter-in-law named Ruth, God provided a husband and provider for her and included her in the lineage of Jesus Christ. The Book of Ruth demonstrates that once again God was extending His covenant beyond Israel's borders.

SG *TEACHING OUTLINE*

Icebreaker: If you could go back in time and change any situation in history, what would you change?

Teacher Tip: Connect the group's answers to show that God can change our future, even if we cannot change our history.

Lesson Connection: Share the Lesson Connection.

I. NAOMI'S LOSS AND REDEMPTION

A. Covenant to Ruth

DISCUSS: *Rather than just looking at what you're going through, who around you could use your help? How could you help build up or restore their faith in God?*

B. Return to Covenant Land

C. I will allow God to redeem my suffering to extend covenant to others.

DISCUSS: *What will you do to stave off bitterness when going through tough times? What gifts has God provided for you to help you through those times?*

II. BOAZ, THE KINSMAN-REDEEMER

A. Discovering Boaz **V**

DISCUSS: *In what situations have you seen God's guiding hand when at the time it might have seemed like coincidence?*

B. Redeeming Ruth and Naomi

C. To inherit God's covenant promises, we must enter a monogamous relationship with Him.

DISCUSS: *What other excuses do people give for not being in relationship with God? How does this story answer those excuses?*

III. JESUS IS OUR KINSMAN-REDEEMER

A. Our Redeemer Cares

DISCUSS: *How do you know how much Jesus, our Redeemer, cares for you?*

B. Jesus, Our Incarnate Redeemer

C. If we pledge our loyalty to God, He promises to eternally redeem, restore, and provide for us.

Internalizing the Message **I**

PRAYER FOCUS

Lead the group in prayer and consider the following topics of focus:

- For God to help us see His plan even when life is difficult
- For God to redeem us from our troubles

LESSON CONNECTION

A poor farmer who lived in Arkansas had a neighbor who left home for a long time. When the farmer realized his neighbor would lose his land since he had not returned in time to pay his taxes, the farmer went over to his neighbor's farm, cut wood, loaded it in his truck, took the lumber into town, sold it, and sent the money to the tax office. The farmer repeated the same action year after year until twenty years had passed. While most people would have given up and assumed the neighbor had died or had left never to return, the farmer treated his neighbor as he wanted to be treated. He fulfilled the second commandment of loving his neighbor as he loved himself.

Many years later the farmer had an opportunity to be rewarded for his good deeds. Although he had never even sought so much as a pat on the back for this labor of loyalty, a blessing sought him out. An attorney informed the farmer that because he had paid the taxes on 280 acres for two decades, he had become the owner of his absentee neighbor's land by default. All he needed to do was sign papers to claim ownership of the property. The vast acreage and the remaining timber would yield a substantial amount of money. Despite the windfall before his eyes, the farmer steadfastly refused. He deemed it wrong to take land that did not belong to him.

The poor farmer passed up around \$250,000, an amount that could have changed his life and the lives of his children and grandchildren. Even when the attorney spoke of the benefits for his family, the old farmer refused to entertain those thoughts. After he died, the family convinced the farmer's wife to sign the documents so they could reap the blessing the patriarch of the family had refused. The children and grandchildren received the money as part of their inheritance.

Having seen his grandfather resolutely refuse to accept money for the land, one of the grandsons wrestled with how and if he should spend the money. Instead of using the funds to enrich himself, he used them to enrich others. He created a Bible commentary series that would pay for the cost of printing the work of godly authors. The money raised from the profits would go back into an account to produce more books. The farmer who yearly redeemed his neighbor's land gave in a way that God could redeem many other individuals.

Like the farmer in this true story, we have the opportunity to see others redeemed. We have received the special gift and blessing of the Word of God, and we must follow its tenets and exercise great care in how we live our lives. We are called to live morally and ethically like the farmer. Just as the farmer saw the value in redeeming a neighbor's land even though it cost him his time and labor, we must see the value of redeeming others even when the situation seems hopeless. After all, many might have thought our situation looked extremely hopeless, but our Redeemer, Jesus, never gave up on us.

BIBLE LESSON

I. NAOMI'S LOSS AND REDEMPTION

Many commentators have noted that Naomi and her husband, Elimelech, left Bethlehem, meaning the “house of bread,” during a famine. The couple often receives a bad rap due to all the misfortune that befell them. However, a closer look at their circumstances as well as comparing them to other ancient Israelites may change how we view them.

Elimelech lived during the days of the judges. His name means “my God is king.” In an era when Israel had no king and everyone did as he or she pleased, his choice to leave Bethlehem and sojourn in Moab mirrors the decisions of his patriarchs and their wives. Abraham and Sarah dwelled in Egypt and Gerar during a famine. Isaac and Rebekah, their son and daughter-in-law, found refuge in Gerar as well. Jacob moved his entire family down to Egypt because the Lord used Joseph to redeem his family.

The Lord also used Naomi to bring about His divine plan. Although she had suffered immense loss, the Lord redeemed her through her Moabite daughter-in-law Ruth. The plan of God transcended regional boundaries and cultural differences. Once again, God extended His covenant beyond the borders of Israel.

A. Covenant to Ruth

Naomi's bitterness could have derailed the entire plan. She told her daughters-in-law to leave her and return to their families. Orpah did. She kissed Naomi goodbye, but Ruth refused to go. Despite Naomi's suffering, Ruth saw something special about her and her God. Ruth pledged her loyalty to Naomi, covenanting with her and creating the foundation for God's covenant He would soon make with David.

Amazingly, the beginnings of this covenant seemed to be in danger. As Naomi pressed her daughters-in-law to leave her, they could feel her broken heart and even her anger with God. She set up the rhetorical situation: “If I married today and conceived right away and gave birth to a baby boy, would you wait around until he's old enough to marry? Of course you wouldn't!” Her frustration was biting. Naomi only looked at the situation from her own limited perspective. She failed to see the possibilities Ruth presented. Ruth was young enough to bear a child, and Ruth's child would count as the seed of Naomi. In a way, Ruth could redeem Naomi.

DISCUSS: *Rather than just looking at what you're going through, who around you could use your help? How could you help build up or restore their faith in God?*

B. Return to Covenant Land

This redemption required Naomi to return to the covenant land after the famine. After the patriarchs and matriarchs were safe to return to Israel, they often returned with gifts. Egypt's pharaoh enriched Abraham and Sarah when they left Egypt. When the Israelites exited Egypt, they spoiled the Egyptians and left loaded down with gifts and goods.

Naomi spoke of going out of Israel full, only for the Almighty to bring her home empty. But she did not return empty; the Lord gave her a most precious gift. In God's faithfulness, He gave her faithful Ruth, and Ruth was still able to bear a child to bless Naomi in her old age. The woman who felt she had nothing walked next to the divine gift of Ruth who could change everything.

C. I will allow God to redeem my suffering to extend covenant to others.

Like Naomi, we will face times of suffering. Not all problems arise from sin; some problems are just life. Naomi had no real control over going to Moab since her husband had made the choice. They were in a famine and needed to find bread. She could not have prevented his death or the deaths of her sons. She felt God had forgotten her, but He had not.

We must be careful to avoid the bitterness of Naomi and allow God to redeem us even in the midst of our suffering. During these times, we may rant, rave, moan, lament, and loathe our lives. However, we must eventually dry our tears and blink past our clouded vision to see the plan and purpose of our covenant God. We may find help in the most unexpected places. Ruth covenanted with Naomi to go where she went, to lodge where she lodged. Ruth promised that Naomi's God and people would be her God and her people. If Ruth could help save Naomi in her darkest hour, we can allow God's power to work through us in any situation.

DISCUSS: *What will you do to stave off bitterness when going through tough times? What gifts has God provided for you to help you through those times?*

II. BOAZ, THE KINSMAN-REDEEMER

The plan of God required yet another piece to the puzzle. When these two ladies returned, they needed to find work or a husband who would provide for them. God faithfully led Ruth to both; God led Ruth to a man named Boaz. He was a man of means who owned fields, and he followed the principles of God's covenant with Israel that allowed the poor to glean from his crops. When he met Ruth and discovered who she was, he commanded his hired hands to drop handfuls of grain just for her. Boaz genuinely cared about Ruth and promised to provide for her if she would work alongside his workers in his fields. She no longer needed to find other work because God had led her to Boaz. Since he went above the requirements of the Law, Naomi believed he may go one step further and offer to marry Ruth.

▼ A. Discovering Boaz

When Ruth first went to the fields for food, the Bible reveals the divinely-inspired circumstances that led her to Boaz's field, stating her "hap" was to light on Boaz's field (Ruth 2:3). The writer almost winks at the reader, making the scenario seem like coincidence or happenstance. In reality, God was guiding Ruth and Boaz the entire time. Naomi was overjoyed when she discovered who Boaz really was. Jewish law provided for a male relative to step forward and "rescue" someone or their property when they seemed to have no other options. This close relative was known as the

kinsman-redeemer. The redeemer paid off their debts and helped redeem their life from destitution or even destruction.

DISCUSS: *In what situations have you seen God's guiding hand when at the time it might have seemed like coincidence?*

B. Redeeming Ruth and Naomi

Naomi and Ruth may have wondered why a God-fearing, Law-abiding man like Boaz had not fulfilled his obligation to redeem them. Perhaps Boaz assumed Ruth was taking care of Naomi, and neither of them needed his help. Naomi went to work creating a plan to spur Boaz into action. Late one night Ruth snuck to the threshing floor where Boaz was sleeping and lay down by him. He awoke startled to find her near him, and she asked him to redeem her. Boaz smiled. He would be glad to, but another relative was even closer than he was, and the Law gave that relative the first right of redemption.

The next sunrise, Boaz hurried to the city gates where the elders met for legal matters. The nearer kinsman walked by and Boaz called out to him. When this man discovered that buying Naomi's land meant also marrying Ruth, he refused because it would endanger his own inheritance. That day Boaz became the kinsman-redeemer for Naomi and Ruth by marrying the Moabitess, Ruth. Three generations later, their lineage would eventually give rise to King David and later to the King of kings, Jesus Christ.

C. To inherit God's covenant promises, we must enter a monogamous relationship with Him.

To covenant with God and receive His promises, we must enter an exclusive relationship with Him. We cannot serve God and money. We cannot love the values of our world and fully love the Lord. We cannot set our affection on earthly things; we must set our affection on heavenly things. (See Matthew 6:24; 1 John 2:15; Colossians 3:2.)

Ruth's ethnicity did not exclude her from the promises of God, neither should anything in our background exclude us from being part of the kingdom of God. While others might have viewed Ruth as an outsider, the Almighty saw her as an insider, an integral part of His plan and purpose to redeem the world.

DISCUSS: *What other excuses do people give for not being in relationship with God? How does this story answer those excuses?*

III. JESUS IS OUR KINSMAN-REDEEMER

A. Our Redeemer Cares

It is easy to see the parallels between Boaz and our kinsman-redeemer, Jesus Christ. Jesus paid our debts and redeemed us from destruction, but Jesus paid with more than silver and gold; He redeemed us with His own blood. Many people who saw Jesus' miracles and heard His parables probably wondered why He did not immediately act to change their oppressive situation with the Romans. Like Boaz, Jesus had to fulfill the Law. The Bible even tells us Jesus was baptized to "fulfil all righteousness"

(Matthew 3:15). Because Jesus was God manifested in the flesh, He recognized the importance of doing everything the right way.

Like the kinsman nearer than Boaz, others promise redemption, but they cannot deliver us. The Sadducees believed offering sacrifices would provide redemption, but that ultimately failed. The Pharisees believed ultra-strict observance of the Law could provide salvation. That failed. The Zealots believed violent revolution could bring redemption. The Romans ensured they failed. Only Jesus succeeded because only Jesus loved us enough to give His sinless life for us. Ironically, His success came through offering His own life. The kinsman nearer than Boaz would not put his inheritance at risk, but Jesus put more than His reputation on the line; He put His life on the line, giving His life to extend a lifeline of mercy.

DISCUSS: *How do you know how much Jesus, our Redeemer, cares for you?*

B. Jesus, Our Incarnate Redeemer

In Jesus, God incarnated Himself as our kinsman-redeemer to redeem us and restore what sin stole from us in the Garden of Eden. God has always loved us—which is why He invites us into covenant with Him—but for God to redeem us, He had to become human like us. He “made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men” (Philippians 2:7). Because Jesus became our Redeemer, we call on His name in repentance. We are baptized in the name of Jesus and begin to bear His name as a sign of being in covenant with Him. When we speak His name in praise and seek His face, we receive the Holy Spirit with the supernatural sign of speaking in other tongues. The name of Jesus is known throughout the world, but no one knows the name of the kinsman nearer than Boaz. Scripture omits his identity. This unknown individual missed out on being part of one of the greatest, most miraculous plans in history.

C. If we pledge our loyalty to God, He promises to eternally redeem, restore, and provide for us.

We have the opportunity to pledge our loyalty to God. Doing so requires humbling ourselves and being more concerned about exalting the name of Jesus than strengthening our own reputation. If we enter into covenant with God and live in covenant with Him, He redeems us for eternity. The Almighty not only provides us with everlasting life, but He also offers restoration in this life. Just as the Lord restored Naomi and turned her bitter life sweet, so Jesus can completely transform us.

Be careful not to presume that some do not want to be part of the covenant of redemption, especially since such individuals may be important and essential catalysts in the plan of God, much like King David’s great-grandmother, Ruth the Moabitess.

Teacher Option: Tell the story below or share one of your own to illustrate the beauty of God's redeeming love for us, even if others reject us.

INTERNALIZING THE MESSAGE

I National Basketball Association (NBA) player Rudy Gobert understands the power of redemption better than most people. From the time he was just a baby, his mother held him fast with her redemptive love. Because his mother was a French Caucasian woman and his father was black, his mother's family did not accept her child. The normally quiet Gobert shared his plight and the powerful story of his mother's love in the essay "What You See in the Dark."

Before Gobert knew the meaning of the word *ostracize*, his mother showed him what it was like to be loved even when rejection hit her hard. Her relatives spewed the hate of prejudice, telling her they did not want "that baby" to join them for Christmas. Somewhat like baby Jesus, baby Rudy found no place among his own. Rudy's mother chose her child over her other relatives.

Rudy's life was not easy. His family grew up in government housing. Rudy, however, found a way to change the family's situation. The tall young man left home at age thirteen to be part of a basketball academy. Despite the heart-wrenching separation, Rudy's mother encouraged him to pursue his dreams. She provided a redemptive voice in a world of rejection. The teenage Rudy needed someone to redeem him because he understood all too well the meaning of racial slurs. He felt the sting of isolation when confronted

by bad coaches. He had to face his doubts when people dismissed him.

Rudy Gobert went from facing rejection to rejecting shots in the NBA. Three times the seven-foot-one center won the NBA Defensive Player of the Year Award. Despite his success, some people still mocked him. When he failed to make the 2019 NBA All-Star Game, he cried. People made fun of him, but they failed to understand the true meaning behind those tears. Rudy cried because of how much his mother meant to him.

Just as Ruth and Boaz redeemed Naomi, Rudy's mother redeemed him. While she could have sought help from her bigoted family out of financial need, she refused to allow her child to grow up in the midst of their hatred. Although she had little to give her son in the way of worldly possessions, she gave him the most important gift of all—love. A multimillionaire due to his NBA salary, today Rudy could buy almost anything he wants. Yet he realizes he has a precious gift that money can never buy. His mother's love and her story of redeeming her son are priceless (theplayerstribune.com).

As we think about our own hurts and rejections, we must realize our loving Redeemer cares about us. God Almighty incarnated Himself on this earth to save us from our sins. Jesus bled and died on the cross to redeem us. He loved us enough to lay down His life for us. Since He died for us, let us covenant to live for Him.



JUDGES
AND
KINGS



FALL
13

NOVEMBER 30, 2025

LESSON TEXT
1 Samuel 8-10

FOCUS VERSES

1 Samuel 8:7-9

⁷And the LORD said unto Samuel, Hearken unto the voice of the people in all that they say unto thee: for they have not rejected thee, but they have rejected me, that I should not reign over them.

⁸According to all the works which they have done since the day that I brought them up out of Egypt even unto this day, wherewith they have forsaken me, and served other gods, so do they also unto thee.

⁹Now therefore hearken unto their voice: howbeit yet protest solemnly unto them, and shew them the manner of the king that shall reign over them.

TRUTH ABOUT COVENANT

God's plans for His people are better than their own plans.

Samuel and Saul

I WILL TRUST
GOD'S PLAN
FOR ME, EVEN WHEN
IT IS AT ODDS WITH
THE PREVAILING
WORLDVIEW.

COVENANT CONTEXT

Following a failed period of leadership known as the Judges, Israel rejected their covenant with God by asking for a human king to lead them. God relented and gave them what they asked for, but they soon discovered they already had what they needed; they just needed to follow God's will rather than their own.

SG *TEACHING OUTLINE*

Icebreaker: What is something that seemed like a good idea at the time, but you are glad it didn't work out?

Teacher Tip: Connect the group's answers to illustrate how God sometimes give us what we want, even if it's not what we need.

Lesson Connection: Share the Lesson Connection.

I. THE CALL FOR A KING

A. We Want a King

DISCUSS: *Rather than ask for a king, how should Israel have looked to God for His help?*

B. Rejecting God

DISCUSS: *Have you ever repeatedly asked for something only to find out it wasn't what you really wanted or needed? How did it turn out?*

C. God will not force us to follow His plan. (V)

II. SAMUEL ANOINTED SAUL AS KING

A. Looking for a King

DISCUSS: *Why do we sometimes look past warning signs to get what we want? How can we see those warning signs more clearly?*

B. Saul's Anointing

C. Hiding among the Stuff

D. I will follow when God sends His Spirit to confirm His will.

III. KING SAUL'S PRIDE AND FALL

A. A King in Decline

DISCUSS: *What were some of the signals that Saul was growing distant from God? What are the signals we should watch for in our own lives?*

B. Trusting Saul's Plan

C. God wants to be the only King of my heart.

DISCUSS: *What have you learned by Saul's failure as a king? How will you follow God with your whole heart?*

Internalizing the Message (I)

PRAYER FOCUS

Lead the group in prayer and consider the following topics of focus:

- For God to help us avoid making unwise demands
- For God to help us to humble ourselves and accept His plan

LESSON CONNECTION

It had been a bumpy few years—decades actually. After political turmoil and revolt, the American Revolutionary War had brought on even more hardship. The British forces, superior in number and training, had decimated the ragtag rebel bands. Casualties in war were one thing; navigating rings of traitors and almost starving to death at Valley Forge were another. The constant through it all was George Washington. By anyone's account he was the fearless leader who rallied American forces, such as they were, to hold off the British for over eight years until King George III's representatives signed the Treaty of Paris, formally concluding the war.

Following the treaty, each colony fended for themselves, operating loosely under Articles of Confederation. Yet even with the colonies' preference for autonomy, the need for a chief head of state was clear, and the war hero was far and away the favorite. In the fall of 1788, the US Congress ratified the Constitution and began clamoring for Washington to be president. Washington described himself as “a culprit who is going to the place of his execution: so unwilling am I, in the evening of a life nearly consumed in public cares, to quit a peaceful abode for an Ocean of difficulties.” But serve he did.

The Electoral College elected him unanimously and spent considerable time debating whether to call him “His Elective Majesty” or “His Highness the President of the United States of America.” With only the British monarchy as their heritage, and monarchy being so common among other nations, leaders in America grappled with recreating the only form of government they knew. Such was their perspective and Washington's popularity that many historians suggest Washington could have assumed the same power as his peer kings. Washington chose to leave office at the end of his second term, indicating he did not want to die in office and open the door to the assumption that the presidency was a lifetime appointment. Thus set the precedent of the two-term US presidency, officially codified into the Constitution in 1948.

Much like the fledgling American nation contended with desire for a king, the children of Israel had a similar longing. Israel's history up until the Book of I Samuel was a theocracy—God was the people's King. Chosen leaders, like Moses and Joshua, fulfilled special roles, such as adviser and general, but the Lord reigned. In the Book of Judges, God anointed warriors to deliver the people; kingship did not come to Israel until around 1000 BC.

The Philistines posed a threat, even capturing the Ark of the Covenant, the symbol of God's abiding presence in Israel. The people assumed they had good reasons to call for a king. Without empires like the Egyptians to thwart their plans, they could proceed. They saw the corrupt leadership of the sons of Eli and later the sons of Samuel, so they felt justified in replacing a theocracy with a monarchy. They could not have been more wrong.

BIBLE LESSON

I. THE CALL FOR A KING

People often clamor for new leadership during times of trouble. Although Samuel had stood in the gap for the Israelites, they had forgotten all the good deeds the prophet had done. They failed to remember their time of great fear when the Lord responded to Samuel's sacrifice by thundering against the Philistines. They did not appreciate all the times the man of God prayed for them. Now they desired to replace the prophet and their heavenly King with a king they could see with their eyes, not through eyes of faith.

The ever-present, growing Philistine threat made the people feel a king was necessary, but they had not calculated the full cost of their request. Samuel offered them a vision of the future, showing them how poorly a king would treat them. Nevertheless, the people foolishly persisted in their demands.

A. We Want a King

The Israelites wanted a king so they could be like all the other nations, but they forgot they were not like the other nations because they served the God of the universe. They made one of the worst trades in the history of humanity. Israel wanted to transition from a theocracy where the Lord ruled to a monarchy where a king held sway over them. Rather than trusting in the covenant God had made with them—and kept by protecting them and fighting for them time and time again—the Israelites pressed for a king they could see. This visible leader would fight for them and subdue their enemies. They would soon watch their king face severe internal battles that would shake the nation of Israel to its core.

DISCUSS: *Rather than ask for a king, how should Israel have looked to God for His help?*

B. Rejecting God

Samuel wrestled with the situation internally. He was deeply hurt. He felt rejected by the people's request, but the Lord assured His prophet that the Israelites had rejected Him, not just Samuel. Long before Isaiah's prophecy that Jesus would be despised and rejected of men (Isaiah 53:3), the Lord felt the sting of the Israelites' rejection.

Parents deal with similar scenarios. When their children ask for something they should not have, sometimes a parent relents to teach a lesson. God repeatedly warned the Israelites of the consequences of having a king. Although a king would go to battle for the people, he would also draft their sons into military service and their daughters to serve in his kingdom. To hold onto political power, the king would give the best fields and lands to his officials. He needed their support to maintain order. Israel had traded the awesome power of God for paltry politics.

DISCUSS: *Have you ever repeatedly asked for something only to find out it wasn't what you really wanted or needed? How did it turn out?*

C. God will not force us to follow His plan.

The situation reveals the nature of God to allow us to have free will. Despite His incalculable power, Almighty God does not force people to follow His plan. While God moved the wicked Pharaoh to do God's will by hardening Pharaoh's heart, the Lord treats His children differently. God used Pharaoh's natural inclination to defy God as a way to show His glory. We, however, must make our own personal decision to live a life that gives God glory.

- ❑ Because God will not force His will on us, we must submit our will to His. Despite our best intentions, our inclinations may prove to be wrong. In many cases we may feel like we have a good reason for our decisions. However, we would do well to consider this cautionary tale of the Israelites in I Samuel 8. Their plan for a king seemed like a good idea, but they failed to fully consider all the ramifications.

II. SAMUEL ANOINTED SAUL AS KING

After Israel made their request, God reluctantly answered yes and created a scenario to crown Saul as the first king in Israel. Saul's father sent him with a servant to find some lost donkeys. They felt like they had searched everywhere, but they could not find the donkeys. Saul's servant suggested the two seek the assistance of the seer named Samuel. Surely, the man of God would be able to help. Providentially, the Lord set the meeting between Saul the king-to-be and Samuel the prophet to give Israel its first king.

In a private conversation Samuel told Saul he would be king. Samuel prophesied of various signs that would come to pass as the Spirit empowered Saul, and every promise came to pass. When Saul left, he did not need to worry any more about finding his father's lost livestock because the donkeys had returned home.

A. Looking for a King

This private meeting between Samuel and Saul set the stage for Saul, from the tribe of Benjamin, to ascend to the throne. However, the people needed to coronate Saul as their king. Samuel poured anointing oil over him to signify he was the one God had chosen to lead His people. The opinion polls might have supported Saul's inauguration because the young man seemed to possess all the attributes the people would want in a king.

Head and shoulders taller than the rest of the people, Saul looked like a formidable warrior. His towering presence hid his inner insecurities. At this stage in life, he possessed great humility. Both by outward appearance and inner fortitude, he seemed like an excellent choice. But red flags began to fly early in the story of Saul. He failed to demonstrate good leadership skills. The servant was spiritual enough to present the idea of appealing to Samuel for help when he and Saul could not find the donkeys. Saul did not even have the money to give a gift to the prophet, but the servant did. Even

when Saul behaved with humility, he may not have possessed the necessary qualities to prioritize God first and effectively manage his resources.

DISCUSS: *Why do we sometimes look past warning signs to get what we want? How can we see those warning signs more clearly?*

B. Saul's Anointing

Thankfully, the Lord had a plan to transform Saul. The prophet would anoint Saul to be king, and God's Spirit would empower him to lead the people. In the Book of Judges, most of the leaders God chose had the distinction of the Spirit being on them. Samson was different because Judges declares the Spirit of the Lord rushed on him. The first two anointed kings of Israel, Saul and David, knew what it felt like for the Spirit to rush on them similar to the mighty rushing wind on the Day of Pentecost in Acts 2.

C. Hiding among the Stuff

Saul would need the rush of the Spirit to empower him for the immense task ahead of him. When God chose the Benjamite to be king, no one could find him because he was hiding among the stuff. During perhaps the most important meeting of his life, Saul remained with the baggage. Many have pointed to Saul's humility in this action, but Saul's location creates a strong contrast with the next king, David. The shepherd boy left all his baggage behind before he fought Goliath. David charged a keeper with watching the sheep when he journeyed to the battlefield to take food to his brothers. David also refused the armor of Saul. Unlike Saul, David would not allow anything unnecessary to weigh him down.

D. I will follow when God sends His Spirit to confirm His will.

Both Saul and David felt the rush of the Spirit, but they responded very differently. Saul initially acted in humility but later grew prideful. Saul's story is a warning. Even if we have experienced the power of the Spirit through the infilling of the Holy Spirit, we must consistently seek the will of God. We need God in every moment, not just in the public moments everyone can see.

III. KING SAUL'S PRIDE AND FALL

At first, Samuel anointed Saul in private—not even allowing Saul's servant to see him pour the oil on the new king. Next, God revealed His divine plan to the entire kingdom when Samuel publicly revealed God's choice for king. Saul also proved himself by winning a great battle over the Ammonites. Things seemed to be going well for Saul. Even when others told Saul to deal harshly with his detractors, the king showed mercy. Sadly, the anointed king would spiral out of control as he replaced the Spirit as his guide and chose to follow the selfishness of his own prideful heart.

A. A King in Decline

The once mighty and promising king entered a time of decline. Saul's prideful impatience, impulsiveness, disobedience, and paranoia caused his kingdom to unravel.

Saul's behavior worsened throughout his reign. He battled a spirit that troubled him. He sought a musician to play music to soothe his soul. Enter David, the psalmist. David played and God calmed Saul, but over time, David unwittingly ignited Saul's anger even further. The king threw a spear at the young man, which he barely escaped. David eventually ran for his life from a man who had ruined his own life and made it his mission to end David's.

DISCUSS: *What were some of the signals that Saul was growing distant from God? What are the signals we should watch for in our own lives?*

B. Trusting Saul's Plan

When the people demanded a king, they could not have envisioned all the problems that would befall them so quickly even though Samuel warned them. Unfortunately, the people did not have the vision to recognize they had traded the glory of their heavenly King for the psychosis of an earthly king bent on destroying himself and others. In this way, they were breaking the covenant God had made with them to provide for them and protect them.

Saul's poor leadership demonstrated that Israel should have trusted God's plan instead of demanding their own will. The fast deterioration would soon lead to a rivalry between Saul and David and eventually pit brother versus brother in Israel's own brutal civil war. Kingship would be known more for division than unity.

C. God wants to be the only King of my heart.

If we separate ourselves from God, we will find it difficult to maintain unity with our brothers and sisters in Christ. Sometimes divisions that arise may be a sign of not being as close to the Lord as we need to be. While we may blame our fellow Christians for the problem, perhaps we should first take a close look and ask if we are the problem.

God wants sole possession of our hearts, but we can become distracted by the things of this world. We can put possessions or even other people on the throne of our hearts. Worse yet, we can become prideful and conceited like Saul and make ourselves the king or queen of our own personal kingdom. We must avoid the trap of pride. We must trust God's plan for our lives even when the will of God seems counter to our own plans, especially when it is counter to the world's plans.

DISCUSS: *What have you learned by Saul's failure as a king? How will you follow God with your whole heart?*

Teacher Option: Tell the story below or share one of your own to illustrate the value of following what God wants, not just what we want.

INTERNALIZING THE MESSAGE

ISports fans often think about what might have been when they discuss the worst trades in history. Every sport features its own tale of woe, but perhaps the most terrible trade in history occurred when Harry Frazee, the owner of the Boston Red Sox, traded Babe Ruth (nicknamed the Bambino) to the New York Yankees for \$100,000 and requested a \$300,000 loan as part of the deal. The exchange occurred in the 1920s, sending the Bronx Bombers roaring to success while the lowly Red Sox began an extended period of decline.

The trade proved so foolish that many baseball fans thought it brought bad luck to Beantown. Many referred to the losing ways of the Red Sox as the “Curse of the Bambino.” Calling the situation a curse detracts from the truly terrible decision Frazee made. In his pinstriped Yankees uniform, Babe Ruth hit 93 percent of his career homers: 665 out of a total of his 714 homeruns. He played twenty-two seasons from 1914 to 1935. His homerun record would not be broken until 1974, when Hank Aaron clobbered his 715th homerun over the fence in Atlanta. The Bronx Bomber’s record stood for around forty years until Hammerin’ Hank wrote his name in the history books above Ruth’s.

The Red Sox made some history of their own—bad history. Boston had won its fifth straight World Series with the help of Ruth in 1918, but the Red Sox would not win another Major League Baseball title until 2004. While many fans focus on the long drought of the Red Sox, the hitting

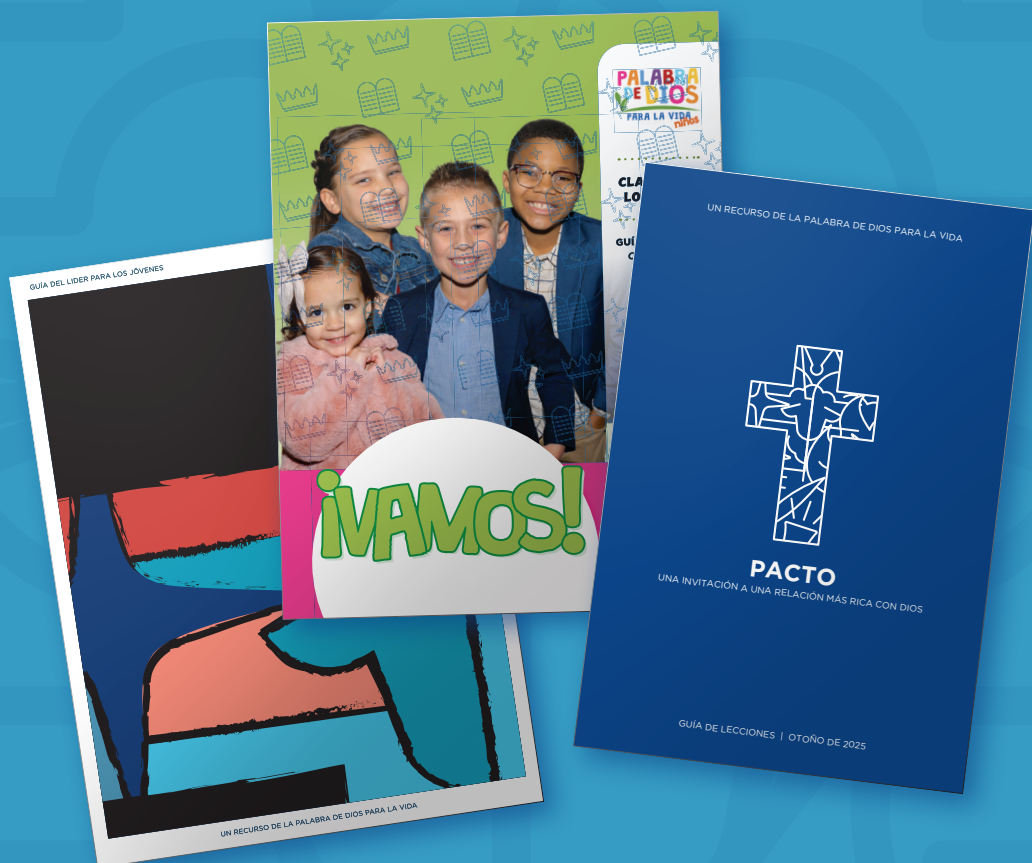
prowess of Ruth, and the rivalry between Boston and New York, a key detail is often omitted. Many do not know the colossally foolish reason Frazee traded Babe Ruth. The Red Sox owner wanted to finance a Broadway musical, and he owed a mortgage on Boston’s Fenway Park.

The long-term consequences of the Babe Ruth trade demonstrate how we must be extremely careful in our actions. Even our best logic may sometimes defy us. Perhaps Frazee assumed his team with five consecutive championships could continue its winning ways without Babe Ruth. Perhaps his desire to diversify his investments in the entertainment industry seemed promising, thinking he could make money off fans at games and audiences on Broadway.

Even though Frazee might have had some good reasons to support his decision, the results speak for themselves. Millions of Red Sox fans endured season after season of torturous misfortune. Worse yet, their archrivals continued to win championships. When we think of the trade of Babe Ruth and look at the story of Israel demanding a king, we see two cautionary narratives that warn us about the dangers of following our own designs or the designs of the world instead of God.

The Red Sox were not cursed by the trade, but we cannot ignore the fact that the Lord does set blessings and curses before us. May we always choose wisely and live fully committed to God’s covenant plan and purpose for us and those around us.

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