BIBLE LESSON SUMMARIES
Heroes Of The Bible

Lesson # 1: Jesus Christ
“So God created man in his own image…” (Genesis 1:27). In this lesson we’ll talk about how God has revealed himself through the character and qualities of His Son Jesus Christ.

Exploring the Bible helps the kids explore some of these qualities so that they may know better how God wants them to live.

Lesson # 2: Noah
“Noah was a righteous man, blameless in his generation, and he walked with God” (Genesis 6:9). Today we’ll talk about the qualities and courage that had Noah finding favor in the eyes of God.

Exploring the Bible centers around helping the kids practice obedience.

Lesson # 3: Abraham (Part 1)
“The Lord said to Abram, “Leave your country, your people and your father’s household and go to the land I will show you. I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you” (Genesis 12:1-2). Today we’ll talk about Abraham’s faith and obedience for which God greatly rewarded him.

Exploring the Bible helps the kids to practice doing “the right thing.”

Lesson # 4: Abraham (Part 2)
“Yet he (Abraham) did not weaken through unbelief regarding the promise of God, but was strengthened in his faith and gave glory to God, being fully persuaded that God had the power to do what he promised” (Romans 4:20-21). Today we’ll talk about Abraham’s faith & courage when God asks him to sacrifice his only son Isaac.

Exploring the Bible encourages the kids to practice being courageous this week.

Lesson # 5: Joseph
“You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives” (Genesis 50:20). Today we’ll talk about the servant nature of Joseph that enabled him to go from being a slave to being the second in command in all of Egypt.

Exploring the Bible encourages the kids to practice having the attitude of a servant.

Lesson # 6: Moses (Part 1)
“Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. These commands I give to you today are to be upon your hearts” (Deuteronomy 6:5-6). In this lesson we’ll talk about the qualities of Moses that allowed him to deliver the Ten Commandments to the people of Israel.

Exploring the Bible helps the kids review the Ten Commandments and their meaning.

Lesson # 7: Moses (Part 2)
“Oh, that their hearts would be inclined to fear me and keep all my commands always, so that it might go well with them and their children forever” (Deuteronomy 5:29). Today’s lesson focuses on Moses’ fear (awe or reverence) of the Lord and how God used this fear to help Moses lead an entire nation.

Exploring the Bible helps the kids to learn the importance of reverence for God and to practice hearing His Word.
Lesson # 8: Joshua

“Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be terrified; do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go” (Joshua 1:9). Joshua was Moses’ assistant who was chosen by God to be Israel’s leader after Moses died. We’ll talk about Joshua’s qualities of faith, obedience, strength and courage that allowed him to take the nation of Israel into the land that God promised to give to Abraham and his descendants.

**Exploring the Bible** helps the kids practice making God’s Word living & active in their lives.

Lesson # 9: Gideon

“When the angel of the Lord appeared to Gideon, he said, “The Lord is with you, mighty warrior” (Judges 6:12). Gideon was one of the judges of Israel, who led the nation of Israel during the period of time between the death of Joshua and the ministry of Samuel. We’ll talk about Gideon’s qualities of availability, confidence in the Lord & humbleness that allowed God to use him to defeat the Midianites and restore peace to Israel.

**Exploring the Bible** challenges the kids to be available to God.

Lesson # 10: Samson

“...the boy is to be a Nazarite, set apart to God from birth, and he will begin the deliverance of Israel from the hands of the Philistines” ( Judges 13:5). Samson was one of the judges of Israel, who led the nation of Israel during the period of time between the death of Joshua and the ministry of Samuel. We’ll talk about Samson’s strength through God’s power that allowed the Lord to use him to defeat the Philistines and restore peace to Israel.

**Exploring the Bible** encourages the kids to explore the power and strength that they receive from the Holy Spirit as believers in Jesus Christ.

Lesson # 11: Ruth

“But Ruth replied, “Don’t urge me to leave you or to turn back from you. Where you go I will go, and where you stay I will stay. Your people will be my people and your God my God” (Ruth 1:16).

Ruth was the great grandmother of King David and an ancestor of Jesus. We’ll talk about Ruth’s qualities of love and devotion that God used in bringing about His plan of salvation to the world.

**Exploring the Bible** encourages the kids to be devoted to their family and to their friends.

Lesson # 12: Samuel

“And the boy Samuel continued to grow in stature and in favor with the Lord and with men” (1 Samuel 2:26). Samuel was the last judge of Israel and prophet whom God used to establish the kingship in Israel. Today we’ll talk about Samuel as a young boy and his devotion and service to God.

**Exploring the Bible** helps the kids to consider what their service to the Lord is.

Lesson # 13: Saul (Part 1)

“But the people refused to listen to Samuel. “No!” they said. We want a king over us. Then we will be like all the other nations, with a king to lead us and to go out before us and fight our battles” (1 Samuel 8:19-20).

Samuel anointed Saul as the first king of Israel. In Part 1 of this series we’ll talk about how God can change a person’s heart so that God’s plans will be accomplished. It also underscores the importance of obeying God - even if you’re an anointed king!

**Exploring the Bible** encourages the kids to trust in God’s power in their life.
LESSON # 14: Saul (Part 2)

“You acted foolishly,” Samuel said. “You have not kept the command the Lord your God gave you; if you had, he would have established your kingdom over Israel for all time. But now your kingdom will not endure; the Lord has sought out a man after his own heart and appointed him leader of his people, because you have not kept the Lord’s command” (1 Samuel 13:13-14). In Part 2 of this series we’ll talk about Saul’s disobedience to God and the consequence of his decision to disobey God.

Exploring the Bible encourages the kids to obey and heed God’s voice.

LESSON # 15: David (Part 1)

“The Lord does not look at the things man looks at. Man looks at the outward appearance but the Lord looks at the heart” (1 Samuel 16:7). Today we’ll meet David, a shepherd boy who God chose to be the next king of Israel.

Exploring the Bible encourages the kids to be a person after God’s own heart.

LESSON # 16: David (Part 2)

“David said to the Philistine, “You come against me with sword and spear and javelin, but I come against you in the name of the Lord Almighty, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied” (1 Samuel 17:45). Today’s lesson is an oldie but goodie - the story of David & Goliath. We’ll talk about David’s courage & trust in God.

Exploring the Bible encourages the kids to trust in God in all things - even GIANT problems!

LESSON # 17: David (Part 3)

“Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me” (Psalm 51:10). David wrote this Psalm after the prophet Nathan came to him after David committed adultery with Bathsheba. We’ll briefly talk about the story of David & Bathsheba but focus more on David’s repentance & the consequence of his actions.

Exploring the Bible encourages the kids to make good decisions.

LESSON # 18: Solomon (Part 1)

“I will do what you have asked. I will give you a wise and discerning heart, so that there will never have been anyone like you, nor will there ever have been. Moreover, I will give you what you have not asked for - both riches and honor - so that in your lifetime you will have no equal among kings. And if you walk in my ways and obey my statutes and commands as David your father did, I will give you a long life” (1 Kings 3:12-14). Solomon, King David’s son and successor to his throne as king of Israel, asked God for wisdom to govern the nation of Israel. Today we’ll talk about wisdom and its importance.

Exploring the Bible encourages the kids to value wisdom.

LESSON # 19: Solomon (Part 2)

“King Solomon was greater in riches and wisdom than all the other kings of the earth” (1 Kings 10:23). Even with all of Solomon’s wisdom, his heart turned away from the Lord. We’ll talk about Solomon’s achievements but also his disobedience to the Lord.

Exploring the Bible encourages the kids to remain faithful to God.

LESSON # 20: Elijah (Part 1)

“Ahab son of Omri did more evil in the eyes of the Lord than any of those before him” (1 Kings 16:30). Before we meet Elijah, we need a brief review of the history of the kings of Israel and Judah, from the time of Solomon’s death until Ahab arrives to become king of Israel. Then we’ll briefly meet Elijah and talk about why he was sent to Israel and King Ahab.
Exploring the Bible encourages the kids to learn and follow God’s commands.

Lesson # 21: Elijah (Part 2)
“As the Lord, the God of Israel, lives, whom I serve, there will be neither dew nor rain in the next few years except at my word” (I Kings 17:1). Today the prophet Elijah confronts king Ahab about abandoning God’s commands.

Exploring the Bible encourages the kids to be bold in their faith in the Lord.

Lesson # 22: Elijah (Part 3)
“How did Elijah know that God would send fire and burn up his sacrifice when he challenged the prophets of Baal? How was he sure that God would send rain again? How did Elijah develop such strong confidence in God? Today we’ll talk about some reasons why Elijah had such complete confidence in God.

Exploring the Bible encourages the kids to develop confidence in God and trust that the word of the Lord is true.

Lesson # 23: Job

Then the Lord said to Satan, “Have you considered my servant Job? There is no one on the earth like him; he is blameless and upright, a man who fears God and shuns evil. And he still maintains his integrity, even though you incited me against him to ruin him without any reason” (Job 2:3). Job was a man who did all that was right and was also very rich. But even after he lost everything he owned Job still maintained his integrity. Today we’ll talk about integrity and why it’s important.

Exploring the Bible encourages the kids to explore the truth of Scripture.

Lesson # 24: Nehemiah

“...O Lord, God of heaven, the great and awesome God, who keeps his covenant of love with those who love him and obey his commands, let your ear be attentive and your eyes open to hear the prayer your servant is praying before you day and night for your servants, the people of Israel...” (Nehemiah 1:5-6). Nehemiah returned from exile in Babylon in 445 BC. He went to Jerusalem and led the people in repairing the walls of the city. Today we’ll meet Nehemiah: a man of prayer.

Exploring the Bible encourages the kids to understand the importance of prayer.

Lesson # 25: Isaiah

“Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, “Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?” And I said, “Here am I. Send me!” (Isaiah 6:8). We’ll talk about some of the prophecies that Isaiah foretold about the Messiah, and the fulfillment of those prophecies in Jesus Christ.

Exploring the Bible encourages the kids to understand that fulfilled prophecy is one key to knowing that the Bible is true.

Lesson # 26: Jeremiah

“Get yourself ready! Stand up and say to them whatever I command you. Do not be terrified by them, or I will terrify you before them. Today I have made you a fortified city, an iron pillar and a bronze wall to stand against the whole land - against the kings of Judah, its officials, its priests and the people of the land” (Jeremiah 1:17-18). The prophet Jeremiah spoke to the people of Judah at the time of their exile to Babylon about their accountability to God. Today we’ll talk about standing up for God even in difficult situations.

Exploring the Bible encourages the kids to stand up for God.
Lesson # 27: Shadrach, Meshach & Abednego
“If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God we serve is able to save us from it, and he will rescue us from your hand, O king. But even if he does not, we want you to know, O king, that we will not serve your gods or worship the image of gold you have set up” (Daniel 3:17-18). Today we’ll meet three young men and talk about their loyalty and devotion to God.

Exploring the Bible encourages the kids to be loyal friends.

Lesson # 28: Daniel
“Now when Daniel learned that the decree had been published, he went home to his upstairs room where the windows opened toward Jerusalem. Three times a day he got down on his knees and prayed, giving thanks to his God just as he had done before” (Daniel 6:10). Another oldie but goodie - Daniel and the Lion’s Den. We’ll talk about being trustworthy and committed to serving God.

Exploring the Bible encourages the kids to be trustworthy & committed to serving God.

Lesson # 29: Jonah
“The word of the Lord came to Jonah son of Amittai: “Go to the great city of Nineveh and preach against it, because its wickedness has come up before me.” But Jonah ran away from the Lord...” (Jonah 1:1-3). In our Heroes of the Bible series this year, Jonah may be the person to who we can relate to the best. Jonah is at best a reluctant hero. We’ll talk about how God accomplished his purpose through Jonah, even though Jonah wanted no part of God’s plan for him.

Exploring the Bible encourages the kids to submit to God’s will for their lives.

Special Thanksgiving Lesson: Giving Thanks & Thanks Giving
“Give thanks to the Lord, call on his name, make known among the nations what he has done. Sing to him, sing praise to him; tell of all his wonderful acts.” (Psalm 105:1-2). Today we’re going to count our blessings – and then do something with them – give!

Exploring the Bible helps the kids think of ways to give in a new way!

Special Christmas Lesson: An Unforgettable Christmas Eve
“And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day, in the city of David, a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord” (Luke 2: 10-11). Senator John McCain shares the story of an unforgettable Christmas Eve in a POW Camp in the Vietnam War.

Exploring the Bible looks at the meaning of, "O Come All Ye Faithful."

Special Easter Lesson: The Dragon
“he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy” (Titus 3:5). A fictional story helps teach is the truth of Easter.

Exploring the Bible helps the kids understand the spiritual battle around us and why God had to send Jesus.

National Day of Prayer Lesson
“If my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land” (2 Chronicles 7:14). Instead of studying today, we’re going to be doing. We’re going to spend our lesson time praying to the God who created us and sustains us for the people of our country.

Exploring the Bible invites the kids to write a prayer for the people of our country.
**Story Time**

**One thing I do know. I was blind but now I see!** (John 9:25). The thought of “telling your story” – how Jesus Christ came into your life, can be a little uncomfortable. Perhaps you’re afraid of failing or that you won’t know what to say. But if Jesus Christ is in your life, you do have a story to tell, and learning how to tell your story may be just what it takes to bring the good news of Jesus Christ into someone’s life.

A special *Exploring the Bible* gives you ideas, suggestions and an outline to help you put your story together.
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Practice Makes Perfect!

Over the past 9 years we’ve helped organize hundreds of bible studies. And we’ve come up with a pretty good recipe that will help your families get the most out of your bible study.

Here’s a suggested outline for how to make your first bible study go smoothly:

• Invite Jesus to attend your bible study. Ask for His power and presence to work in and through each person gathered.
• If it’s a morning study, have some donuts (donuts are key) and juice on hand. If it’s an evening study, have some light snacks for the boys and dads before study begins.
• Start fairly promptly as some may have time constraints.
• We find that your study works best when the kids sit with their dads.
• Introduce yourself and then have the kids introduce themselves especially if there are some who do not know each other.
• Begin the bible study with an opening prayer. Ask if one of the kids or dads will pray - but don’t push too hard, since it may be uncomfortable or intimidating at first - even among the dads. One idea is to assign the opening and closing prayer to one of the dads and their child, so that they have time to get ready.
• As the group gets more comfortable with each other, we find that rotating the prayer around from week to week is a good way to get the kids and dads involved.
• Give a short description about the day’s lesson
• Lead-off with the discussion question & discuss it for a bit. Encourage your dads to participate in the discussion. We find that often dads will not say anything because it’s “a study for the kids.” But their participation is important.
• Go through the lesson at a comfortable pace for the group. If you don’t finish - it’s ok.
• End the study lesson promptly at the time mentioned. Twenty minutes of study is plenty. You may find that at times, less is better.
• Encourage the dads and kids to do the corresponding Exploring the Bible Worksheet each week, and leave time in your study for each child to give their answers.
• Encourage the kids to practice the quality or character trait emphasized in the day’s lesson during the week. Challenge them to share with the group at the next study about any situations where they had an opportunity to put into practice what they learned.
• Here’s a wonderful way to end each lesson: have each dad get with his child (or boy or girl he brings with him whose father is not there) and ask them to pray with each other. We have found that this is a wonderful way for a dad and child to learn to pray for each other. You may suggest that they ask each other what they would like prayer for that day.

Try the above recipe the first few times, and then if you need to, adjust it to meet your group’s needs.

Sample Bible Study Agenda

7:10 - 7:20 a.m.   Fellowship over donuts and juice
7:20 - 7:40 a.m.   Bible study lesson
7:40 - 7:50 a.m.   Exploring the Bible review
7:50 - 7:55 a.m.   Prayer between each dad and his child
7:55 -             Practice what you’ve learned!
### Heroes Of The Bible

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LESSON # 1: JESUS CHRIST

Today’s Lesson Verse
“Be imitators of God…” (Ephesians 5:1).

Questions
Who is one of you heroes? Why is he or she your hero?

Introduction
The following is an excerpt from President George W. Bush’ speech a couple of months following the September 11, 2001 attack on the Pentagon & World Trade Center:

“Americans have responded magnificently with courage and caring. We've seen it in our children who have sent in more than $1 million for the children of Afghanistan. We have seen it in the compassion of Jewish and Christian Americans who have reached out to their Muslim neighbors. We've seen it as Americans have reassessed priorities: parents spending more time with their children and many people spending more time in prayer and in houses of worship.

We have gained new heroes, those who ran into burning buildings to save others: our police and our firefighters.

Those who battle their own fears to keep children calm and safe: America's teachers.

Those who voluntarily place themselves in harm's way to defend our freedom: the men and women of the armed forces.

And tonight we join in thanking a whole new group of public servants who never enlisted to fight a war, but find themselves on the front lines of a battle nonetheless: those who deliver the mail, America's postal workers.

We also thank those whose quick response provided preventative treatment that has no doubt saved thousands of lives: our health care workers.

Countless Americans gave blood in the aftermath of the attacks. New Yorkers opened their homes to evacuated neighbors. We are waiting patiently in long security lines. Children across America have organized lemonade and cookie sales for children in Afghanistan. And we can do more.

Courage and optimism led the passengers on Flight 93 to rush their murderers to save lives on the ground - led by a young man whose last known words were the Lord's Prayer and, "Let's roll."

On September 11, America and many around the world were reintroduced to something that has all but vanished: Heroes. Firemen, police officers and other rescue workers sacrificed their lives so that others could have the chance to live. Men and women in the armed forces are defending our country all over the world. Postal workers are putting aside fears and delivering the mail.

Where else can we find heroes? At first, Moses said, “No!” Gideon said, “Why me?” and Jonah said, “I’m gettin’ outta here!” Heroes? You bet! In this lesson series, we’ll meet these and other men and women whose achievements, qualities and courage made them heroes then and make them heroes today.

Jesus Christ
(Philippians 2:6-11)

6 “Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped,
7 but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. 
8 And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death--
even death on a cross! 9Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name
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that is above every name, \(^\text{10}\) that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, \(^\text{11}\) and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”

Question: What is it that makes someone a hero? [A hero is a person who is admired for his qualities & achievements or one that has great courage].

We’re going to use this definition of the word “hero” as we apply the “hero test” to the men & women that we call “Heroes of the Bible.” We’re going to talk about their qualities, achievements and their courage that made them heroes then and why they are still heroes today.

Question: Who is the first hero mentioned in the Bible? [Jesus Christ].

The Bible says, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and The Word was God. He was with God in the beginning” (John 1:1-2).

Question: Who is the Word? [Jesus Christ].

Question: If Jesus Christ is the Word, and the Bible says that the Word is God; whom does that make Jesus? [Jesus Christ is God].

Question: Have you ever thought of Jesus as a hero? What reasons can you think of why Jesus is a hero? [Let’s look at His achievements, His qualities and His courage]:

His Achievements:

Jesus has achieved quite a few things since the beginning of time. In the Book of Revelation, it says, “You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things” (Revelation 4:11). The Scriptures also tell us that, “Jesus created all things and he holds all things together” (Colossians 1:16). In other words, without Jesus’ permission, nothing - not the world, or you or I, would exist or keep from falling apart.

The Bible also says, “Jesus did many other things as well. If every one of them were written down, I suppose that even the whole world would not have room for the books that would be written” (John 21:25).

Question: What other achievements can you think of that Jesus did? [Miracles, healing, teaching, and His sacrifice for you and me]. Jesus has achieved and continues to achieve great accomplishments. But achievements are only part of our definition of a hero. Let’s look at His qualities.

His Qualities:

Question: How can we know what God’s qualities are? [We can read about them all throughout the Bible]. We can know God’s qualities through Jesus Christ because “He is the image of the invisible God” (Colossians 1:15).

Question: Is there another place we can look? [Our lesson verse says, “So, God created man in His own image.” (Genesis 1:27).]

Question: What’s another word for image? [Another word for image is reflection or mirror or likeness].

God created you to have or reflect the same characteristics and qualities He has. When you draw or paint or build something, you create it the way you want it to be. When God creates, He creates the way He wants His creation to be.

Question: What are some of the qualities God has that He wants you to have? [Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, & self-control]. Jesus has all of these qualities and He wants you to have them as well.
His Courage:
The night before Jesus was crucified, Jesus and His disciples were at a place called Gethsemane, on a
beyond them, knelt down and prayed, “Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my
will, but yours be done.” An angel from heaven appeared to him and strengthened Him. And
being in anguish, he prayed more earnestly, and his sweat was like drops of blood falling to the
ground” (Luke 22:41-44).

Question: What is “the cup” that Jesus asks His Father to take from Him? [Enduring the crucifixion
and the separation from His Father that would last for a short while].

Why was Jesus about to be crucified? [Not for anything that he had done, but it was God’s plan that
He would become a sacrifice. Jesus Christ. All man. All God. Jesus – God in the flesh – would take all
the punishment that you and I deserve for our sins upon Himself. He paid the bill that we owe but can’t
pay it ourselves.

Question: Why would Jesus do this? [It’s the Good News – The Gospel].

The Gospel – by Bill Zukoski – Dallas, TX
In the fall of 2014 I was diagnosed with cancer. Doctors put me on an operating table and physically
removed the cancer from my body and put it in a place where it could no longer hurt me. But you and I
are more than just a physical body. We have an eternal soul that will live forever. And while cancer and
disease cannot hurt our soul, we have a much more serious condition than cancer that if not removed will
hurt us forever. That condition is called sin. A doctor cannot get it out of you. You cannot pray it out of
you. You cannot get rid of it by going to church and you cannot get rid of it by being a good enough
person -what’s good enough?

The Bible says that everyone has sinned (Romans 3:23) and that means spiritual death (Romans 6:23) –
separation from God forever.

But here’s the good news. The Bible says that “the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is
eternal life through Christ Jesus our Lord” (Romans 6:23).

And the Bible says, “If you openly declare that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God
raised him from the dead, you will be saved” (Romans 10:9).

This is the good news of the gospel. Only Jesus can remove sin from us. I asked Jesus rescue me. If
you’re hearing this today and have not asked Jesus to rescue you from your sin, you can say a simple
prayer right now if you’re ready:

“Father, I believe you love me. You gave your one and only Son so I can live forever with You. Apart
from you, I die. With you, I live. I choose life. I choose You. Please make me a part of your family.”

There have been and there are a lot of heroes in our world. In fact, the Bible is full of them. We’ll meet
many of them during the school year. But Jesus’ achievements, his qualities, and his courage make Him
the greatest hero the world has known or will ever know.

practice ministries  Dad’s and Kids Together in God’s Word 14
LES
Lesson # 2: Noah

Review

Last week's questions & memory verse

Today's Lesson Verse

“Noah was a righteous man, blameless in his generation, and he walked with God” (Genesis 6:9).

Quality

Obedience

Discussion Question

Have you ever been asked to do something big – really big? How did you feel when you first thought about doing it?

Introduction

There’s a story that a man named Bruce Wilkinson tells. He was speaking to some college students, and challenged them to go out and accomplish something big – really big in the area of telling people about Jesus Christ.

A week later Bruce received a letter from two students from the college where he spoke. These two guys had prayed that they would have a chance to talk to the governor of California about Jesus and decided to do it immediately – in fact the very same week that Mr. Wilkinson spoke! They got into their car, drove 400 miles to the capital. Here’s what happened: along the way, they also talked with 2 gas station attendants, 4 security guards, the governor’s secretary, and the governor about Jesus Christ!

But there’s more. Two students put together a team of 126 students and teachers, rented an airplane, and flew to Trinidad to put on vacation Bible school for thousands of people on that island!

I’ll bet none of these students had a clue that they could do so much for God; in fact, just thinking about doing something that big probably scared them to death. But as long as we make ourselves available to God, He can use us to do big - really big things for Him. Today, we’re going to talk about a Bible Hero that made himself available to God and obeyed Him.

Noah

(Text: Genesis 6:9-22)

“This is the account of Noah. Noah was a righteous man, blameless among the people of his time, and he walked with God. 10 Noah had three sons: Shem, Ham and Japheth. 11 Now the earth was corrupt in God's sight and was full of violence. 12 God saw how corrupt the earth had become, for all the people on earth had corrupted their ways. 13 So God said to Noah, “I am going to put an end to all people, for the earth is filled with violence because of them. I am surely going to destroy both them and the earth. 14 So make yourself an ark of cypress wood; make rooms in it and coat it with pitch inside and out. 15 This is how you are to build it: The ark is to be 450 feet long, 75 feet wide and 45 feet high. 16 Make a roof for it and finish the ark to within 18 inches of the top. Put a door in the side of the ark and make lower, middle and upper decks. 17 I am going to bring floodwaters on the earth to destroy all life under the heavens, every creature that has the breath of life in it. Everything on earth will perish. 18 But I will establish my covenant with you, and you will enter the ark-you and your sons and your wife and your sons’ wives with you. 19 You are to bring into the ark two of all living creatures, male and female, to keep them alive with you. 20 Two of every kind of bird, of every kind of animal and of every kind of creature that moves along the ground will come to you to be kept alive. 21 You are to take every kind of food that is to be eaten and store it away as food for you and for them." 22 Noah did everything just as God commanded him."
Question: What was Noah’s greatest accomplishment? [How many say it was building the ark? Building the ark was a great accomplishment! But Noah’s biggest achievement was the living the kind of life that found favor with God. Let’s talk about Noah a little bit.]

Question: Noah had 4 qualities that that found him favor with God. Do you remember what they are? [Noah was righteous, blameless, he walked with God, and he was obedient]. Noah lived obediently according to God’s standards, and lived according to God’s ways.

When the Bible refers to our hearts, it refers to the very inside part of us where our attitudes, our personalities, our feelings and emotions come from. Another name for our heart is our soul. Our heart makes us who we are. Noah followed God’s ways in his heart.

Noah Was Righteous

Question: What do you think being righteous means? [A lot of people think being righteous means, “I’m better than you” - but that’s not what it means].

No one person is “better” than another. The Bible says that we’ve all turned away from God. Noah understood this. He knew he wasn’t perfect, but he made a choice to turn back around and follow God’s way. Christians understand that we can only live a godly life because Jesus Christ gives us the power to do so.

Question: So what does “righteousness” mean? [Living according to what God says is right].

Noah obeyed God’s laws in his heart, in his thoughts and attitudes. He didn’t live like others around him who were living by their definition of right. Noah did it God’s way! The Bible says that it took 100 years for Noah to build that boat, and I’m sure that he was made fun of for living the way he did, even from people he considered to be good friends, for most of those 100 years!

Question: Do you think that Noah ever felt like listening to his friends and just forgetting the whole ark thing? [Probably].

Question: Do you think Noah was glad he stuck to following God’s way? [Yep. Especially right about the time the rain started coming].

Question: What's one way you can practice righteousness today? [Treating others with respect].

Noah Was Blameless

Next, the Bible says Noah was blameless.

Question: What do you think it means to be blameless? [No one can find fault or wrong in you]. And if Noah did do something wrong, he did the right thing by admitting his fault.

Question: What’s one way to practice being blameless today? [Be honest, kind]. It doesn’t mean you have to be perfect, but in your heart, it is following God’s ways.

Noah Walked With God

Question: The Bible says that Noah walked with God. What do you think that means? [When you walk along with someone, you’re spending time with that person].

Noah took the time to “hang out” with God. He spent time with God. He learned how to become a person that God was pleased with.

Question: How can you “hang out” with God? [By talking with Him about your day (prayer), reading the Bible and asking God to help you understand what it means for you].
Noah Was Obedient

**Question: What does obedience mean?** [The dictionary says it means to do what someone in charge says]. It means following directions or doing what’s asked of you, even if you don’t feel like doing it. It’s not easy, but it’s right to do it that way. But I’d like for you to hear another definition of obedience.

When the Bible talks about being obedient, it means, “getting to know and be like Jesus.” Isn’t that a much cooler meaning? It’s more than following a bunch of rules - do this or do that. Think about it for a moment. When you learned to ride a bike, you had training wheels, then when it was time to take those off, you probably wobbled a bit, but you were good enough to do it on your own. Then, the more you rode, the better you became. In fact, they say once you learn how, you never forget.

It’s the same thing with practicing obedience. As you practice God’s instructions, you get good at them; in fact, you get so good at them, you don’t even think about them. It’s kind of like learning how to ride that bike well. Obeying God changes you into being more like His Son Jesus.

**Question: What’s one way you can practice being obedient today?** [Do things as Jesus would do them]. That means you have to know how He would do them, which means you have to get to know Him, and the best way to do that is to “walk with Him.”

Noah chose to live a different kind of life than all the other people on earth. His life was one that God approved of. He chose to make good decisions by following the compass arrow that pointed straight toward God’s ways.

**Question: Which direction will you choose?**

The Bible says Noah walked with God. Walking with God means that Noah followed where God led Him. They talked, and listened to each other – just like you do with a friend. Do you have a relationship with God? The Bible says you can: “Look! I stand at the door and knock. If you hear my voice and open the door, I will come in, and we will share a meal together as friends” (Revelation 3:20). When you open the door of your life and ask Jesus to come in and make his home in your heart – because you want to – He will come in and He will be your God and your friend.

Just as Noah was given a big task, we are going to be instructed by God to obey Him when He asks us to do some BIG things in our lives. Count on it. But these are the times when we grow as a person. Trust in God. God will lead us in the right direction; help us make the right decision; help us say the right thing. There are times when it will be hard to obey God, but at those times, think about Noah. 100 years. But with God’s help Noah did it. And so can you.

Trust in God. Ask Him for the help you need to follow where He leads you or do what He’s asking you to do.
LESSON # 3: ABRAHAM (Part 1)

Review
Last week's questions & memory verse

Today’s Lesson Verse
“"The Lord said to Abram, “Leave your country, your people and your father’s household and go to the land I will show you. I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you” (Genesis 12:1-2).

Qualities
Faith & Obedience

Discussion Question
Have you ever moved to another city? How did you feel about moving?

Introduction
On December 28, 1944, after ten months of being in a Nazi Germany concentration camp, Corrie Ten Boom was released.

The Ten Boom family, all Christians, had provided a hiding place in their home for Jews who were being persecuted (badly treated) during World War II. Her family was eventually betrayed, and in return for their kindness, at age 59 along with her family, Corrie was put into a concentration camp. Her father and sister had died in those camps.

Corrie made a promise to God that if she were allowed to live, she would tell as many people about the love and forgiveness of Jesus as she could. Then God made her a promise: that she would reach far more people than she could imagine with the gospel message. For the next 30 years following her release she traveled to more than 60 countries, telling people about God’s love and faithfulness through her experiences while in prison. Among the 9 books she wrote, the most well known is The Hiding Place, an account of her arrest and time spent in prison.

Corrie said, “God has plans – not problems – for our lives.” Thousands of years ago, in a land that today is called Iran & Iraq, God appeared to a man named Abram. Abram was a descendant of Shem, one of Noah’s 3 sons. Abram had a wife named Sarai, and they had no children. On that day that God appeared to Abram, God told Abram of a plan for his life.

Question: When God appeared to Abram, what two things did He promise him? [1) The promise of many descendants & 2) The promise of a land, "the promised land" for his descendants to live in].

Abraham (Part 1)
(Text: Genesis 12:1-7)

“1 The LORD had said to Abram, “Leave your country, your people and your father’s household and go to the land I will show you. 2 “I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. 3 I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you.”

4 So Abram left, as the LORD had told him; and Lot went with him. Abram was seventy-five years old when he set out from Haran. 5 He took his wife Sarai, his nephew Lot, all the possessions they had accumulated and the people they had acquired in Haran, and they set out for the land of Canaan, and they arrived there. 6 Abram traveled through the land as far as the site of the great tree of Moreh at Shechem. At that time the Canaanites were in the land. 7 The LORD appeared to Abram and said, “To your offspring I will give this land.”

Question: When God appeared to Abram, what two things did He promise him? [1) The promise of many descendants & 2) The promise of a land, "the promised land" for his descendants to live in].
Question: What was the amazing thing about God’s promise of many descendants to Abraham? [At the time that God appeared to Abram, Abram and his wife were very old - maybe older than your grandma or grandpa - and they had no children].

Question: Did Abram ask for the promise that God gave to him? [No. God gave it to him as a gift].

We’ll talk about some reasons why God made His promise to Abram in a few moments. But before we continue talking about Abram, let’s talk about another promise that God has made.

Question: What is the amazing promise that God makes to you and me today? [The promise of eternal life through belief and faith in His Son Jesus Christ].

Question: What is so amazing about God’s promise of eternal life through Christ? [God gives it to us as a gift if we will simply ask for it and receive it].

Question: Do we deserve this gift from God? [No. We can’t do anything on our own to earn it. God offers this gift only because He wants us to have it].

Now, let’s continue our talk about Abram.

Question: What 3 qualities did Abram have that gives us a clue as to why God chose Abram to receive this wonderful promise? [Abram’s qualities of faith, obedience & righteousness].

Faith & Obedience

Question: What is faith? [The Bible says, “Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see” (Hebrews 11:1)].

Question: What is a good example of faith? [A good example of faith is that you are sitting in the chair you’re in right now. Did you check the chair out to make sure it would hold you, or did you just sit down? You have faith that the chair will hold you. You are more than hopeful, you are sure of it. That’s faith].

Our first clue about Abram’s faith is this, “So Abram left, as the Lord told him...” (Genesis 12:4). Put yourself in Abram’s place and imagine that God appears to you! He tells you and your family to pack up all of your stuff and move to a place that you’ve never been to. In fact, you don’t even know where you’re going to end up!

Question: Would you have the faith to leave your home, your neighborhood, your friends & relatives and without knowing where you’re going?

Question: Why do you think that Abram had the faith to leave his house and his friends and his country? [Listen to what the Scriptures say about Abram (his name was later changed to Abraham), “By faith Abraham, when called to go to a place he would later receive as his inheritance, obeyed and went, even though he did not know where he was going” (Hebrews 11:8)]. Even though Abraham did not know exactly what God had planned for him, he was sure that God would provide everything he and his family needed to accomplish what God wanted him to do.

Abraham recognized & respected God’s authority over his life and accepted it. Because Abraham respected God’s authority in his life, he could obey what God wanted him to do. Abraham’s faith allowed him to obey God.

Question: What are some things that God wants you to have faith in Him about? [Needs your family has, help in making good decisions].

Question: In what areas does God want your obedience? [Living according to His Word, obeying your parents]. If you remember from our last lesson (Noah, lesson #2) obedience means more than just doing what you’re told; it also means getting to know and be more like Jesus.
Righteousness

Question: Do you recall what righteousness is? [Righteousness is doing what is right in God’s eyes].

The Bible says that, “For I (God) have chosen him [Abraham], so that he will direct his children and his household after him to keep the way of the Lord by doing what is right and fair” (Genesis 18:19).

A new nation was about to begin. God needed a man who would do what was right and teach his children to do the same. Abraham’s qualities of faith & obedience in God, led him to do what is right in the eyes of God. And because of this, God chose him to become the father of the nation of Israel.

Question: Could God choose you today to be the father of a nation?

Question: How can you learn to do what is right in God’s eyes? [Learn & practice living by God’s Word, ask God what is right & fair, learn from parents, pastors, teachers, coaches who teach God’s Word].
Review
Last week’s questions & memory verse

Today’s Lesson Verse
"Yet he (Abraham) did not weaken through unbelief regarding the promise of God, but was strengthened in his faith and gave glory to God, being fully persuaded that God had the power to do what he promised" (Romans 4:20-21).

Qualities
Courage

Discussion Question
If your home was on fire, and (assuming all of your family & pets got out of the house safely) you only had time to grab one possession on your way out, what would that one possession be?

Review
Question: Do you remember what our definition of a hero is? [A hero is a person who is admired for his or her achievements & / or great courage].

In last week’s lesson (Abraham Part 1), we talked about Abraham’s qualities of faith & obedience that led him to do what is right in the eyes of God. And because God knew that Abraham would do what was right & teach his children to do the same, God chose him to become the father of the nation of Israel!

Introduction
Crews of the NASA space shuttles engage in glamorous and important missions having included transporting the Spacelab scientific workshop into space, launching the Hubble Space Telescope and other scientific and defense related satellites into orbit.

But orbiting at speeds of 17,500 miles per hour (5 miles per second) and altitudes of 155 to 600 miles above the earth has its risks. On January 28, 1986, the Space Shuttle Challenger exploded shortly after takeoff, killing all seven astronauts.

Rick Husband, commander of the Space Shuttle Columbia knew those risks when he signed up to be an astronaut, and on February 1, 2003, he was among the seven astronauts killed when the spacecraft Columbia broke apart over North Texas just 16 minutes from landing in Florida.

But as dangerous as his work was, Rick did something even more courageous every day. Listen to his words that have become his legacy: "If I ended up at the end of my life having been an astronaut, but having sacrificed my family along the way or living my life in a way that didn’t glorify God, then I would look back on it with great regret…what really meant the most to me was to try and live my life the way God wanted me to and to try and be a good husband to Evelyn and to be a good father to my children."

Rick had the courage to be a godly husband and a godly father. He led a weekly prayer group for fathers called "Dads in the Gap." He had the courage to make his relationship with Jesus Christ as his number one priority and honor God with his life. Today, we’ll see how Abraham had the courage to honor God and as a result, leave an incredible legacy.

Abraham (Part 2)
“Now the LORD was gracious to Sarah as he had said, and the LORD did for Sarah what he had promised. 2 Sarah became pregnant and bore a son to Abraham in his old age, at the very time God had promised him. 3 Abraham gave the name Isaac to the son Sarah bore him. 4 When his
son Isaac was eight days old, Abraham circumcised him, as God commanded him. 5 Abraham was a hundred years old when his son Isaac was born to him.

2:1 Some time later God tested Abraham. He said to him, "Abraham!"
"Here I am," he replied. 2 Then God said, "Take your son, your only son, Isaac, whom you love, and go to the region of Moriah. Sacrifice him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains I will tell you about."

Question: Why did God ask Abraham to sacrifice his son Isaac? [To test him].

Question: Why do you think that God chose to test Abraham this way? [To see how much Abraham really loved Him. God needed a man who would obey Him completely without reservation].

3 Early the next morning Abraham got up and saddled his donkey. He took with him two of his servants and his son Isaac. When he had cut enough wood for the burnt offering, he set out for the place God had told him about. 4 On the third day Abraham looked up and saw the place in the distance. 5 He said to his servants, "Stay here with the donkey while I and the boy go over there. We will worship and then we will come back to you."

6 Abraham took the wood for the burnt offering and placed it on his son Isaac, and he himself carried the fire and the knife. As the two of them went on together, 7 Isaac spoke up and said to his father Abraham, "Father?"
"Yes, my son?" Abraham replied. "The fire and wood are here," Isaac said, "but where is the lamb for the burnt offering?"

8 Abraham answered, "God himself will provide the lamb for the burnt offering, my son." And the two of them went on together.

9 When they reached the place God had told him about, Abraham built an altar there and arranged the wood on it. He bound his son Isaac and laid him on the altar, on top of the wood. 10 Then he reached out his hand and took the knife to slay his son. 11 But the angel of the LORD called out to him from heaven, "Abraham! Abraham!"
"Here I am," he replied.

12 "Do not lay a hand on the boy," he said. "Do not do anything to him. Now I know that you fear God, because you have not withheld from me your son, your only son."

Question: What did the angel mean when he said, "Now I know that you [Abraham] fear God"? [To fear God is to have a deep respect for God. It's the kind of respect that allows you to trust that what God says is right and is what's best for you. God needed Abraham to understand just how much he needed to trust in Him].

13 Abraham looked up and there in a thicket he saw a ram caught by its horns. He went over and took the ram and sacrificed it as a burnt offering instead of his son. 14 So Abraham called that place The LORD Will Provide. And to this day it is said, "On the mountain of the LORD it will be provided."

15 The angel of the LORD called to Abraham from heaven a second time 16 and said, "I swear by myself, declares the LORD, that because you have done this and have not withheld your son, your only son, 17 I will surely bless you and make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and as the sand on the seashore. Your descendants will take possession of the cities of their
enemies, and through your offspring all nations on earth will be blessed, because you have obeyed me."

**Question:** Did God really want Abraham to sacrifice Isaac? [No].

**Question:** What did God want from Abraham? [God wanted his obedience].

**Question:** What does God want from you? [God wants your obedience]. God wants you to say, “Here I am, Lord.” What do you want me to do for You?"

**Question:** What examples of courage did Abraham show in this Bible story? [To obey God when he didn’t want to, to trust God even though he didn’t understand what God’s plan was]. It takes courage to do what God asks you to do sometimes. It may even mean standing alone for God when no one else will. But you can give honor to God by doing the right thing and obey His Word.

**Question:** What does it mean to bring glory or honor to God? [If you bring glory to God, it means that you’re directing people’s attention toward God]. Abraham brought glory to God by doing what was right.

**Question:** How can you be courageous & bring glory to God today? [Wear a Christian T-shirt, pray at the lunch table, decide to obey God even if some say it’s unpopular, invite a friend to go to church with you].

**Question:** Because Abraham had the courage to believe in God’s promise, all the nations on this earth have been blessed. How have you and I been blessed by Abraham’s courage? [You see, Abraham was the father of Isaac, and Isaac was the father of Jacob (whose name was later changed to Israel) and one of Jacob’s sons was Judah, and from Judah’s descendants came King David, and from King David’s descendants came Joseph, the husband of Mary whose baby was named Jesus].

**Question:** What is the blessing that we have received? [The reward of eternal life through faith and trust in Jesus Christ, God’s only Son].

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The Gospel – by Michael Denton – Dallas, TX

I grew up with this story and still have my "I'm Third" card from over 30 years ago:

It was a little after nine on the morning of June 7, 1958, and the destination of the Air National Guard's jet precision team was the Wright-Patterson Air Force Base, just outside Dayton (Ohio).

On the ground, thousands looked upward as Colonel Walt Williams, leader of the Denver-based Sabre Jet team, gauged a high-speed pullout. For the Minute Men pilots - Colonel Williams, Captain Bob Cherry, Lieutenant Bob Odle, Captain John Ferrier, and Major Win Coomer - the maneuver was routine, for they had given their show hundreds of times before millions of people.

Judging his pull-up, Colonel Williams pressed the microphone button on top of his throttle: "Smoke on -- how!" The diamond of planes pulled straight up into the turquoise sky, a bush tail of white smoke pluming out behind. The crowd gasped as the four ships suddenly split apart, rolling to the four points of the compass and leaving a beautiful, smoky fleur-de-lis inscribed on the heavens. This was the Minute Men's famed "flower burst" maneuver.

Out on the end of his stem of the flower, Colonel Williams turned his Sabre hard, cut off the smoke trail, and dropped the nose of his F86 to pick up speed for the low-altitude crossover maneuver. Then, glancing back over his shoulder, he froze in terror. Far across the sky to the east, John Ferrier's plane
was rolling, out of control. He was in trouble, and his plane was headed right for the small town of Fairborn, on the edge of Patterson Field.

Steering his jet in the direction of the crippled plane to race after it, Williams radioed urgently, "Bail out, John! Get out of there!" Ferrier still had plenty of time and room to eject safely. Twice more Williams issued the command: "Bail out, Johnny! Bail out!" Each time, Williams was answered only by a blip of smoke. He understood immediately. John Ferrier couldn't reach the mike button on the throttle because both hands were tugging on a control stick locked in full-throw right. But the smoke button was on the stick, so he was answering the only way he could - squeezing it to tell Walt he thought he could keep his plane under enough control to avoid crashing into the houses of Fairborn. Suddenly, a terrible explosion shook the earth. Then silence. Walt Williams continued to call through the radio, "Johnny? Are you there? Captain, answer me!"

No response.

Captain John T. Ferrier's Sabrejet had hit the ground midway between four houses, in a backyard garden. It was the only place where he could have crashed without killing people. The explosion had knocked a woman and several children to the ground, but no one had been hurt, with the exception of Johnny Ferrier. He had been killed instantly.

An elderly man with tears in his eyes, later told Major Coomer, "When the pilot started to roll, he was headed straight for us. For a second, we looked right at each other. Then he pulled up right over us and put it in there - this man died for us."

God first, others second, and himself third. John Ferrier sacrificed his life for people he had never met. Jesus Christ sacrificed his life as a gift to the world so that those who accept His gift will live with Him forever. Have you accepted this gift from Jesus? If not, you can do so by asking Jesus to rescue you from a life apart from Him.
LESSON # 5: JOSEPH

Review
Last week's questions & memory verse

Today’s Lesson Verse
“You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives” (Genesis 50:20).

Qualities
Being a Servant

Discussion Question
When did something happen that you thought was bad at the time, but actually turned out to be good?

Introduction
William Booth was a Methodist minister, who took Christ’s command to ‘feed my sheep’ literally. His philosophy was that there is little point in preaching ‘salvation’ to hungry people, so the concept of ‘soup and salvation’ took hold. In July of 1865, Booth began preaching on the streets in the slums of London. Thieves, prostitutes, gamblers, and drunkards became Christians. His aim was to lead them to Christ and link them to a church for continued spiritual guidance.

Even though Booth’s followers became Christians, churches did not accept them because of what they had been. However, Booth gave their lives direction in both a spiritual and practical manner and put them to work to save others who were like themselves. They also preached in the streets as a living testimony to the power of God.

In 1867, Booth had only 10 full-time workers serving under the name of “The Christian Mission.” By 1874, the numbers had grown to 1,000 volunteers and 42 preachers, and the Mission had a new name: The Salvation Army. The church spread out of the east end of London into neighboring areas and then to other cities. Booth laid a firm foundation for the organization. Today, The Salvation Army serves people in 103 countries.

Before he retired, Booth addressed the members of the Salvation Army one last time. His address consisted of one word: Others.

Today’s lesson is about another man whose life is remembered for being a servant.

Background
Joseph was the son of Jacob and grew up on a farm along with his 11 brothers (and 1 sister – Dinah). Joseph’s grandpa was Isaac and his great-grandpa was Abraham. Jacob loved Joseph more than any of his other sons and Joseph’s brothers were jealous of him. In fact, they hated him and couldn’t speak a kind word to him.

It didn’t help matters any that Joseph told his brothers & father & mother that he had dreams where they all bowed low to the ground before him. So his brothers hated him even more. So one-day Joseph’s brothers plotted to kill him but instead, they grabbed him and sold him to some Ishmaelites (cousins of the Israelites – sort of like the Hatfields & the McCoys) who were on their way to Egypt. So Joseph was taken down to Egypt as a slave and Potiphar, who was the police chief of Egypt, bought Joseph from the Ishmaelites and took him to his house.

What Joseph didn’t realize at the time was that God had a big job for him to do, and once he was in Egypt, God put him to work right away.
Joseph
(Text: Excerpts from Genesis 37-50)

"2 The Lord was with Joseph and he prospered, and he lived in the house of his Egyptian master. 3 When his master saw that the Lord was with him and that the Lord gave him success in everything he did, 4 Joseph found favor in his eyes and became his attendant. Potiphar put him in charge of his household, and he entrusted to his care everything he owned."

Question: What was Joseph's first promotion? [He was made head of Potiphar's household].

Question: Why was Joseph promoted? [Joseph was responsible with what he was given to do, so much so that Potiphar trusted Joseph with everything that he owned].

Not too long after this Mrs. Potiphar tried to engage Joseph in improper behavior with her several times, but he always resisted saying, "How could I do such a wicked thing and sin against God?" (Genesis 39:9). Mrs. Potiphar became angry with Joseph for refusing her and then told lies that Joseph tried to hurt her to Mr. Potiphar. When Mr. Potiphar heard her story, he had Joseph thrown into jail.

Question: Why did Joseph resist Mrs. Potiphar even though it meant getting thrown in jail? [Joseph knew that engaging in improper behavior with Mrs. Potiphar would displease God and would be a sin against Him. Even though he got into trouble, Joseph wanted to obey God above all else].

"...But while Joseph was there in the prison, 21 the Lord was with him; he showed him kindness and granted him favor in the eyes of the prison warden. 22 So the warden put Joseph in charge of all those held in the prison, and he was made responsible for all that was done there" (Genesis 39:20-22).

Question: What was Joseph's second promotion? [He was put in charge of all the prisoners and all that they did].

Question: How did Joseph turn something bad into something good? [Again, despite the circumstances, he was responsible and did a good job with what he was given to do].

The next job for Joseph was a little bigger. Pharaoh, ruler of Egypt said to Joseph,

"...there is no one so discerning and wise as you. 40 You shall be in charge of my palace, and all my people are to submit to your orders. Only with respect to the throne will I be greater than you." 41 So Pharaoh said to Joseph, "I hereby put you in charge of the whole land of Egypt" (Genesis 41:39-41).

Question: What was Joseph's third promotion? [He was made second in command of all Egypt]!

Question: Why was Joseph promoted to second in command of all of Egypt? [Because of his wisdom and knowledge].

Question: Once a slave, Joseph worked his way up to the position of second in command of all Egypt. Joseph had four qualities that allowed him to achieve all that he did. From what we've talked about can you think of what they are? [Faithfulness, humbleness, being a good steward, wisdom].

Faithfulness
Joseph was faithful to God in all that he did (and didn't do)! He made a decision to honor God with his conduct and stood against wickedness.
Question: How can you choose to make a stand for God today? [Avoid what is wrong and do what is right].

Humbleness
"15 Pharaoh said to Joseph, "I had a dream, and no one can interpret it. But I have heard it said of you that when you hear a dream you can interpret it."
16 "I cannot do it," Joseph replied to Pharaoh, "but God will give Pharaoh the answer he desires" (Genesis 41:15-16).

Joseph humbled himself and gave credit to God for all things because he knew that it was God who gave him wisdom and understanding.

Question: What can you give God credit for in your life today? [Health, abilities to think, providing for your needs].

Responsibility
"From the time he put him in charge of his household and of all that he owned, the Lord blessed the household of the Egyptian because of Joseph. The blessing of the Lord was on everything Potiphar had, both in the house and in the field. 6 So he left in Joseph's care everything he had; with Joseph in charge, he did not concern himself with anything…” (Genesis 39:5-6).

Joseph was responsible with everything that he was given to do.

Question: With what can you be responsible with today? [Chores, homework, being ready on time].

Question: Why is it important to do a good job with simple responsibilities? [To prepare you for larger responsibilities as you are able to do them, to earn the trust of parents, teachers, friends, coaches who give them to you].

Wisdom
"And now let Pharaoh look for a discerning and wise man and put him in charge of the land of Egypt. 34 Let Pharaoh appoint commissioners over the land to take a fifth of the harvest of Egypt during the seven years of abundance. 35 They should collect all the food of these good years that are coming and store up the grain under the authority of Pharaoh, to be kept in the cities for food. 36 This food should be held in reserve for the country, to be used during the seven years of famine that will come upon Egypt, so that the country may not be ruined by the famine."

37 The plan seemed good to Pharaoh and to all his officials. 38 So Pharaoh asked them, "Can we find anyone like this man, one in whom is the spirit of God ?” 39 Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, “Since God has made all this known to you, there is no one so discerning and wise as you. 40 You shall be in charge of my palace, and all my people are to submit to your orders. Only with respect to the throne will I be greater than you” (Genesis 41:33-40).

Through wisdom Joseph saved an entire country from starvation from a severe famine and saved many lives.

Question: Do you remember what wisdom is? [Wisdom is knowing what is right according to God and using that knowledge correctly].

Question: Where does wisdom come from? [The Bible says, “For the Lord gives wisdom, and from his mouth come knowledge and understanding” (Proverbs 2:6)].

Question: What did Joseph learn about serving God? [Joseph realized that he could serve God whether he was at home farming, or being a slave, or being second in command of all Egypt].
Question: How did Joseph become great? [Joseph did not become great by waiting for other people to serve him and his desires, he became great because he was a servant and did what God wanted him to do.]

Listen to what Jesus said, “26 Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, 27 and whoever wants to be first must be your slave— 28 just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many” (Matthew 20:26-28).

Question: How can you become a great person? [By serving others].

Question: How can you be a servant today?
• At home
• At school
• In activities
• At church
LESSON # 6: MOSES & THE TEN COMMANDMENTS

Review
Last week’s questions & memory verse

Today’s Lesson Verse
“Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. These commands I give to you today are to be upon your hearts” (Deuteronomy 6:5-6).

Qualities
Powerful in speech & action

Discussion Question
If you could suggest one rule that people should live by, what would that rule be?

Introduction
Dwight Moody was one of history’s most influential servants for God. He traveled over 1,000,000 miles, spoke to more than 100,000,000 people, and led millions of people into a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. On one day in Chicago, more than 130,000 people attended one of his services. Perhaps he is best known today for establishing the Moody Bible Institute in Chicago.

At age 23, Moody was led to minister to poor immigrants in the inner city of Chicago. He spoke to people in lecture halls and theaters. He was able to reach people who otherwise would not visit a church. He was popular and successful. But there’s another reason why he was so successful. He continually asked God to fill him with His Spirit. One day God revealed Himself to Moody in such a way that Moody had to ask God to “stay His hand.”

After that experience Moody said, “I went to preaching again. The sermons were not different; I did not present any new truths, and yet hundreds were converted. I would not now be placed back where I was before that blessed experience if you should give me all the world.”

As God made Dwight Moody a powerful speaker, so God made Moses a powerful speaker and leader.

Background
Three months after leaving Egypt, Moses and the Israelites came from the wilderness to the desert and camped in front of a big mountain called Mt. Sinai. God called to Moses from the mountain and said, “I want to give you some instructions that you must take to the people,” and God gave Moses the Ten Commandments.

Moses was sent to be Israel’s deliverer by God, and Moses led all the families of Israel out of Egypt by doing wonders and miraculous signs in Egypt and at the Red Sea. There were about 2 million people in the Exodus (meaning “exit” or “departure”) and Moses took them on a journey through the wilderness.

On the third day after camping at Mount Sinai, Moses prepared to meet with the Lord on Mount Sinai in the sight of all the people.

Moses & The Ten Commandments
(Text: Excerpts from Exodus 19, Exodus 20:1-17)
“The Lord said to Moses, “I am going to come to you in a dense cloud, so that the people will hear me speaking with you and will always put their trust in you.” 16 On the morning of the third day there was thunder and lightning, with a thick cloud over the mountain, and a very loud trumpet blast. Everyone in the camp trembled. 17 Then Moses led the people out of the camp to meet with God, and they stood at the foot of the mountain. 18 Mount Sinai was covered with smoke, because the Lord descended on it in fire. The smoke billowed up from it like smoke from a furnace, the
whole mountain trembled violently, and the sound of the trumpet grew louder and louder. Then Moses spoke and the voice of God answered him..."

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Note: Have the group read the commandments one at a time, and after reading each commandment ask the group what it means. (The Ten Commandments are found in Exodus 20:3-17).

1. You shall have no other gods before me.
   To worship God alone.  God wants to be #1 in your life.
2. You shall not make for yourself an idol in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below.  You shall not bow down to them or worship them.  Worship God only in the ways He has told us to.
3. You shall not misuse the name of the Lord your God.
   Honor God’s name by the way you act or talk.
4. Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy.  Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God.  On it you shall not do any work...For in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but He rested on the seventh day.
   Take a day of rest as a gift from God and use it to honor God.
5. Honor your father and your mother.
   Honor and respect our parents.
6. You shall not murder.
   Respect the lives of others.
7. You shall not commit adultery.
   Honor God with our bodies; keep our thoughts, words and actions pure.
8. You shall not steal.
   Respect the property of others.
9. You shall not give false testimony against your neighbor (Do not lie).
   God wants you to love truth and live truthfully.
10. You shall not covet anything that belongs to your neighbor.
    Be content with what you have.

Question: Why did God give Israel the Ten Commandments?  [To teach the people of Israel how to love God and how to love each other].

Question: Why was Moses chosen by God to lead Israel and give the Ten Commandments to the people of Israel?  [Moses had three qualities: wisdom, leadership & a deep respect for God].

Wisdom
"Moses was educated in all the wisdom of the Egyptians and was powerful in speech and action” (Acts 7:22).  Moses was perhaps the most educated man in all of Israel & was a powerful leader.

Question: Why did Moses need wisdom?  [Moses taught the people of Israel God’s laws & commands.  Moses was also judge for the nation of Israel (Exodus 18:20)].

Question: Who are leaders in our nation today that need wisdom?  [Our President, judges, senators, representatives, police chiefs].
**Question:** Why do your parents need wisdom? [To teach you right from wrong, to help you make good decisions, to teach you God’s Word].

**Question:** Why do you need wisdom? [To know what is right according to God and to make good decisions].

**Leadership**

**Question:** How did Moses teach God’s commands? [By example].

**Question:** What made Moses a good leader? [Moses showed the people of Israel how to live. God needed a man who could best lead by example. Would God have chosen anyone who would not live by the Ten Commandments to deliver them?].

**Question:** Dads: What can you do to be a good leader? [Set a good example]. The Bible says, “Don’t let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for the believers in speech, in life, in love, in faith and in purity” (1 Timothy 4:12).

**Question:** Kids: What can you do to be a good leader? [Learn to make good decisions, know right from wrong and choose to do right, be responsible].

**Fear Of The Lord**

**Question:** What is the fear of the Lord? [A deep respect for God]. It is this fear of the Lord that allowed Moses to develop the qualities that God needed him to have to lead the nation of Israel. We’ll talk about Moses and the fear of the Lord in our next lesson.

Moses is a “Super Hero” of the Bible. Moses was well educated, wise and powerful in both speech and action. The people of Israel were living in slavery in Egypt and God chose Moses to lead His people out of the land of slavery to freedom. God then gave Moses the Ten Commandments – The Law – to help Israel live the right way. But if a person broke the law – even one wrong thought or action – meant they were law breakers. And the punishment for breaking the law meant separation from the rest of the people.

It’s a true story, but this story in the Bible also represents a larger truth. Just as the people of Israel were enslaved with no hope of rescue unless someone came to help them, we are enslaved by sin, and when we sin – when we break God’s rules as set out in The Law – even once – we deserve punishment. And that punishment is separation forever from God – death.

BUT – thanks be to God there is another Super Hero who is greater than Moses – Jesus. He lived a perfect life, never breaking the law once. And Jesus, the perfect man, the Son of God, died to take away the punishment you and I deserve for our sins, so we don’t have to be separated from God. Jesus is the only way to have a relationship with God.

If the Israelisites had never trusted followed Moses out of Egypt, they would still be slaves. If you never trust Jesus to take your sin away from you, you will still be a slave to sin forever. If you want to be freed from your sin, trust that what Jesus did for you is enough, and decide to receive Him as your Lord and Savior: Jesus – thank you for dying for me so that I can be freed from the land of slavery to sin. Help me now to live a life according to your ways.
LESSON # 7: MOSES & THE FEAR OF THE LORD

Review
Last week’s questions & memory verse

Today’s Lesson Verse
“Oh, that their hearts would be inclined to fear me and keep all my commands always, so that it might go well with them and their children forever” (Deuteronomy 5:29).

Qualities
Fear of the Lord

Introduction
He once crossed the continent of Africa, 4,390 miles, from east to west, mostly on foot. All together he had traveled 29,000 miles in Africa. He discovered several lakes and rivers including Victoria Falls. His letters and reports had made him a national hero in England and his native Scotland. He left England in 1865, planning to return in two years. Now, six years later, he was missing in Africa’s interior.

In October 1869, James Bennett Jr., editor of the New York Herald ordered reporter Henry Morton Stanley to lead an expedition into the African wilderness to find the explorer. Stanley assembled a large expedition and set off from Zanzibar in March 1871. He had heard rumors that a white man had been seen near Ujiji, some 750 miles inland. After traveling for over 200 days, Stanley had battled cerebral malaria, starvation and dysentery. By trip’s end, two-thirds of the expedition's porters had deserted or died.

On November 10th, according to his journal, Stanley finally arrived in Ujiji. An old man pushed through a crowd surrounding Stanley. He stepped up crisply to the old man, removed his helmet and extended his hand. Stanley spoke, according to later accounts, the most dignified words that came to mind: “Dr. Livingstone, I presume?”

“Yes,” was the simple reply.

While Livingstone’s explorations made him a national hero, excerpts from his journal show what his explorations cost him: frequent sicknesses, long, weary marches, supplies stolen or lost, the deaths of his wife and more than one of his children. But his great purpose in all his exploring was to open the way for the Gospel in Africa. In a letter to his father he wrote: “For a long time I have felt much depressed after preaching the unsearchable riches of Christ to apparently insensible hearts; but ...I know the Gospel is the power of God – the great means which He employs for the regeneration of our ruined world.”

Dr. Livingstone had a fear of the Lord that enabled him to endure hardship and achieve mighty works for God. Today we’ll continue to meet Moses, whose fear of the Lord helped him become the leader of the nation of Israel.

Review
Three months after the people of Israel left Egypt - to the very day - they came to a desert called Sinai and camped there in the desert in front of a mountain called Mount Sinai.

“Then Moses went up to God, and the Lord called to him from the mountain and said... ‘I am going to come to you in a dense cloud, so that the people will hear me speaking with you and will always put their trust in you’ ” (Exodus 19:9).

On the third day after camping at Mount Sinai, Moses prepared to meet with the Lord on Mount Sinai in the sight of all the people. And God gave Moses the Ten Commandments.
“Go near and listen to all that the LORD our God says. Then tell us whatever the LORD our God tells you. We will listen and obey.” 28 [Moses said] The LORD heard you when you spoke to me and the LORD said to me, “I have heard what this people said to you. Everything they said was good. 29 Oh, that their hearts would be inclined to fear me and keep all my commands always, so that it might go well with them and their children forever! 30 “Go, tell them to return to their tents. 31 But you stay here with me so that I may give you all the commands, decrees and laws you are to teach them to follow in the land I am giving them to possess.” 32 So be careful to do what the LORD your God has commanded you; do not turn aside to the right or to the left. 33 Walk in all the way that the LORD your God has commanded you, so that you may live and prosper and prolong your days in the land that you will possess.”

Question: Do you recall what the fear of the Lord is? [The fear of the Lord is a deep respect for God].

Question: Why did God want the people of Israel to deeply respect Him? [So they would keep His commands].

Question: Why is it important to keep God’s commands today? [God knows that people work best when we live according to His Words and commands].

Next time you wash your hair, take a look at the directions on the shampoo bottle. The directions will say something like, “for best results…” When a product is made, it is made to work best when the instructions are followed, because of how the product is designed. As people, we “work” best when we follow God’s instructions because that’s how He designed us.

Question: What are some of God’s commands that He wants us to keep today? [Love God and others, live truthfully, be pure].

Moses’ Leadership

Question: What qualities do you think a person needs to have to be a good leader? [Moses’ respect for God produced four qualities in him that allowed him to lead God’s people: obedience to God, faith in God’s commands, wisdom & courage]. Let’s talk about these four qualities:

1. **Obedience**: The Bible says that, “Moses and Aaron did just as the Lord commanded them” (Exodus 7:6). Moses obeyed God and did everything just as God asked him to. Moses led by his example, and because of his example, many people also followed God’s commands.

2. **Faith**: The Bible says that, “By faith, he left Egypt, not fearing Pharaoh’s anger…By faith the people passed through the Red Sea as on dry land…” (Hebrews 11:27-29). Moses had faith in God, and because Moses trusted God to lead him, many people trusted in God.

3. **Wisdom**: The Bible tells us, “The next day Moses took his seat to serve as judge for the people…” (Exodus 18:13). People came to Moses to seek God’s answers to their questions. Moses was able to answer them because he knew God’s commands.

Question: How can wisdom help you & help others? [By knowing how God wants you live, you can have knowledge and good judgment that will help you & help others to make good decisions].
4. **Courage**: Remember when Pharaoh sent his army after the Israelites at the Red Sea and how afraid the people of Israel were? “Moses answered the people, “Do not be afraid. Stand firm and you will see the deliverance the Lord will bring you today” (Exodus 14:13). Moses’ faith allowed him to have courage, and his courage allowed the people of Israel to reverence and trust in God.

**Question: How can you show courage today?** [Standing firm on God’s Word in any circumstance: At home, in school, at practice, with friends].

**Question: How can you develop a deep respect for the Lord?** [A respect and reverence for God can be learned and developed, just like practicing a sport can make you become better at doing it].

The Scriptures say, “**Assemble the people - men, women and children - so they can listen and learn to fear the Lord your God...**” (Deuteronomy 31:12).

**Question: What are ways that you can listen to God’s Word?** [Listening to God’s Word in family Bible readings, Sunday school, church, Bible study, prayer or reading Christian books & listening to Christian music are all ways to hear God’s Words].

**Question: How can the fear of the Lord help you today?** [You will understand what is right and what is wrong. You will have knowledge to make good decisions and guard against making poor decisions].

Listen to what a man named Charles Colson says about the fear of God:

*“We need to know the fear of the Lord - the overwhelming, compelling awe and reverence of a holy God. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom: It provides the right perspective on God's sovereign rule over all creation; the sense of God's power and perfection...”* (Colson, The Body, pg. 376).

Moses had this fear of the Lord, an overwhelming awe and reverence of the Holy God who revealed Himself to Moses in the flames of the burning bush. And it is this fear of the Lord that allowed Moses to develop the qualities that God needed him to have to lead the nation of Israel.

Listen to what Isaiah, the Old Testament prophet, said about the people of Israel, “**These people honor me with their mouths and honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me**” (Isaiah 29:13).

**Question: According to the Scripture passage just read, how does God want you to honor Him each day?** [God wants you to honor Him not only with what you say, but also how you act].

The Gospel – by Jeff Jackson – Dallas, TX
How can we live like Moses where God walks, talks and grants us these four qualities: Obedience, Faith, Wisdom and Courage? You have to know God.

How do we get to know God? Well not many of us will be able to go to Mount Sinai like Moses and talk to him face to face so God sent Jesus His Son so we could get to know God. The Bible says in John 3:16 – “For God so loved the World that he gave his only son, that whoever believes in him should not perish, but have eternal life.”

Jesus gave up his place on the throne in heaven so we could be able to walk and talk with God. Jesus set the perfect example of courage, faith and obedience and wisdom by willing dying on the cross for our sins. What a great sacrifice our God gave to give up his only Son so that we could inherit the kingdom of heaven.

If you want to know Jesus and live with him forever say this simple prayer (the words don’t matter but it’s what you really want that matters to God):
Father I know you sent Jesus to come to this earth and live a perfect life because I can't. You say in your word that if we believe in your Son, Jesus Christ, and confess with our mouth and heart that Jesus died for my sins that you are faithful and just to forgive us and accept me into your family. Jesus I'm asking you to come into my life and be Lord over my life. Amen.
HEROES OF THE BIBLE

LESSON # 8: JOSHUA

Review
Last week’s questions & memory verse

Today’s Lesson Verse
“Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be terrified; do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go” (Joshua 1:9).

Qualities
Courage & Leadership

Discussion Question
Has there been an occasion when you have been asked to be a leader (family, school, activity)? Tell us about it.

Introduction
The issue of slavery and the conviction that something must be done to stop its spread were enough to motivate Abraham Lincoln to pursue a career in politics. In 1846 he was elected to U.S. Congress. He experienced 4 major defeats until 1860 when he was elected President of the United States.

From the time he took office, he was consumed with two goals: end the war and preserve the Union. Although he suffered many defeats, he never gave up. He regarded the Bible as his foundational tool for life: “This great book [the Bible]…is the best gift God has given to man…But for it we could not know right from wrong.” But it was not until he visited Gettysburg, and saw the graves of thousands of soldiers that he accepted Jesus Christ into his life. His faith in Jesus Christ and his leadership brought this nation through a terrible Civil War. Lincoln believed he was chosen “for such a time as this.”

Abraham Lincoln found in Jesus Christ the strength and courage he needed to lead his country as President. Today we’ll meet a Bible Hero who needed courage to lead the nation of Israel.

Background
Joshua was Moses’ assistant who was chosen by God to be Israel’s leader after Moses died. Joshua was the man who would lead the nation of Israel into the land that God promised to give to Abraham and his descendants. As the day was approaching for Joshua to become the leader of Israel, God gave this command to Joshua: “…Be strong and courageous, for you will bring the Israelites into the land I promised them on oath, and I myself will be with you” (Deuteronomy 31:23).

“After the death of Moses the servant of the LORD, the LORD said to Joshua son of Nun, Moses’ aide: 2 “Moses my servant is dead. Now then, you and all these people, get ready to cross the Jordan River into the land I am about to give to them--to the Israelites. 3 I will give you every place where you set your foot, as I promised Moses. 4 Your territory will extend from the desert to Lebanon, and from the great river, the Euphrates--all the Hittite country--to the Great Sea on the west. 5 No one will be able to stand up against you all the days of your life. As I was with Moses, so I will be with you; I will never leave you nor forsake you.

6 “Be strong and courageous, because you will lead these people to inherit the land I swore to their forefathers to give them. 7 Be strong and very courageous. Be careful to obey all the law my servant Moses gave you; do not turn from it to the right or to the left, that you may be successful wherever you go. 8 Do not let this Book of the Law depart from your mouth; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and
Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be terrified; do not be discouraged, for the LORD your God will be with you wherever you go."

Question: In the last few weeks we’ve been talking a lot about qualities that our Bible heroes possess. What is a quality? [A quality is an essential characteristic or nature that someone has].

Question: Joshua had four essential characteristics that allowed him to lead the entire nation of Israel. What do you think they are? [Faith in God, obedience to God, strength, & courage]. Let’s talk about them:

**Faith:**

*Question:* What promise did God make to Joshua, as Israel was about to cross over the Jordan River into the land? [That as God was with Moses, He would also be with Joshua wherever he went].

*Question:* How do you think that helped Joshua have faith in God? [Joshua had seen all that God did through Moses. God's promise to Joshua helped assure him that God would do as He said].

*Question:* What does faith require for it to be worth something? [Faith requires action for it to be valid].

The Scriptures say, “Suppose a brother or sister is without clothes and food. If one of you says to him, “Go, I wish you well; keep warm and well fed,” but does nothing about his physical needs, what good is it?” In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead” (James 2:15-17). Joshua’s faith would have been no good to God or to the people of Israel if he were not willing to do what God commanded him to do.

*Question:* How are ways that we can show our faith today? [By our actions. We must be willing to show our faith by how we live: worshipping, studying the Bible, sharing our abundance with those in need, caring].

**Obedience**

Joshua was very careful to obey all the laws that Moses gave him as God had commanded him.

*Question:* Why was it so important for Joshua to obey what God commanded him? [Like Moses, Joshua was the leader of the nation of Israel. God chose Joshua to lead by example; if Joshua obeyed God’s commands, then so would the people of Israel].

*Question:* Suppose you’re the coach on a basketball team, and during a game you repeatedly call for a certain play to be run. Your team captain refuses to run the play that you call for. What would you do? [You would probably remove him from the game]. Like the basketball coach, God doesn’t want us to just hear what He says and then do nothing. The Scriptures say, “Do not merely listen to the word...Do what it says” (James 1:22).

*Question:* How can you show obedience to God? [Again, by your actions. Not just hearing what He says, but by following through and doing what He says]. If you remember, when the Bible talks about being obedient, it means “getting to know and be like Jesus.” As you practice God’s instructions, you get good at them; kind of like riding that bike well. Obeying God changes you into being more like His Son Jesus.

**Strength**

*How did God tell Joshua to be strong?* [By learning and practicing God’s Word and obeying His commands].

*Question:* How can you become strong today? [Wisdom can make you strong]. To know right from wrong, and live by what is right takes much more strength than to give in and to do wrong.
Courage:
Joshua was about to lead the nation of Israel into a land that would contain many enemies. But God commands Joshua to be courageous. God assures Joshua that He will be with him wherever he goes.

Question: What kinds of enemies do we face today? [Anything that is in direct opposition to God’s Word: false ideas about God, negative influences through certain music, certain advertisements].

Question: How can you have courage to live according to God’s ways? [Decide to stand firm and live truthfully].

Question: How did God command Joshua to lead the people of Israel? [By his example of: faith, obedience, strength & courage].

Question: How does God want you to lead others today? [Lead by example].

When you have the opportunity to be a leader, and you’re feeling that it’s too big a job for you, remember Joshua and the words our Lord spoke to him that day before he led the nation of Israel into the land that God had promised to Abraham, “Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be terrified; do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go” (Joshua 1:9).

The Gospel – by Brant Bernet – Dallas, TX
Joshua was strong, God commanded him to be so (Joshua 1:6-7). He was a great military man and he trusted God to go before him in battle. He was a leader and arguably one of the bravest men in the Bible. We are all asked to be brave at times. You might need to stand up for someone at school and your decision to do so will be hard. Leadership and bravery are not easy. BUT, the GREAT News is that we don’t have to be brave alone.

The Bible tells us that “we can do everything through Him (Jesus Christ), Who gives us strength” (Philippians 4:13) and “He (Jesus Christ) gives strength to the weary and increases the power of the weak” (Isaiah 40:29). Jesus Christ came to the earth as a man over 2000 years ago and lived a perfect life, completely free from sin. Then He did something that no one else before Him or after Him could ever do…he accepted all of our sins (your sins and mine) and died a horrible death on a cross just so that we could live forever in Paradise with Him. He lives today and provides strength and courage to those that know Him.

John wrote “For God so loved the world (that is us!) that He gave his only Son (that is Jesus Christ) so that whoever believes in Him, shall not die, but have everlasting life (in Paradise with Him) (John 3:16). If you would like to have a personal relationship with the One that provides Strength and Courage, pray this prayer with me:

“Dear Lord, I am a sinner and far from perfect. But I know that you came to earth just so that you could wash all my sins away. Thank you for your sacrifice on the cross and thank you for saving me. I want to live FOR you here on earth and I want to live WITH you for eternity. I trust in You, Lord. I want You to control my life. Accept me, Lord. Hold me and make me courageous for You.”
Review
Last week's questions & memory verse

Today's Lesson Verse
"When the angel of the Lord appeared to Gideon, he said, “The Lord is with you, mighty warrior” (Judges 6:12).

Qualities
Availability to & Confidence in the Lord

Discussion Question:
Have you ever been chosen to be in charge of a project at school or in an activity?
What responsibilities did you have? How did you feel when you were chosen?

Introduction
Growing up, Jim Elliot was a hard worker, good student, and a star athlete. But Elliot also had a burning desire to serve God, and that desire led him to the foreign mission field, specifically, South America. Elliot said, "Why should some hear twice, when others have not heard the gospel once."

Elliot then heard of a tribe of South American Indians called the Aucas. In January of 1956, Elliot and four companions landed on a beach in Ecuador. Within days of the first personal contact with the Auras Elliot and his four companions were killed by warriors from the Auca tribe. *

Jim Elliot was a man committed to God's purpose for him. He looked for God's purpose for him, asked for it, waited for it and most importantly – obeyed it. Jim Elliot made himself available to God. Our story today is about a hero of the Bible who also made himself available to God.

Background
There was a time in the history of Israel called the period of the Judges. The period of the Judges occurred between the death of Joshua and Samuel’s ministry (remember the kid who grew up in the temple? We'll visit him later on this series). There was a cycle that characterized this period: The people of Israel would not pay much attention to God and would go off and begin worshiping other gods of the nations around them. God would then allow Israel’s enemies to knock 'em around a bit. This would get Israel’s attention back and they would cry out to God to save them. God would then raise up a judge to deliver them from their enemies. Gideon was one of these Judges.

The Scriptures say, “After the death of Joshua, a new generation grew up who knew neither the Lord or what He had done for Israel” (Judges 2:10).

Question: What is the importance of teaching children God’s Word in the family? [So that they will know who God is & remember all that He has done, and pass along His instructions to their children].

Gideon
(Text: Judges 6 & 7)
“Again the Israelites did evil in the eyes of the LORD, and for seven years he gave them into the hands of the Midianites. 2 Because the power of Midian was so oppressive, the Israelites prepared shelters for themselves in mountain clefts, caves and strongholds. 3 Whenever the Israelites planted their crops, the Midianites, Amalekites and other eastern peoples invaded the country. 4 They camped on the land and ruined the crops all the way to Gaza and did not spare a living thing for Israel, neither sheep nor cattle nor donkeys. 5 They came up with their livestock and their tents like swarms of locusts. It was impossible to count the men and their camels; they invaded the land to ravage it. 6 Midian so impoverished the Israelites that they cried out to the LORD for help.
When the Israelites cried to the LORD because of Midian, 8 he sent them a prophet, who said, "This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: I brought you up out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery. 9 I snatched you from the power of Egypt and from the hand of all your oppressors. I drove them from before you and gave you their land. 10 I said to you, 'I am the LORD your God; do not worship the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you live.' But you have not listened to me."

11 The angel of the LORD came and sat down under the oak in Ophrah that belonged to Joash the Abiezrite, where his son Gideon was threshing wheat in a winepress to keep it from the Midianites. 12 When the angel of the LORD appeared to Gideon, he said, "The LORD is with you, mighty warrior."

13 "But sir," Gideon replied, "if the LORD is with us, why has all this happened to us? Where are all his wonders that our fathers told us about when they said, 'Did not the LORD bring us up out of Egypt?' But now the LORD has abandoned us and put us into the hand of Midian."

14 The LORD turned to him and said, "Go in the strength you have and save Israel out of Midian's hand. Am I not sending you?"

15 "But Lord," Gideon asked, "how can I save Israel? My clan is the weakest in Manasseh, and I am the least in my family."

16 The LORD answered, "I will be with you, and you will strike down all the Midianites together."

Question: Gideon had four qualities that made him a “mighty warrior” and Judge of Israel. What do you think that they are? [Availability, strength, confidence in God, and humbleness].

Gideon’s Availability

Question: What was one reason why God chose Gideon? [Gideon was willing to be available for God. He accepted God’s authority in his life]. Although Gideon was unsure of himself, he accepted God’s command. He made himself available for God’s purpose for him. God was then free to make Gideon a “mighty warrior.”

Question: How can you make yourself available for God? [By your attitude. Ask God how He can use you & then give him permission].

Question: How can you find out how God wants to use you? [Continue to ask Him to let you know, listen for His answer in prayer, scripture, interests you have, desires].

Gideon’s Strength

Question: In what area did God have to strengthen Gideon? [Gideon was afraid of his enemies, and thought of himself as weak].

Question: How can God make someone weak like Gideon to be strong? [Think of weakness as a well. God’s strength pours into that well until it overflows]. It wasn’t Gideon’s strength, but God’s. Gideon accepted God’s authority in his life and took the cover off the well so God’s strength could pour in.

Question: Does “strength” necessarily mean physical strength? [Strength can refer to courage, boldness, emotional, mental strength as well as physical strength].
Question: What task might God make you strong for? [Choosing to stand up for a classmate who is being unfairly teased, playing by the rules when others are cheating, avoiding evil]. God will strengthen you for whatever He wants you to do.

Gideon’s Confidence In The Lord
Gideon’s confidence didn’t come immediately. God gave Gideon some time to warm up for the big assignment.

Question: If you plan on being a schoolteacher, what is one requirement you have to complete before you are allowed to teach? [You must complete at least a semester of what is called “student teaching,” – being a teacher’s assistant for a period of time]. One reason for this is so that you get some experience teaching, but also so you build some confidence before getting your own class of students. Likewise, Gideon needed some time for his confidence to build.

Listen to how Gideon’s confidence in the Lord grew: God told Gideon to knock down his family’s heathen altar and build a proper altar of worship to Him. “So Gideon took ten of his servants and did as the Lord told him. But because he was afraid of his family and the men of the town, he did it at night rather than in daytime” (Judges 6:27). Gideon obeyed God, and gave his confidence needed time to grow.

Here’s another example of how God gave Gideon confidence: “Now all the Midianites, Amalekites and other eastern peoples joined forces and crossed over the Jordan and camped in the Valley of Jezreel. 34 Then the Spirit of the LORD came upon Gideon, and he blew a trumpet, summoning the Abiezrites to follow him” (Judges 6:33-34). God had told Gideon when He first appeared to him that He would be with him, and now Gideon began to allow God to fill him with strength and courage.

As Gideon prepared for battle against thousands upon thousands of enemy troops, God pared Gideon’s army down from 22,000 to 300 men. God then told Gideon to sneak down into the enemy camp and listen to what the men were saying. Gideon overheard one man telling his friend about a dream he had just hand, and this was the interpretation, of the dream: “…this can be nothing other than the sword of Gideon son of Joash, the Israelite. God has given the Midianites and the whole camp into his hands.” 15 When Gideon heard the dream and its interpretation, he worshiped God. He returned to the camp of Israel and called out, "Get up! The LORD has given the Midianite camp into your hands" (Judges 7:14-15).

Question: Why do you think that God pared down Gideon’s army to only 300 men when there were thousands of Midianites? [So that Gideon’s men would put their faith and trust in the Lord’s power].

Completely confident that God would do as He said, Gideon led his men against thousands upon thousands of the Midianite army, and God caused the Midianite army to be defeated by -300- of Gideon’s men.

Question: Think of something you did for the first time. How did that experience give you confidence to succeed? [Riding a bike, passing a test].

Humbleness
"The Israelites said to Gideon, "Rule over us--you, your son and your grandson--because you have saved us out of the hand of Midian." 23 But Gideon told them, "I will not rule over you, nor will my son rule over you. The LORD will rule over you ( Judges 8:22-34)."

Gideon did not take credit for his great accomplishments. Gideon remembered that it was God who delivered Israel from Midian. That’s what humbleness is: giving credit to another, or bringing attention to another.
Question: How can you honor God through your achievements? [When you achieve good grades, success as a soccer player, or a part in the school play, remember - it is God who gives you that ability].

Like Gideon, we should honor God by being humble and thanking Him for our abilities that help us to accomplish our achievements. You can have complete confidence that God will enable you to do anything He asks of you. God says, “The Lord is with you, mighty warrior... Go in the strength you have...Am I not sending you?”

* And now...the rest of the story. Elliot's death was called a” waste of lives” by some. But hundreds of young people around the world, inspired by the dedication of Jim Elliot and the others, volunteered to become missionaries in their place. Eventually, among others, Elliot’s wife – Elisabeth Elliot – lived among the Aucas who killed her husband. These women learned the Auca language and translated the Bible for them. Many Aucas eventually came to accept Christ as Savior.

Question: How can you make yourself available for God today? [Ask Him what He would like for you to do for Him today, and then allow Him to use you for His purposes].

The Gospel – by John Bateman – Dallas, TX

Question: Do you think you are strong enough to ALWAYS think, say and do the right thing, ALL the time? [No – we're not perfect].

Question: If you realize that you are not always perfect, do you think God would let you into heaven when you die? [Some will say, maybe, others will say, no]. In fact, there is a gap, a huge canyon, between God’s perfection and our imperfection – it’s called sin.

Let me show you what the Bible says about how you can know for sure that you can go to heaven, even though we all sin throughout our lives.

Romans 3:23 says, “For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.” That means that we all have sinned and are not equal to God.

Romans 6:23 says, “For the wages of sin is death.” “Wages” means the result, and “death” means separation from God. So the result of our sin is separation from God. He is 100% holy and even though we might be 80% good, that causes a huge gap between us and God. But God loves you SO MUCH that he came up with a solution to this problem, this separation between you and God. The rest of the verse in Romans 6:23 says: “But the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus, our Lord.” That means that to have a close relationship with God while we are still on earth, and to be able to go to heaven, we don’t have to be perfect. We only need to accept the free gift of salvation through Jesus Christ.

Let me explain: Romans 5:8 says, “God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.” Christ’s death on the cross paid the penalty for our sins. He didn’t have to die for his sins, because he never sinned. And he could have avoided being killed on the cross because he is super powerful – he’s God!

Question: if Jesus didn’t have to die for his sins and could have avoided dying on the cross, then why did he allow them to beat him and kill him? [Because he loves you SO much!].

So if we accept this gift of salvation through Jesus, we can be close to God and be able to go to heaven when we die. That’s great news.

Question: When we pray, who are we talking to? [God]. Does he hear us when we talk with him? [Yes, every time].

So how do we accept this free gift? It is by talking with God in prayer. And our prayer is rather simple:
Jesus, I realize that I'm a sinner and that I need you. Thank you for dying on the cross to pay the penalty for my sins. Please come into my heart and be my Lord and my Savior. And allow me to be close to you and to go to heaven when I die. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

If you prayed that prayer, I encourage you to tell your Dad or Mom, maybe a pastor or someone who can help you take next steps because this is the biggest, most important decision you will ever make! Your prayer today has changed the rest of your life and allowed you to live in heaven with God forever.
HEROES OF THE BIBLE

LESSON # 10: SAMSON

Review
Last week’s questions & memory verse

Today’s Lesson Verse
“I can do everything through him [Jesus] who gives me strength” (Philippians 4:13).

Qualities
Strength

Discussion Question:
If you were the strongest person in the world, what kinds of things would you do with your strength?

Introduction
Gladys Aylward returned from China to England in the late 1940’s as an unknown missionary. Alan Burgess, who was producing a series on war heroes for the BBC radio, visited her in the hope that as a missionary she could tell him about heroes she had heard about in China. “Well, no,” she said, “I didn't actually know any heroes.”

"What about yourself?" he asked. "Did you have a scrape or two?"

"I doubt people who listen to BBC would think I've done anything interesting."

"Didn't you even come into contact with the Japanese invaders?" he asked.

"Yes," she answered reluctantly. Gladys thought it wouldn't be very forgiving of her if she told Alan Burgess the Japanese had shot her down in a field outside Tschow; bombed her in Yangcheng; strafed her near Lingchuang; hit her on the noggin once with a rifle butt. Finally put a price on her head: dead or alive. "Some Japanese are very nice, you know," she volunteered.

"Apparently your life in China was rather sheltered," he said. Gladys had to offer something.

"I did take some children to an orphanage near Sian."

"You don't say?" he grumbled, not hiding disappointment. "Kids? To an orphanage?"

"Yes, we had to cross some mountains." Burgess perked up. "Real mountains?"

"Yes, I believe you would call them real mountains. The journey was made more difficult because we couldn't walk on the main trails. Oh, and then we had to get across the Yellow River too."

"Isn't that the notorious river that drowns so many its called 'China's Sorrow'?"

Burgess became more and more horrified as Gladys detailed her trek. "You ran out of food? You had no money? Just you and 100 kids - many of whom were toddlers - trekked for one month across mountains, across the Yellow River, ducking Japanese patrols and dive bombers? And at Sian you were diagnosed with typhus and pneumonia and malnutrition? Yes, Miss Aylward, I think people who listen to BBC would think you've done something interesting…"

Gladys Aylward accomplished an amazing feat of strength. Today, we'll meet a Hero of the Bible who is also known for his great strength. Both their source of strength is available to us.
Review
This was the cycle that characterized the history of Israel during the period of the Judges: The people of Israel would not pay much attention to God and would go off and begin worshiping other gods of the nations around them. God would then allow Israel’s enemies to knock ‘em around a bit. This would get Israel’s attention back and they would cry out to God to save them. God would then raise up a judge to deliver them from their enemies. Samson was one of these Judges.

Samson
(Text: Judges 13:1-5, 24-25)

1 Again the Israelites did evil in the eyes of the LORD, so the LORD delivered them into the hands of the Philistines for forty years.

2 A certain man of Zorah, named Manoah, from the clan of the Danites, had a wife who was [unable to have children]. 3 The angel of the LORD appeared to her and said, "You are…childless, but you are going to conceive and have a son. 4 Now see to it that you drink no wine or other fermented drink and that you do not eat anything unclean, because you will conceive and give birth to a son. No razor may be used on his head, because the boy is to be a Nazirite, set apart to God from birth, and he will begin the deliverance of Israel from the hands of the Philistines."

24 “The woman gave birth to a boy and named him Samson. He grew and the LORD blessed him, 25 and the Spirit of the LORD began to stir him…”

Question: Samson was a Nazarite. What did it mean to be a Nazarite? [A Nazarite made an agreement to serve God for a special purpose. Often times this meant observing special vows made to God during this period of service].

Question: The Bible says that the Spirit of the Lord began to stir Samson. What do you think this means? [Just as the Holy Spirit strengthened Gideon, the Spirit was beginning to prepare Samson for the work of delivering the Israelites from the Philistines].

Israel had problems with the Philistines ever since the Joshua led the nation of Israel across the Jordan River into the Promised Land. The “Promised Land” was the land of Canaan that God said He would give to Abraham’s descendants. The only problem for the Israelites was that the Philistine people were already there. So the Israelite and the Philistines were bitter enemies, and they took turns beating up on each other. From the time before his birth, Samson was dedicated to the Lord for the purpose of delivering Israel from Philistine oppression.

Question: How did God choose to deliver Israel through Samson? [Samson delivered the Israelites through great feats of strength against the Philistines]. Here are a couple of examples:

1) “Samson went down to Timnah together with his father and mother. As they approached the vineyards of Timnah, suddenly a young lion came roaring toward them. The Spirit of the Lord came upon him in power so that he tore the lion apart with his bare hands...” (Judges 14:5-6).

2) Another time, Samson was being delivered to an army of 3,000 Philistine men, bound with ropes. “The Spirit of the Lord came upon him in power. The ropes on his arms became like charred flax, and the bindings dropped from his hands. Finding a fresh jawbone of a donkey, he grabbed it and struck down a thousand men” (Judges 15:14-15).

Now, Samson did some things that I would not recommend as wholesome family activities: spending the night with prostitutes, setting fields on fire and killing thousands of people. But remember, Samson’s purpose, what he was set apart for, was to deliver the people of Israel from the Philistines.
Samson did many heroic and courageous feats, but his story has another important meaning for you & me. Samson knew the source of his strength and power.

**Question:** What was the source of Samson’s strength? [The Scriptures say that the Spirit of the Lord came upon him in power].

**Question:** Does God give people power today? [As believers in Jesus Christ, you & I also have tremendous strength and power through the Holy Spirit].

The same Holy Spirit that gave Samson his incredible strength is the same Holy Spirit that dwells in the hearts of all people who accept Jesus Christ as Savior & Lord.

**Question:** There is a fundamental difference between the way God sent His Spirit to Samson & how He sends the Holy Spirit to you & I today. Do you know what that difference is? [Let’s talk about two passages of Scripture that can help explain this to us].

1. Listen to what David (who would later become king of Israel) writes in the Old Testament, “Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me. Do not cast me from your presence or take your Holy Spirit from me...” (Psalm 51:10-11).

2. Now listen to what the apostle John writes in the New Testament, “...Jesus stood and said in a loud voice, "If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within him." By this he meant the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were later to receive. Up to that time the Spirit had not been given, since Jesus had not yet been glorified” (John 7:37-39).

**Question:** Do you hear what the difference is between the two passages of Scripture? [In the first passage, God gave to people the Holy Spirit for a period of time. In the second passage, people now receive the Holy Spirit].

In Old Testament times and in the early New Testament days, God would rest or visit His Spirit upon people in order to have His purpose accomplished by that individual. Yet God also withdrew His Spirit from people at times. This happened to Samson.

Samson had fallen in love with a Philistine girl named Delilah. The Philistine leaders came to her and asked her to lure Samson into showing her the secret of his strength so that they could overpower and subdue him. In return they would make her very wealthy. So Delilah badgered Samson daily until he got tired of her pestering and so he told her everything: “No razor has ever been used on my head,” he said, “Because I have been a Nazarite set apart to God since birth. If my head were shaved, my strength would leave me, and I would become weak as any other man” (Judges 16:17).

**Question:** Why was Samson never to cut his hair? [Samson’s hair was the visible outward reminder of his covenant (agreement) with God & his vow to serve Him]. When his hair was cut, the covenant between God and Samson was broken and God withdrew His Holy Spirit that gave Samson his strength. The Bible says, “When Delilah saw that he had told her everything, she sent word to the rulers of the Philistines, “Come back once more; he has told me everything.” So the rulers of the Philistines returned with the silver in their hands. Having put him to sleep on her lap, she called, “Samson, the Philistines are upon you!” He awoke from his sleep and thought, “I’ll go out as before and shake myself free.” But he did not know that the LORD had left him” (Judges 16:18-20).

However, In the New Testament, God has given His Holy Spirit to us forever! Listen to what Jesus says, “And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor to be with you forever - the
Spirit of Truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you” (John 14:16-17).

Question: When do you receive the Holy Spirit? [The moment that you ask Jesus to come into your life, the Holy Spirit comes and makes His dwelling within you].


Question: What are some ways that we have strength and power through the Holy Spirit? [Here are four passages of Scripture that tell us]:

1. “A wise man has great power, and a man of knowledge increases strength” (Proverbs 24:5). The Scriptures say that wisdom is power and knowledge is strength.
2. “The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective” (James 5:16). Prayers are powerful.
3. “I can do everything through him [Jesus] who gives me strength” (Philippians 4:13). Jesus will give you all the strength to do anything that He asks of you; to make good decisions, strength to choose to live the way God wants us to.
4. “Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil’s schemes...” (Ephesians 6:10-11). The Word of God says that we are in a battle against evil and that God’s mighty power will help us to stand up against evil.

Gladys Aylward depended upon God’s strength to accomplish His purposes for her. Samson was used his great strength for God’s purposes. You have great strength as a Christian because God’s mighty power dwells within you.

Question: How can you use your great strength for God today?
Lesson # 11: Ruth

Review
Last week’s questions & memory verse

Today’s Lesson Verse
“But Ruth replied, “Don’t urge me to leave you or to turn back from you. Where you go I will go, and where you stay I will stay. Your people will be my people and your God my God” (Ruth 1:16).

Qualities
Devotion

Discussion Question
Think of one of your friends. Why is he or she one of your friends? Why would one of your friends consider you a good friend?

Introduction
Agnes Bojaxhiu was born in 1910 in Yugosloavia and in 1928 decided to become a nun. After spending a short time in Ireland she was sent to join a convent in the city of Darjeeling in Northeast India. When she was twenty-one she chose the name Teresa.

At first she taught geography at a girls school in Calcutta. But there were other needs in the city. There were many homeless people and beggars. Lepers and orphans lived on the streets. In 1946 Teresa gave up the job as a teacher to care for the needy in the slums of Calcutta. In 1948 she became an Indian citizen. In 1950 she founded the Missionaries of Charity order of nuns.

Her initial work was amongst children teaching them to care for themselves and to learn basic reading and writing skills. She had her first recruit in 1949 and many others joined her over the next few years. In 1952 she founded the Kalighat Home for the Dying and established a leper colony to help leprosy sufferers. By the year 2000 over 3,000 nuns belonged to the Missionaries of Charity, running centers in over one hundred countries.

She lived among the people she helped. She cared for people because they needed it and expected nothing from them in return. She literally laid down her life to love and show compassion for all.

There is none who served “her Jesus” more devotedly than Mother Teresa. Our lesson today is about a Bible hero who showed great devotion and kindness. Her name is Ruth.

Background
The story of Ruth is set in the time of the judges and occurs during a temporary time of peace between Israel and the country of Moab.

Ruth
(Text: Ruth 1:1-16, 2:1-12, 4:13-17)

“In the days when the judges ruled, there was a famine in the land, and a man from Bethlehem in Judah, together with his wife and two sons, went to live for a while in the country of Moab. 2 The man’s name was Elimelech, his wife’s name Naomi, and the names of his two sons were Mahlon and Kilion. They were Ephrathites from Bethlehem, Judah. And they went to Moab and lived there.

3 Now Elimelech, Naomi’s husband, died, and she was left with her two sons. 4 They married Moabite women, one named Orpah and the other Ruth. After they had lived there about ten years, 5 both Mahlon and Kilion also died, and Naomi was left without her two sons and her husband.
When she heard in Moab that the LORD had come to the aid of his people by providing food for them, Naomi and her daughters-in-law prepared to return home from there. With her two daughters-in-law she left the place where she had been living and set out on the road that would take them back to the land of Judah.

Then Naomi said to her two daughters-in-law, "Go back, each of you, to your mother's home. May the LORD show kindness to you, as you have shown to your dead and to me. May the LORD grant that each of you will find rest in the home of another husband."

Then she kissed them and they wept aloud and said to her, "We will go back with you to your people."

But Naomi said, "Return home, my daughters. Why would you come with me? Am I going to have any more sons, who could become your husbands? Return home, my daughters; I am too old to have another husband. Even if I thought there was still hope for me--even if I had a husband tonight and then gave birth to sons--would you wait until they grew up? Would you remain unmarried for them? No, my daughters. It is more bitter for me than for you, because the LORD's hand has gone out against me!"

At this they wept again. Then Orpah kissed her mother-in-law good-by, but Ruth clung to her.

"Look," said Naomi, "your sister-in-law is going back to her people and her gods. Go back with her."

But Ruth replied, "Don't urge me to leave you or to turn back from you. Where you go I will go, and where you stay I will stay. Your people will be my people and your God my God."

Question: What two qualities that Ruth has are we shown in this story? [Kindness and devotion].

Ruth's Kindness
Question: How does Ruth show kindness to Naomi? [Ruth did not have to continue to stay with Naomi after the death of her husband, but she chose to be kind to Naomi and stay with her. She did not leave her to be alone]. The Bible says, "May the Lord show kindness to you, as you have shown to me..." (vs 8).

Ruth's Devotion
Question: How does Ruth show devotion to Naomi? [Ruth was willing to be completely devoted to Naomi, the people of Israel and the God of Israel].

"Where you go I will go, and where you stay I will stay. Your people will be my people and your God my God" (Vs 16). This devotion that Ruth gives to Naomi comes from the type of love that fulfills God's command, "Love your neighbor as yourself" (Leviticus 19:18). Ruth considered Naomi's interests above her own.

Question: What was so unusual about Ruth's kindness & devotion to Naomi? [The Moabites & Israelites had been bitter enemies up to this time of recent peace]. Even though the two countries were in a time of peace, there was probably still resentment toward each other. That's why it makes it all the more remarkable that Ruth considered Naomi's interests above her own.

So Naomi and Ruth went back to Judah and arrived in the little town of Bethlehem. Now it just so happened that Naomi had a relative who was a man of high standing in the community. His name was Boaz. Naomi and Ruth did not have any wealth, so one day Ruth went to pick grain from the fields near town.
**HEROES OF THE BIBLE**

**Question:** How was it that Ruth could pick grain from other people’s fields without getting into trouble? [In those days, there was a law that allowed poor people to pick up any extra grain that was left over from the harvesting].

**Question:** Whose fields do you think Ruth wandered into? [As it turned out, she found herself picking grain from a field owned by Boaz].

Bethlehem was a small town and in a small town everybody knew everybody else. That very day Boaz met Ruth as she was working in his field. Since she was new in town, he inquired as to who she was. When Boaz found out who she was, he treated her with extra kindness.

“So Boaz said to Ruth, "My daughter, listen to me. Don't go and glean in another field and don't go away from here. Stay here with my servant girls. Watch the field where the men are harvesting, and follow along after the girls. I have told the men not to touch you. And whenever you are thirsty, go and get a drink from the water jars the men have filled."

10 At this, she bowed down with her face to the ground. She exclaimed, "Why have I found such favor in your eyes that you notice me--a foreigner?"

11 Boaz replied, "I've been told all about what you have done for your mother-in-law since the death of your husband--how you left your father and mother and your homeland and came to live with a people you did not know before. 12 May the LORD repay you for what you have done. May you be richly rewarded by the LORD, the God of Israel, under whose wings you have come to take refuge."

13 "May I continue to find favor in your eyes, my lord," she said. "You have given me comfort and have spoken kindly to your servant--though I do not have the standing of one of your servant girls."

14 At mealtime Boaz said to her, "Come over here. Have some bread and dip it in the wine vinegar." When she sat down with the harvesters, he offered her some roasted grain. She ate all she wanted and had some left over.

**Question:** Why do you think that Boaz was so kind to Ruth? [Because of Ruth’s kindness to Naomi, his relative].

Boaz replied, "I've been told all about what you have done for your mother-in-law since the death of your husband - how you left your father and mother and your homeland and came to live with a people you did not know before. May you be richly rewarded by the Lord, the God of Israel, under whose wings you have come to take refuge" (Ruth 2:8-12).

No more prophetic words were ever spoken. Boaz continued to look after Ruth and Naomi, and later took Ruth as his wife.

**Question:** Do you know how Ruth along with you and I were rewarded by God? [Because of her qualities of kindness and devotion, God worked through her to continue His plan of salvation for the world]. You see, The Lord gave Boaz and Ruth a son, and they named him Obed. Obed became the father of Jesse.

**Question:** Do you know who Jesse’s son was? [David, who would become King of Israel. From David’s line would come a guy named Joseph, who became the husband of a girl named Mary of whom was born Jesus, who is called Christ].
Question: What other truth does this story tell us about God and about us? [God has a plan and a purpose for everyone. God doesn't always pick the biggest or the strongest or the richest person to accomplish His purpose].

The story of Ruth is one of kindness and devotion. The Scriptures encourage us to live with devotion to God and to others.

Question: What are some ways that we can live in devotion to God? [Being kind to others, as God has been kind to you; making good decisions about how you treat your body, which includes making good decisions about the types of things you put into your mind].

Question: Why is it important to make good decisions about things that go into your mind? [Remember, what goes into your mind stays there. As much as is possible, put what is good and pure into your mind]. Be alert as to what the lyrics of music you listen to are saying, and what the content of the videos and movies that you watch are. Is violence and improper behavior what you want replaying over and over in your mind?

Question: What are some ways that you can be devoted to others?
- “Devote yourselves to prayer...” (Colossians 4:2). Spend time with God through prayer and reading the Bible.
- “Honor your father and your mother” (Exodus 20:12). Devote yourself to practicing obedience and respect to your parents and your family members.
- “Be devoted to one another in brotherly love. Honor one another above yourselves” (Romans 12:10).
- “Devote yourselves to doing what is good. These things are excellent and profitable for everyone” (Titus 3:8). Spend your time doing what is good.

Question: How can you tell if a decision or activity is good? [If you have to hesitate to decide if it’s a good activity, check it out or seek advice before committing].

The Gospel – by Karen Zukoski – Dallas, TX
Ruth was kind – that’s good. Mother Teresa was kind – that’s good. We may want to be kind but we aren’t all of the time. Sometime we’re selfish or even think something unkind toward others. The Bible calls that sin and that sin must be punished. That punishment is separation from God forever.

Ruth and Mother Teresa were two very kind women. But as good and kind as they were, even their good works couldn’t save them. The Bible tells us that “all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23). Ruth put her faith in the God of Israel instead of the false gods of her homeland to become a part of God’s family. Mother Teresa became a part of God’s family by putting her faith in Jesus and asking Him to forgive her sins and become the Lord of her life.

You can become a part of God’s family by putting your trust in Jesus to save you from your sins. Jesus showed the world the ultimate kindness by paying the penalty for our sins so we wouldn’t have to. Romans 6:23 says, “the wages of sin is death but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

If you want to become a part of God’s family you can today by simply saying something like this: Jesus – I know I’ve made mistakes and have not always been good or kind. Please forgive me of my sins. Thank you for taking the punishment that I deserve. Please live in me forever and help me live my life to honor you and to thank you for your kindness to me.
HEROES OF THE BIBLE

LESSON # 12: SAMUEL

Review
Last week’s questions & memory verse

Today’s Lesson Verse
“And the boy Samuel continued to grow in stature and in favor with the Lord and with men” (1 Samuel 2:26).

Qualities
Obedience & Devotion

Discussion Question
What responsibilities do you have in your family?

Activity
You’ll need:
1. A tablespoon
2. Cooking oil
3. Water
4. Food coloring
5. Jar or soda bottle with a lid or a cork

Put 2 tablespoons of water into the jar and add a few drops of the food coloring. Now pour 2 tablespoons of the oil into the jar. Put the lid on the jar and shake it hard. Talk about what happened when the oil & water were mixed. Why do you think this happened? [They're not made of the same stuff]. Although the oil and water seem to mix when you shake the container, they separate when you put it down.

Introduction
Lin Huo-ping desperately wanted a baby boy. “Oh God,” she prayed, “I will give this baby back to serve you, if you will only give me a son.”

True to her word, Huo-ping dedicated her son to God’s service. As the boy grew into a man, he wanted a name that reflected his mission in life: preaching the Word of God and sharing God’s love with his people. The name he chose means “Watchman.”

Watchman Nee’s teaching began many “house churches” in China. These churches continued even after the Communists tried to shut the churches down. Watchman Nee was arrested by the Communists and remained in prison until he died, but his writings still teach many around the world (Adapted from Hero Tales, by Dave & Neta Jackson, Bethany House, 1997, pp. 93-94).

Watchman Nee did not mix with the world around him. Today’s lesson is about a boy who didn’t exactly mix with the world around him either. But we’ll find out how he honored God and how God honored him.

Background
Samuel’s mother dedicated him to the Lord before he was born, and he grew up serving the Lord in the tabernacle (the Temple in Jerusalem had not yet been built). Samuel became the last of the judges of Israel and the prophet whom God used to usher in the first earthly king in Israel’s history.

Samuel
(Text: 1 Samuel selected)

There was a man named Elkanah who had a wife named Hannah. She had not been able to give him any children. One day, she prayed to the Lord and made a vow saying, “¶ And she made a vow, saying, “O Lord Almighty, if you will only look upon your servant’s misery and remember me, and not forget your servant but give her a son, then I will give him to the Lord for all the days of his life (1 Samuel 1:11).
Question: Who is another hero of the Bible we have talked about that was dedicated to the Lord from even before his birth? [Samson].

God honored her prayer and she gave birth to a son named Samuel. Hannah kept her vow to the Lord and after Samuel was old enough, she took him to the temple. She brought Samuel to Eli, the priest and said, “I prayed for this child, and the Lord has granted me what I asked of him. 28 So now I give him to the Lord. For his whole life he will be given over to the Lord.” And he worshiped the Lord there” (1 Samuel 1:27-28).

Question: What is the first quality or essential character of Samuel that we know about? [He worshiped the Lord]. At a very young age, before he even knew God personally, Samuel worshipped the Lord.

Question: What are ways that we worship God? [Prayer, praise, song, attitude, conduct].

There are three other verses that tell us about Samuel’s character:

1. Eli the priest had two sons who had no respect for God and were continually up to no good. “But Samuel was ministering before the Lord…” (1 Samuel 2:18).

Question: What do you notice about a little brother or sister when they are with an older brother or sister? [A little brother or sister often times imitates his older brother or sister].

Question: Why do you think that did Samuel not imitate his older brothers? [The Scriptures tell us that Samuel constantly kept himself before God].

Question: Dads, why is it so important for you to teach your child God’s word? [So that they, like Samuel, can learn to respect God and learn to live according to His word].

2. “Meanwhile, the boy Samuel grew up in the presence of the Lord” (1 Samuel 2:21). Samuel did not shut God out, as Eli’s two sons did; rather he accepted God’s words and his commands.

Question: How can your family grow up in the presence of the Lord? [Prayer, reading the Bible, worship].

3. “And the boy Samuel continued to grow in stature and in favor with the Lord and with men” (1 Samuel 2:26).

Question: The Bible says that Samuel grew in stature. What does the word stature mean? [In this case stature means good standing among others]. Samuel was respected & well thought of because of his devotion and service to God.

Question: How can you grow in stature in your family and among people in your community? [Follow Samuel’s example. Keep God before you, do those things that will earn the respect of others].

Question: What are some other ways that you can spend time in God’s presence? [Keep the Lord in mind at all times; dedicate yourself to serving Him with the abilities He has given to you].

There’s one other part of Samuel’s character that we should talk about. The Scriptures say, “Now Samuel did not yet know the Lord: The word of the Lord had not yet been revealed to him” (1 Samuel 3:7). Samuel had spent all this time learning about God and how to serve and obey him, but he did not yet know God personally and the purpose that God had for his life.

Question: What was God’s plan for Samuel? [To lead the nation of Israel and deliver God’s messages to all of Israel’s people]!
Question: Why was it important for Samuel to spend time learning about God and how to serve and obey Him? [Just like Moses, just like Joshua, Samuel was being prepared to handle the responsibilities that God was about to give to him, and he had to be completely ready].

Question: Why was it important for Samuel to know God personally? [So Samuel could not just know about God really know God]. Samuel was God’s representative to the people of Israel. It would be hard for Samuel to be a good representative if he did not know God well.

Question: Why is it important for you to spend time learning about God and how to serve and obey Him? [Just like Samuel, God has a purpose and a plan for your life. God wants you to be prepared for those responsibilities and to do a good job with them].

Question: What is God’s sincerest desire for you today? [God’s sincerest desire for you is for you to know Him personally].

The Scriptures say, “What good will it be for a man if he gains the whole world, yet loses his soul?” (Matthew 16:26). You can have all of the cool stuff you want, you can do all kinds of good things for others, you can be great in all kinds of sports, you can hang around with all kinds of cool people, but you will have an empty life if you don’t have a personal relationship with God.

Like Samuel showed us, God wants your worship, your respect, your service and your obedience, but what He really wants is for you to ask Jesus Christ into your heart.

Question: Do you know Jesus personally? Have you opened the door of your heart to Jesus and asked him to come in and live there?

Jesus says, “Here I am. I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in...” (Revelation 3:20). If you have never opened the door, Jesus is waiting to come in, and He will come in and begin to change you in a wonderful way - if you will invite him.

The Gospel – by Sammy Bickham – Dallas, TX
Eli’s sons did not know God and did not receive him but Samuel did. The Bible says, “But to all who believed him (Jesus) and accepted him, he gave the right to become children of God. They are reborn—not with a physical birth resulting from human passion or plan (these things mean that you cannot earn your way into a relationship with Jesus), but a birth that comes from God” (John 1:12-13). Jesus is saying that if you receive Him into your life, His gift to you is to adopt you into God the Father’s family.

Jesus says, “Look! I stand at the door and knock. If you hear my voice and open the door, I will come in, and we will share a meal together as friends” (Revelation 3:20). If you have never opened the door to let Jesus come into your life, He is waiting to come in and change your life in a wonderful way.

Question: Do you know Jesus personally? Have you opened the door of your heart to Jesus and asked him to come in and live there? Right now…and you can tell if he is knocking…you just know…invite Him in and ask Him to adopt you into God’s family, so that you can know God.

If you just invited Jesus in…you are a new creation, adopted as the son or daughter by the King of Kings and Lord of Lords. And as soon as you can…tell someone about what God has just done!
LESSON # 13: SAUL (Part 1)

Review
Last week's questions & memory verse

Today’s Lesson Verse
"Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge him and he will make your paths straight” (Proverbs 3:5-6).

Qualities
Obedience & Devotion

Discussion Question
If you were elected President of the United States, what is the first action you would take?

Introduction
It was said of him that, "When he found his own soul needed Jesus Christ, it became a passion with him to take Jesus Christ to every soul." At the age of 44, a strange restlessness came over him. He had seen hundreds of souls saved and dozens of churches established. But his soul burned with an indescribable longing to fulfill his Lord's promise, "I tell you the truth, anyone who has faith in me will do what I have been doing. He will do even greater things than these..." (John 14:12).

Reading a book by Charles Finney, an evangelist in the mid-late 1800s, who said that spiritual laws governing a spiritual harvest (when people receive Jesus Christ as their savior) are as real and dependable as the laws of a natural harvest, he said, "I am going to find out what these spiritual laws are and obey them, no matter what the cost may be."

He began an intense study of every passage in the Bible dealing with the Holy Spirit. He got up regularly at five o'clock or even earlier in the morning for Bible study and to pray for God's Spirit to fill him. One evening while speaking to an audience of unsaved people he saw deep conviction written on every face and almost every one took an open stand for Christ. Shortly thereafter he visited Korea and was stirred by the remarkable outpourings of God's blessings upon those people. The marvelous results in Korea, he emphasized, were “not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, says the LORD Almighty” (Zechariah 6:4). The people in Korea yielded to God's Spirit and received spiritual power.

Jonathan Goforth was a missionary in China from 1888 – 1933 (you'll meet him in more detail in lesson # 22). He knew that if he wanted God to use him mightily, he needed to yield to Him completely so God could work more fully through him. Today, we'll meet Saul, the first King of Israel and learn how God can do great things through us.

Background
Remember that Samuel was the last judge of Israel. When Samuel grew old, he appointed his sons as judges for Israel. But they did not follow Samuel’s example and were dishonest men. So all the elders of Israel gathered together and came to Samuel and said, “Your sons do not follow God like you do, now appoint a king to lead us so we will be like all the other nations.” Samuel took the elder’s request to the Lord. The Lord knew that the people of Israel had rejected Him as their King, so the Lord answered Samuel and said, “Listen to them and give them a king.”

Question: What makes you distinct from every other person on this earth? [When God put you together in your mother’s womb, your fingerprints, personality, physical characteristics, abilities were woven together to make you distinct and unique].

Question: Up until now, what had made Israel distinct from all other nations on earth? [God was their king].

Question: Why did they now reject God as their king? [They wanted to be like all the other nations].
Saul (Part 1)  
(Text: 1 Samuel Chapters 9-10 selected)

“There was a Benjamite, a man of standing, whose name was Kish [a descendant of Benjamin]. He had a son named Saul, an impressive young man without equal among the Israelites…” (1 Samuel 9:1-2).

The Bible describes how God revealed His plan to Samuel for giving Israel a king: "About this time tomorrow I will send you a man from the land of Benjamin. Anoint him leader over my people Israel; he will deliver my people from the hand of the Philistines. I have looked upon my people, for their cry has reached me.” (9:16).

Samuel found Saul and told him that God had chosen him as king over Israel and that he was the one to whom all of Israel was waiting for. Saul answered, “But am I not a Benjamite, from the smallest tribe of Israel, and is not my clan the least of all the clans of the tribe of Benjamin? Why do you say such a thing to me?” (9:21).

Question: Does Saul's response sound similar to the response of others in the Bible when God told them that He had chosen them to be leaders of His people? [Moses, Gideon].

After Samuel gave Saul some instructions, he said to Saul, “The Spirit of the LORD will come upon you in power, and you will prophesy with them; and you will be changed into a different person. Once these signs are fulfilled, do whatever your hand finds to do, for God is with you. Go down ahead of me to Gilgal. I will surely come down to you to sacrifice burnt offerings and fellowship offerings, but you must wait seven days until I come to you and tell you what you are to do.” As Saul turned to leave Samuel, God changed Saul's heart, and all these signs were fulfilled that day" (1 Samuel 10:6-9).

10:17 Samuel summoned the people of Israel to the LORD at Mizpah and said to them, "This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: 'I brought Israel up out of Egypt, and I delivered you from the power of Egypt and all the kingdoms that oppressed you.' But you have now rejected your God, who saves you out of all your calamities and distresses. And you have said, 'No, set a king over us.' So now present yourselves before the LORD by your tribes and clans.” 20 When Samuel brought all the tribes of Israel near, the tribe of Benjamin was chosen. 21 Then he brought forward the tribe of Benjamin, clan by clan, and Matri's clan was chosen. Finally Saul son of Kish was chosen. But when they looked for him, he was not to be found. 22 So they inquired further of the LORD, "Has the man come here yet?" And the LORD said, "Yes, he has hidden himself among the baggage." 23 They ran and brought him out, and as he stood among the people he was a head taller than any of the others. 24 Samuel said to all the people, "Do you see the man the LORD has chosen? There is no one like him among all the people." Then the people shouted, "Long live the king!" (10:17-24).

Question: What did Moses and Gideon and Saul have in common? [They were ordinary people who at first didn’t believe that they could do what God asked them to].

Question: Why did God choose Saul to be king? [God knew that Saul had the qualities to be a great leader].

Question: What did God do for Saul to help establish him as king? [God sent His Spirit upon Saul to help him accomplish all that He intended for him to do].
Question: What was the only thing that was keeping Saul from believing he could be a great king? [Saul!] Saul did not have any faith in himself. He went so far as to hide when he was to be presented to the people as their king.

Question: What was really holding Saul back? [His faith and trust in God]. Saul did not trust that God was in control of the situation and could help him be a great leader.

Question: Think about Moses, Gideon and Saul? What does their example as God’s chosen leaders teach us today? [Like Moses, Gideon and Saul, you can do great things for God too]. The Bible says: “Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge him and he will make your paths straight” (Proverbs 3:5-6).

Question: How can God use you to do great things for Him? [Remember, its God’s power working through you that accomplishes His purpose]. God created you as a unique and distinct person to accomplish His purpose through you. Because of the way He made you and where He has placed you, no one else can do for Him what He created you to do.

Question: What is your part of the work? [Your part of the work is to be available, trusting and obedient]. Ask God what He wants you to do for Him and ask Him to help you achieve that work.

The Gospel – by Bobby Silva – Dallas, TX
The only way we can be part of God’s work is to have a personal relationship with his son Jesus. When we trust Jesus and his finished work on the cross, God forgives us of all our sins. The Bible says:

- “Jesus answered, ‘the work of God is this: to believe in the one He has sent.’” (John 6:29)
- “but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.” (Romans 5:8).

God does not merely want our works, sacrifices, or treasures. What God truly desires, above all, is for us to surrender our heart to His. When we accept Jesus in our heart and we submit to his authority, He begins to mold us to be like his Son. That is what we describe as being more like Christ.

Question: Do you have a personal relationship with Jesus? Have you surrendered to Him and His finished work on the cross? The Bible tells us that the only way to the Father is through Jesus;

- “Jesus said to him, I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one can come to the Father except through me.” (John 14:6).
- Therefore, “If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.” (Romans 10:9).

Once we are saved and have this personal relationship with Christ then we can begin to do His work by the power of the Holy Spirit. The greatest work we can do as followers of Christ is to share his good news: “For I’m not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.” (Romans 1:16). There is no greater work than this!

Saul is a hero of the Bible. He accomplished great things for God as we’ll talk about in our next lesson. But we’ll also talk about some wrong choices that the Saul and the people of Israel made, and how God worked through those choices to still bless His people.
Review
Last week’s questions & memory verse

Today’s Lesson Verse
“But be sure to fear the Lord and serve him faithfully with all your heart; consider what great things he has done for you” (1 Samuel 12:24).

Qualities
Accountability

Discussion Question
You have been chosen as the captain of your sports team. You are given some very specific instructions as to what your responsibilities are. If you choose to disregard those instructions, what should the consequence of your decision be?

Introduction
Each year, the Ironman Triathlon (held in Hawaii) generates hundreds of inspiring stories about the resiliency of the human spirit. Competitors push themselves to the limit—swimming 2.4 miles, bicycling 112 miles, then running a full 26.2-mile marathon—and reaching their goal brings an elation that is hard to match.

The 1999 race included Dick and Rick Hoyt. Thirty-seven-year-old Rick has cerebral palsy, and cannot walk or talk. But his goal was to compete in the triathlon. So Dick, at age 59, trained to complete the race with and for his son. He pulled Rick in a boat for the swim, rode a custom bike that included a perch for Rick, and pushed him in a special stroller for the marathon.

During the bicycle ride, an equipment problem threatened to end their quest. Dick asked his son if he wanted to continue, and Rick nodded. That was all it took. After a 30-minute delay, they continued down the road. At some points during the marathon, Dick was barely moving as he pushed Rick up steep hills. Then, finally, 45 minutes before midnight, here they came. Riding a wave of adrenaline, Dick almost sprinted toward the finish line. Rick waved his arms wildly as the people rose to their feet to cheer.

Dick & Rick are accountable to each other. Rick says, “Dad is one of my role models. Once he sets out to do something, Dad sticks to it whatever it is, until it is done.” They consider both their decisions as they affect each other and many others who are inspired by their example.

Today, we continue to get to know Saul, and learn why accountability is such an important quality to develop in our lives.

Background
The Lord knew that the people of Israel had rejected Him as their King, so the Lord instructed Samuel to anoint Saul as the first king of Israel. Saul became extremely popular with the people of Israel. After Saul was confirmed as king, Samuel spoke to the entire nation of Israel.

Saul (Part 2)
(Text: 1 Samuel 12:12-25)
"But when you saw that Nahash king of the Ammonites was moving against you, you said to me, ‘No, we want a king to rule over us’—even though the LORD your God was your king. 13 Now here is the king you have chosen, the one you asked for; see, the LORD has set a king over you. 14 If you fear the LORD and serve and obey him and do not rebel against his commands, and if both you and the king who reigns over you follow the LORD your God—good! 15 But if you do not obey the LORD, and if you rebel against his commands, his hand will be against you, as it was against your fathers."
“Now then, stand still and see this great thing the LORD is about to do before your eyes! Is it not wheat harvest now? I will call upon the LORD to send thunder and rain. And you will realize what an evil thing you did in the eyes of the LORD when you asked for a king.”

Question: Why were the people in awe of the Lord and Samuel because of rain and thunder during the harvest season? [It never rained during the harvest season].

Question: What did Samuel accomplish by having it rain? [Even though Israel now had a king, Samuel wanted the people of Israel know that God is still in control and that the people should obey Him].

Then Samuel called upon the LORD, and that same day the LORD sent thunder and rain. So all the people stood in awe of the LORD and of Samuel.

The people all said to Samuel, "Pray to the LORD your God for your servants so that we will not die, for we have added to all our other sins the evil of asking for a king." "Do not be afraid," Samuel replied. "You have done all this evil; yet do not turn away from the LORD, but serve the LORD with all your heart.

Question: What did Samuel's words make the people of Israel realize? [That they had sinned against God by rejecting Him as their king].

Do not turn away after useless idols. They can do you no good, nor can they rescue you, because they are useless. For the sake of his great name the LORD will not reject his people, because the LORD was pleased to make you his own. As for me, far be it from me that I should sin against the LORD by failing to pray for you. And I will teach you the way that is good and right. But be sure to fear the LORD and serve him faithfully with all your heart; consider what great things he has done for you. Yet if you persist in doing evil, both you and your king will be swept away.”

Question: What does Samuel instruct the people of Israel to do? [Not to turn away from the Lord, but serve Him with all their heart].

Question: What lesson does Samuel teach us today about prayer? [We should pray for those who have turned away from God].

Question: What does Samuel teach us today about putting our trust in people rather than in God? [Our nation will fall into disaster if, as a nation, we turn away from God].

Question: What indications or warnings do you see that would tell you that our nation has turned away from God? [Read through the Ten Commandments, then pick up a newspaper and read through the front page or metro section. What do you find?].

As study leader, take a moment and lead the group in prayer; that our nation would turn away from evil and turn back to God.

Israel’s decision to reject God as their King and ask for a man to be their king was not God’s choice. Samuel knew that if the people put their trust in Saul rather than God, it would lead to disaster and Samuel reminded the nation about this. We’ve just seen Israel’s wrong choice. Let’s find out if Saul kept God’s commands. Let’s read 1 Samuel 13:7-14 and see what happens.
Saul’s Decision
Saul’s son Jonathan had attacked a Philistine camp. The Philistines gathered a huge army, far outnumbering the army of Israel. When the men of Israel saw that their situation was critical and that they were in trouble, many hid and even ran away. Saul and his men were at a place called Gilgal at the time.

“Some Hebrews even crossed the Jordan to the land of Gad and Gilead. Saul remained at Gilgal, and all the troops with him were quaking with fear. 8 He waited seven days, the time set by Samuel; but Samuel did not come to Gilgal, and Saul's men began to scatter. 9 So he said, "Bring me the burnt offering and the fellowship offerings."

Question: Do you remember from last week’s lesson what Samuel told Saul to do at Gilgal? [Samuel told Saul that under no circumstances was he to sacrifice any offerings to God until he arrived and told Saul what to do, for this was the Lord’s instruction].

“And Saul offered up the burnt offering. 10 Just as he finished making the offering, Samuel arrived, and Saul went out to greet him. 11 “What have you done?” asked Samuel. Saul replied, "When I saw that the men were scattering, and that you did not come at the set time, and that the Philistines were assembling at Micmash, 12 I thought, ‘Now the Philistines will come down against me at Gilgal, and I have not sought the LORD's favor.’ So I felt compelled to offer the burnt offering." 13 “You acted foolishly,” Samuel said. "You have not kept the command the LORD your God gave you; if you had, he would have established your kingdom over Israel for all time. 14 But now your kingdom will not endure; the LORD has sought out a man after his own heart and appointed him leader of his people, because you have not kept the LORD’s command” (1 Samuel 13:7-14).

Question: Why had Samuel instructed Saul to wait until he arrived at Gilgal before sacrificing to the Lord? [The Lord wanted Saul to obey Him completely].

Question: What had Samuel warned Saul and the people of Israel when Saul became king? [Be sure to fear the Lord and serve him faithfully with all your heart. If they continued to turn away from the Lord, the entire nation would be swept away].

Question: Do you know what the consequence of Saul’s disobedience to God was? [Samuel told Saul that since he had rejected the word of the Lord, that the Lord had rejected him as king over Israel]!

Question: Why do you think Saul’s actions had such a severe consequence? [God’s chosen king was to be an example to all of Israel of how to live a life in obedience to God. God needed a man who could obey Him completely].

Saul was a hero of the Bible - he accomplished great things for God. But even heroes can and do at times make wrong choices, and they must face the consequences of their choices.

Question: What does it mean to be held accountable for our actions? [To be held responsible for the choices or decisions we make].

Question: Why is it important to learn accountability? [In every decision you make, someone else is or will be affected by your decision]. By learning accountability, you develop a sense of what is right and what is wrong, what is acceptable behavior and what is not acceptable behavior.

Question: How can you learn to be accountable? [Tie in your responsibilities so that they affect others, or things important to you, i.e.: if chores are not done, no one gets privileges, or you lose privileges].

Question: What does the lesson of Saul's disobedience teach us today? [Just as Saul faced the consequences of his wrong decision; so must we when we make a wrong decision].
It’s not always easy to make the right choice. When you’re faced with a difficult choice, remember the words of Samuel, “But be sure to fear the Lord and serve him faithfully with all your heart; consider what great things he has done for you” (1 Samuel 12:24).

The Gospel – by Kurt Nelson – Dallas, TX

Question: How does our walk with God compare to Saul’s example of disobedience and failed accountability? [As much as we wish we obeyed God perfectly all the time, when we are honest with ourselves we know that we have fallen short many times].

The Bible makes it painfully clear that all of us have failed to obey God in many commands to which God holds us accountable. “As it is written: ‘There is no one righteous, not even one; there is no one who understands; there is no one who seeks God. All have turned away, they have together become worthless; there is no one who does good, not even one.’” (Romans 3:10-12)

Accountability involves consequences. When we fail to do what is expected or required of us, God always holds us accountable. Saul lost the kingdom as a result of his disobedience (1 Samuel 13:13-14).

Question: What is the consequence of our failure to obey God at all times? [The primary consequence is spiritual separation from God both now and in eternity. Just like Saul lost the kingdom, so we lose the privilege of being in God’s Kingdom forever which the Bible calls eternal life in heaven].

Isaiah 59:2 states, “But your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God, And your sins have hidden His face from you so that He does not hear.”

Saul’s loss of the kingdom was irreversible for him. There was no hope of his ever regaining the kingdom once he lost it. It was a tragic and permanent loss.

Question: Is there any hope for us? Have our sins ruined any hope we have of ever experiencing God’s Kingdom again? [Fortunately there is great news for you and me! Because of the perfect lifelong obedience of Jesus Christ to His heavenly Father, our God is the God of second chances!]

Jesus not only lived a perfect life, He also chose to step up and volunteered be held accountable for the consequences of your sins. He stood in your place when He suffered and died on the Cross as the consequence of your sins - and He took your punishment so that you could be fully pardoned and completely forgiven forever. “God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.” (2 Cor. 5:21)

Question: Is this forgiveness automatic? Do we have to do anything to receive it? [It is a free gift! We cannot work for it, earn it or deserve it. But we do have to ask for it and receive it by faith].

Like receiving any gift, all we have to do is believe in what Jesus did for us when He suffered and died on the Cross to pay for our sins and accept Him as our Savior! - John 1:12-13.

Bonus Question: What if we have already received Jesus as our Savior but realize that we have sinned against God after that? [Once we receive Christ, the Bible teaches us that we have eternal life – that means forever. We will inevitably fall short in our accountability to God and sin against Him again, but the good news is that Jesus died for all of those sins as well].

Once we trust in Jesus for our forgiveness and the gift of eternal life, we are forever forgiven and secure in that relationship with Him. In that case, we just need to admit our shortcomings to God and thank Him again for the gift of forgiveness that He has already given us! “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.” (1 John 1:9) What great good news indeed! Thanks be to God!
LESSON # 15: DAVID: A KING ON THE INSIDE

Review
Last week’s questions & memory verse

Today’s Lesson Verse
“...The Lord does not look at the things man looks at. Man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart” (1 Samuel 16:7).

Qualities
A heart after God’s own heart

Introduction
One winter, the Roman Emperor Licinius (250-325 A.D.) was carrying out a campaign to rid his empire of Christians. His best soldier unit was called the “Thundering Legion,” led by a centurion named Sempronius. The Legion made its winter camp that year in a town called Sebaste. Licinius learned that 40 of his legionnaires had become Christians and so he ordered them to be stripped naked and placed out in the middle of a frozen pond. Nearby, there was a house and he ordered a fire to be built, a warm bath to be provided in the house and plenty of food for any of those 40 who would deny their faith and come on into the house.

As daylight gave way to night, many of the soldiers walked about trying to stay warm and joined in a common prayer: “Oh Lord. Forty wrestlers have come forth to fight for you. Oh, Lord, grant that forty wrestlers may gain the victory.”

As the night went on, one of them could stand the suffering no longer. He left the ice and went into the house where Sempronius and his guards were keeping watch. The others were dying out there on the ice. Some, if they were able, kept praying: “Oh Lord. Forty wrestlers have come forth to fight for you. Oh, Lord, grant that forty wrestlers may gain the victory.

By morning their prayer was answered. Sometime during the night, Sempronius, the centurion, became so convicted by the faithfulness of his men out on the ice that he stood before his men and declared himself now to be a Christian. He stripped off all of his clothes and walked into the middle of the ice to join his brothers in Christ. As daybreak came, forty glorious spirits stood before the unveiled glorious presence of Jesus Christ…Sempronius among them.

Sempronius came to understand that what God wanted was his heart. Today we’ll meet a boy who God chose as the next king over Israel because of his heart.

Background Review
Because Saul had rejected the word of the Lord, God had rejected Saul as king over Israel. Samuel tells Saul, “The Lord has torn the kingdom of Israel from you today and has given it to one of your neighbors - to one better than you” (1 Samuel 15:28). (For complete review read 1 Samuel Chapter 15).

David (Part 1)
(Text: 1 Samuel 16:1-12)

“The LORD said to Samuel, "How long will you mourn for Saul, since I have rejected him as king over Israel? Fill your horn with oil and be on your way; I am sending you to Jesse of Bethlehem. I have chosen one of his sons to be king."

2 But Samuel said, "How can I go? Saul will hear about it and kill me."
The LORD said, "Take a heifer with you and say, 'I have come to sacrifice to the LORD.' 3 Invite Jesse to the sacrifice, and I will show you what to do. You are to anoint for me the one I indicate."
4 Samuel did what the LORD said. When he arrived at Bethlehem, the elders of the town trembled when they met him. They asked, "Do you come in peace?"

5 Samuel replied, "Yes, in peace; I have come to sacrifice to the LORD. Consecrate yourselves and come to the sacrifice with me." Then he consecrated Jesse and his sons and invited them to the sacrifice.

6 When they arrived, Samuel saw Eliab and thought, "Surely the LORD's anointed stands here before the LORD."

7 But the LORD said to Samuel, "Do not consider his appearance or his height, for I have rejected him. The LORD does not look at the things man looks at. Man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart."

8 Then Jesse called Abinadab and had him pass in front of Samuel. But Samuel said, "The LORD has not chosen this one either." 9 Jesse then had Shammah pass by, but Samuel said, "Nor has the LORD chosen this one." 10 Jesse had seven of his sons pass before Samuel, but Samuel said to him, "The LORD has not chosen these." 11 So he asked Jesse, "Are these all the sons you have?"

"There is still the youngest," Jesse answered, "but he is tending the sheep."

Samuel said, "Send for him; we will not sit down until he arrives."

12 So he sent and had him brought in. He was ruddy, with a fine appearance and handsome features.

Then the LORD said, "Rise and anoint him; he is the one."

Question: If you were Samuel, would you have chosen David as king? [I wouldn't have at first glance – or even maybe second look!]

When Jesse found out that one of his boys was about to be named king – he sent for all his sons to stand before Samuel. I’m sure that Jesse put his oldest and biggest and strongest son before Samuel and confidently waited for him to be named king. But it didn’t happen. When Samuel had gone through all of the brothers, he still hadn’t found the man he was looking for – in fact, he wouldn’t find the man – he would find a boy!

David was not the biggest or the oldest in his family – he was a young boy maybe 12 years old. In his dad’s eyes, he wasn’t even on the playing squad – his dad never gave him consideration for the job. On the outside, David did not look like a king. But God saw a king on the inside!

Question: What criteria does God use to measure a person? [God looks at a person’s heart].

Let’s meet David, the son of Jesse, who came from the small town of Bethlehem, chosen by God to be king of Israel. And in getting to know David, perhaps you can discover some of the qualities that God wants you to have.

A Man After God’s Own Heart

David is introduced to us as a man after God’s own heart (1 Samuel 13:14).

Question: What does it mean to be a “person after God’s own heart”? [To have the same values or virtues; to live in a way that pleases God; to reflect God’s qualities; to be His ambassador]. David understood how God wants a person to live his life and to do so obediently (if you remember, being obedient helps you practice living as God wants you to, to become more like Him).
Responsibility
David was a shepherd. This is what God told David through Nathan the prophet: “I took you from the pasture and from following the flock to be ruler over my people Israel” (2 Samuel 7:8).

Question: What kinds of responsibilities did David learn from being a shepherd? [The flock was his to feed and care for. A shepherd knows all of his sheep]. God now gave David a new flock to care for – the people of Israel.

Question: How do sheep respond to a shepherd? [Sheep know their shepherd’s voice, and will respond only to his voice. A sheep will not respond until they know the shepherd and know his voice. This happens only after the shepherd gains the flock’s trust].

Question: Who is another shepherd the Bible tells us about? [Jesus Christ]. Jesus says, “I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me” (John 10:14). The Bible says that we are God’s people, the sheep of His pasture (Psalm 100: 3). God cares for you, just as a shepherd cares for his sheep.

Courage
Question: Why would it take courage to be a shepherd? [The shepherd must protect the flock from its enemies]. When David convinced King Saul to let him fight against Goliath, he said, “Your servant has been keeping his father’s sheep. When a lion or a bear came and carried off a sheep from the flock, I went after it, struck it and rescued the sheep from its mouth” (1 Samuel 17:34).

Question: How did Jesus show courage? [Jesus laid down his life for his sheep - for us].

A Servant
Question: What does it mean to be a servant? [A servant helps meet the needs of others & puts the interests of others first]. David referred to himself as a servant, and God often referred to David as his servant.

- Question: Why does God consider being a servant so important? [The Scriptures say, “2:5 Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: 6 Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, 7 but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant” (Philippians 2:5-7).

- Jesus also says, “whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, 27 ... 28 just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many” (Matthew 20:27-28).

It’s important enough that Jesus made it the focal point of His teaching and how He lived His life. It’s why He says, “you will be blessed if you do as I do.”

Respect for God
A shepherd must stay with the flock both day and night. David had time to look up at the sky at night and breathe in the majesty and splendor of God’s creation.

It was probably on a clear star-lit night that David wrote down these words, “When I consider your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have set in place, 4 what is man that you are mindful of him, the son of man that you care for him?” (Psalm 8:3-4).

David correctly recognized that God is Sovereign (supreme) over all creation.
Question: Because of David's faithfulness, what promise did God make to David? [David was so much of a man after God's own heart that God said to David, “Your house and your kingdom will endure forever before me; your throne will be established forever” (2 Samuel 7:16)]. God promised David that a descendant would be king forever.

Question: How did God ultimately go about keeping His promise to David? [Isaiah, the Old Testament prophet spoke of Jesus saying, “He will reign on David's throne and over his kingdom, establishing it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever” (Isaiah 9:7)]. Jesus’ Mother Mary was a descendant of David, as was Joseph, Jesus’ step-dad (his earthly father). As a direct descendant of David, Jesus had every rightful claim to the throne of Israel.

Question: Like David, how can you become a person after God's own heart? [Learn and develop a deep respect for God]. Qualities of obedience, responsibility, courage, and being a servant are all qualities that God wants you to develop in your life. You may not look like a king on the outside, but you can be a king on the inside. And while God may not ask you to be a king, he does ask you to be a boy or girl after his own heart.

The Gospel – by David Roosevelt – Dallas, TX
As part of this lesson we learned about two shepherds, David and Jesus, and how they both showed courage and how they were both servants. Let’s finish this lesson by asking some very important questions.

Question: What is the key difference between David and Jesus? [David was a man but Jesus was both man and the Son of God. David was imperfect, Jesus was perfect].

Question: Why would God send his Son to earth? [God knew that no matter how hard we try to be a man or woman after God’s own heart that all of us would make mistakes, that we would all fall short of God’s standards (Romans 3:23)].

Question: Have you ever made a mistake? [Yes]. What are those mistakes often times called in Scripture and what do they do to our relationship with God? [The “mistakes” we make are often times called “sin.” Those mistakes have the potential to separate us from God for all eternity (Isaiah 59:2 and 2 Thessalonians 1:9)].

So the Bible, God's Word, says that we all sin and that sin creates separation from God. Uh oh, that's bad news! Well, let's talk about some “Good News” by revisiting why God sent Jesus to earth. God sent Jesus, God in the flesh (Immanuel], to bear our sins on the cross; He died in our place (1 Peter 2:24).

What a gift! We are sinful which separates us from God, and God’s perfect-ness demands that sin – disobedience to God - is punished. Because the punishment is too big – impossible - for us to pay, God paid the price for our sin by sending his Son to be punished – to die - in our place!

Question: Do we have to do anything to receive this gift from God? A gift only becomes a gift when it is received willingly. Likewise, we have to accept the gift that God has given us by believing in Jesus and what he has done for us on the cross (John 3:16). I am going to close in a prayer in which you can receive this gift. Dads and kids, if you want to accept this gift, please pray along with me – you can pray out loud or to God quietly:

God, we have deep regret for our sin but are so thankful for the gift of Jesus. We acknowledge that Jesus is Lord, that we are sinners, that nothing we do will get us to heaven, that Jesus paid for our sins through his death on the cross, and that you conquered death by raising Jesus from the grave. Lord, we
believe in Jesus, what he did for us on the cross and accept his gift. Through your Holy Spirit help us to have a real and growing relationship with you. Amen.

Kids - if you prayed that prayer and meant it with all of who you are, tell your mom or dad what happened today. Dads, if you are receiving this gift today, tell another person you know who follows Jesus to talk about how you grow in this relationship with Him.

“"I am not ashamed of this Good News about Christ. It is the power of God at work, saving everyone who believes…” – Romans 1:16
LESSON # 16: DAVID (Part 2)

Review
Last week’s questions & memory verse

Today’s Lesson Verse
“In this world you will have trouble. But cheer up! I have overcome the world” (John 16:33).

Qualities
Courage, Honoring God

Discussion Question
Suppose you have a giant homework assignment that no one seems to be able to help you with. It’s due tomorrow. How would you begin to solve it?

Introduction
Barcelona, Spain, 1992 - The Summer Olympic Games. Derek Redmond of England was a favorite to win a medal in the 400-meter race. In the middle of the race, Redmond seemed to be running smoothly, preparing to set up his kick to place himself in a prime spot to win the final. But suddenly, Redmond pulled up, grabbed for the back of his leg, and fell to the track in a crumpled heap. Redmond’s pursuit of the Olympic gold had come to a crushing halt. Still, he was not to be defeated. With his face showing the excruciating pain caused from what he would later learn was a torn hamstring, Redmond was determined to finish the race.

He rose from the track, his competitors now a hundred yards ahead, and began to hobble toward the finish line. Each step was marked by agony. The crowd gasped collectively, as if they could feel the pain Redmond was experiencing. Yet he was undaunted in his desire to cross the finish line. His will was strong, but his leg could not hold out. As he attempted to continue, all eyes were on him.

Within moments of seeing his son go down, Redmond’s father Jim, jumped out of the stands and made his way toward the track. When security personnel attempted to stop him, Jim yelled, “That’s my son!” He was allowed to pass, and entered the track, where he came to the aid of his son. When he reached Derek’s side, Jim grabbed his son’s arm and said, “You don’t have to do this.”

“Yes I do,” Derek responded……”

Then we will do it together” His Dad replied.

His dad draped Derek’s left arm around his own shoulders. He then placed his right arm around the shoulders of his son. Then he grabbed Derek’s right arm, and began to lead him to the finish line. With his father walking beside him, Derek hopped along gingerly and completed the last leg of the race. Together, slowly, father and son made it down the back stretch and reached the finish line, while an amazed crowd rose to their feet and roared with wild cheers. The image was captured by photographers and television cameras, and was quickly seen around the world, in what has become one of the most emotional and inspiring moments in Olympic history.

The official results of the men’s 400 meter semifinal race show Derek Redmond’s performance as “race abandoned”. The world will remember it as anything but.

Derek Redmond faced a giant defeat. But as defeat was imminent, his dad came and said, “We’ll do it together.” Today, we’ll continue meeting David, who had a giant problem on his hands, but with the help of his heavenly Father, overcame his giant.

Background
The Philistines and the Israelites were bitter enemies. They had been fighting each other since the day that Joshua and the nation of Israel crossed the Jordan River and stepped into the Promised Land.
Upset about the latest defeat to Israel, once again the Philistines prepared to go to war against Israel. Picture a valley, nestled between two large hills. The Philistines gathered their army and set up camp on one hill. King Saul and the Israelite army set up camp on the opposite hill. Both camps sat around looking at each other for days without doing a thing.

One morning, while both sides stood around looking at each other, the Philistines trotted out their champion fighter whose name was Goliath. He was over nine feet tall. Goliath stood and shouted to the ranks of Israel, “Choose a man and have him come down to me. If he is able to fight and kill me, we will become your subjects; but if I overcome him and kill him, you will become our subjects and serve us. Upon receiving this charming offer, Saul and all the other Israelites all but gave up—who could stand up against such a giant of a man? For forty days Goliath came forward every morning and evening and took his stand.

On one of those days, David’s father Jesse, asked him to go to the Israel camp to get some news on the battle. David reached the camp just as the Israel and the Philistine armies were drawing up their lines to stand around and face each other. David ran to the battle line and greeted his brothers. As he was talking with them, Goliath stepped out from the line and shouted his usual defiance. When the Israelites saw him, they all ran from him in great fear.

David & Goliath
(Text: 1 Samuel Chapter 17:32-49)

“David said to Saul, “Let no one lose heart on account of this Philistine; your servant will go and fight him.”

33 Saul replied, "You are not able to go out against this Philistine and fight him; you are only a boy, and he has been a fighting man from his youth."

34 But David said to Saul, “Your servant has been keeping his father's sheep. When a lion or a bear came and carried off a sheep from the flock, 35 I went after it, struck it and rescued the sheep from its mouth. When it turned on me, I seized it by its hair, struck it and killed it. 36 Your servant has killed both the lion and the bear; this uncircumcised Philistine will be like one of them, because he has defied the armies of the living God. 37 The LORD who delivered me from the paw of the lion and the paw of the bear will deliver me from the hand of this Philistine.” Saul said to David, “Go, and the LORD be with you.”

38 Then Saul dressed David in his own tunic. He put a coat of armor on him and a bronze helmet on his head. 39 David fastened on his sword over the tunic and tried walking around, because he was not used to them. "I cannot go in these," he said to Saul, "because I am not used to them." So he took them off. 40 Then he took his staff in his hand, chose five smooth stones from the stream, put them in the pouch of his shepherd's bag and, with his sling in his hand, approached the Philistine.

41 Meanwhile, the Philistine, with his shield bearer in front of him, kept coming closer to David. 42 He looked David over and saw that he was only a boy, ruddy and handsome, and he despised him. 43 He said to David, "Am I a dog, that you come at me with sticks?" And the Philistine cursed David by his gods. 44 “Come here,” he said, “and I'll give your flesh to the birds of the air and the beasts of the field!”

45 David said to the Philistine, “You come against me with sword and spear and javelin, but I come against you in the name of the LORD Almighty, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied. 46 This day the LORD will hand you over to me, and I'll strike you down and cut off your head. Today I will give the carcasses of the Philistine army to the birds of the air and the
beasts of the earth, and the whole world will know that there is a God in Israel. 47 All those gathered here will know that it is not by sword or spear that the LORD saves; for the battle is the LORD's, and he will give all of you into our hands."

48 As the Philistine moved closer to attack him, David ran quickly toward the battle line to meet him. 49 Reaching into his bag and taking out a stone, he slung it and struck the Philistine on the forehead. The stone sank into his forehead, and he fell face down on the ground."

Let’s talk about three important & awesome truths that come from the story of David & Goliath.

There Is Great Power In The Name Of God:
"David said to the Philistine, “You come against me with sword and spear and javelin, but I come against you in the name of the Lord Almighty, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied” (1 Samuel 17:45).

Question: What’s the difference between David’s approach and the approach of the Philistine and Israelite armies in this situation? [The Israelite and Philistine armies put their trust, hope and confidence in men - in the Philistines’ case one man.  David trusted in His heavenly Father to help him].

Question: How can God do powerful deeds through you? [When you do things that honor God, like standing by your belief in God even if you’re being taunted for it, God will honor your stand].

Trust in God Brings Courage
“When a lion or a bear came and carried off a sheep from the flock, I went after it, struck it and rescued the sheep from its mouth...” (1 Samuel 17:34).

Question: How can trust in God give you courage? [Trusting in God can give you confidence and courage to tackle everyday opportunities and challenges]. Who better to have on your side?

Question: What can you ask for courage for? [Any situation that may come your way - the championship game, going through an illness with a friend or family member, standing up for what’s right and not backing down].

Trust In God Can Overcome Even Giant Obstacles
“All those gathered here will know that it is not by sword or spear that the Lord saves; for the battle is the Lord’s...” (1 Samuel 17:47).

Question: What examples of giant obstacles in the Bible can you think of that God helped people with? [Moses & the people of Israel at the Red Sea, Gideon and 300 men facing thousands of Midianites, David & Goliath].

Question: What are some giants in your life? [The dark; being afraid of dogs, trying out for a part in a school play].

Perhaps you or someone you know is facing a serious illness; perhaps your parents or one of your friend’s parents have gone through divorce. There are some boys and girls that every day face poverty, hunger, and even war.

Question: How can you take on your giants? [First of all, recognize that at times there are going to be troubles]. Jesus says, “In this world you will have trouble. But cheer up! I have overcome the world” (John 16:33). The good news is that God is stronger than your giant troubles!! He can give you courage to shoot the game winning free throw with no time on the clock! He’s stronger than the dark, divorce, and illness. He’s even stronger than nine foot giants with big spears.
Sometimes it’s hard to understand why certain bad things happen. There’s a wonderful verse in the book of Isaiah that says, “I will go before you and will level the mountains; I will break down gates of bronze and cut through bars of iron. 3 I will give you the treasures of darkness, riches stored in secret places…” (Isaiah 45:2-3)

God can bring treasures even out of the darkest most difficult moments. What happened to Derek Redmond did not result in a gold medal, but rather a golden moment. God can bring good from what we see as bad. Sometimes, it takes going through the bad in order for these treasures to be found.

Learn from David. Be courageous. Trust in the strong power and name of the Lord.

The Gospel – by Scott Michael – Dallas, TX
One of the things that I love most when I read about the life of David is his faith and relationship with God. A faith and trust that was so strong he didn't even hesitate to take on the challenge of facing Goliath, believing through God’s strength he could defeat the giant. What’s really cool is that we too, you and I can have a faith and a personal relationship with God just like David. For us today, this is made possible through Jesus. You see God loves us and wants us to trust Him just like David did.

This relationship starts with us first admitting that we need God to help us with this thing in each of us called sin. Sin is our flawed thinking that we don't need God and that our way to live is better than His (Romans 3:23). Sin affects all of us. Romans 6:23 says: “For the wages of sin is death…..” this verse shows us what we have earned because of our sin (death or total separation from God forever) but then gives us the Good News. “…the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

There’s more good news. God is a good father who gives his children good gifts. Romans 5:8 says: “God demonstrates His love for us in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us”. God made a way for us “sinners” to be made right with Him. His didn't wait for us to try and fix ourselves (which we can’t anyway). That love that God “demonstrates for us” has been made real in the person of Jesus, who lived a sinless life here on earth as fully man and fully God and died for us, while we were still sinners, and was raised from the dead and today is alive.

How awesome is all this? Now here is the really, really good part: The Bible says, “that if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead then you will be saved, for with the heart a person believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation” (Romans 10:9-10). God has made this gift (salvation) available to everyone, but you have to grab it or take hold of it.

Like David, the Bible tells us that we too can trust in the strong power of the Lord and that if we do we'll live with Him forever (1 John 5:11-12) and have the abundant life here on earth that Jesus tells us about (John 10:10b). If you would like to trust and follow Jesus you can do so right now through prayer. If you’re ready you can repeat a prayer either in quiet or out loud. The words aren’t important – what matters is that you really mean it and really want to. So here we go:

Lord Jesus, I need You. Thank You for dying on the cross in my place for my sins. I believe in You and I open the door of my life and receive You as my Savior and Lord. Thank You for forgiving me of my sins and giving me eternal life. Take control of the throne of my life and make me the kind of person You want me to be. Amen.”
HEROES OF THE BIBLE

LESSON # 17: DAVID (Part 3)

Review
Last week’s questions & memory verse

Today’s Lesson Verse
“Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me” (Psalm 51:10).

Qualities
Repentance, A Contrite Heart

Introduction
The Greyhound had been in a north Atlantic storm for over a week. On the eleventh day of the storm, sailor John Newton was too exhausted to pump, so he was tied to the helm and tried to hold the ship to its course. From one o’clock until midnight he was at the helm.

With the storm raging fiercely, Newton had time to think. His life seemed as ruined and wrecked as the battered ship he was trying to steer through the storm. Since the age of eleven he had lived a life at sea. Sailors were not noted for the refinement of their manners, but Newton had a reputation for profanity, coarseness, and wild living that even shocked many sailors.

Newton had rejected his mother’s teachings of the Bible and had led other sailors into unbelief. Certainly he was beyond hope and beyond saving, even if the Scriptures were true. Yet, Newton’s thoughts began to turn to Christ.

That day at the helm, March 21, 1748, was a day Newton remembered from that moment on, for “On that day the Lord sent from on high and delivered me out of deep waters.” Only God’s amazing grace could and would take a rude, profane, slave-trading sailor and transform him into a child of God.

Though Newton continued in his profession of sailing and slave-trading for a time, his life was transformed. At the age of thirty-nine, John Newton began forty-three years of preaching the Gospel of Jesus Christ. For his Sunday evening services, Newton often composed a hymn that led into the lessons and Scripture for the evening. The most famous hymn of all, we know today as “Amazing Grace.”

(Christian History Institute, Glimpses Article #28, www.gospelcom.net).

Amazing grace, how sweet the sound
That saved a wretch like me
I once was lost, but now am found
Was blind but now I see

Once John Newton was lost, but now is found. He knew how bad he had become, and how God rescued him from evil. Today we’re going to hear a Bible story about a person who did terribly wrong things; and then how God rescued him, and how he responded to God after he had been rescued.

Background
One fine spring day, David (now the King of Israel) sent Joab (the general of the army) and the whole Israelite army out to war. But David stayed in Jerusalem.

David & Bathsheba
(Text: 2 Samuel Chapters 11 & 12 selected verses, Psalm 51)
“One evening David got up from his bed and walked around on the roof of the palace. From the roof he saw a woman bathing. The woman was very beautiful, and David sent someone to find out about her. The man said, “Isn’t this Bathsheba, the daughter of Eliam and the wife of Uriah the Hittite?” Then David sent messengers to get her…” (2 Samuel 11:2-4).
Question: In an earlier lesson about Saul (lesson #14) we talked about accountability. Do you remember what “being accountable” means? [To be held responsible for the choices or decisions we make].

As the king, whatever David said, “went.” And as a subject to the king, if he said, “come here,” you came. As King, David was not accountable to anyone (except God) for his actions and I don’t think he consulted God on this particular matter. And David did something very wrong. He engaged Bathsheba in improper behavior, even though he knew she was Uriah’s wife. Then something else very wrong happened. David got a message from Bathsheba. The message said, “David, remember the other night when you had me come over to the palace? You’re going to be a daddy!”

David knew that he had done something terribly wrong, so he tried to cover it up. He asked Uriah to come home from the war and go home to his wife Bathsheba. David was hoping that Uriah would think that the child was his and Bathsheba’s, so he wouldn’t find out what really happened. But Uriah wouldn’t go home.

Question: Why do you think that Uriah wouldn’t go home? [He was loyal to his friends and to the king. He didn’t think it was right for all of the other soldiers to be fighting in the war, and only he be allowed to come home].

So David thought up a plan. He sent Uriah back to the war with a note to give to Joab. Remember, whatever the king says, goes. The note instructed Joab to put Uriah where the fighting was fiercest and then leave Uriah out there to fight alone so that he would be killed. And that’s exactly what happened.

“When Uriah’s wife heard that her husband was dead, she mourned for him. 27 After the time of mourning was over, David had her brought to his house, and she became his wife and bore him a son. But the thing David had done displeased the LORD” (2 Samuel 11:26-27).

Question: Why was God displeased with David? [David was God’s chosen king. The king was to be an example to all the people of Israel of a man who feared (respected) God and to live in obedience to God’s word]. In this case, David did wrong, he knew he had done wrong, and he tried to cover it up.

Listen to how God responded to David’s actions:

“The LORD sent [his chosen spokesman] Nathan to David. When he came to him, he said, “There were two men in a certain town, one rich and the other poor. 2 The rich man had a very large number of sheep and cattle, 3 but the poor man had nothing except one little ewe lamb he had bought. He raised it, and it grew up with him and his children. It shared his food, drank from his cup and even slept in his arms. It was like a daughter to him.

4 “Now a traveler came to the rich man, but the rich man refrained from taking one of his own sheep or cattle to prepare a meal for the traveler who had come to him. Instead, he took the ewe lamb that belonged to the poor man and prepared it for the one who had come to him.”

5 David burned with anger against the man and said to Nathan, “As surely as the LORD lives, the man who did this deserves to die! 6 He must pay for that lamb four times over, because he did such a thing and had no pity.”

7 Then Nathan said to David, “You are the man! This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: `I anointed you king over Israel, and I delivered you from the hand of Saul. 8 I gave your master's house to you, and your master's wives into your arms. I gave you the house of Israel and Judah. And if all this had been too little, I would have given you even more. 9 Why did you despise the
word of the LORD by doing what is evil in his eyes? You struck down Uriah the Hittite with the sword and took his wife to be your own...Then David said to Nathan, “I have sinned against the Lord” (2 Samuel 12:1-13).

**Question:** What did David do after realizing his sin? [He confessed his sin – his wrong thoughts and actions - and asked God to forgive him]. It’s important to know that God did hold David accountable for his actions. And David was punished for what he did.

**Question:** If David asked for forgiveness, and God forgave him, why did God punish David? [David needed to be held accountable (responsible) for his actions]. Forgiveness was given, which means the wrong would not be held against him again and again. But David was still accountable for his wrong actions. David still had to pay the price for his actions. And who else but God can punish a king?

**Question:** Why do your parents sometimes need to punish or discipline you? [We need to understand and know that there are consequences for our actions]. Like David, we must be held accountable for our actions. Without accountability, we cannot learn what is right from wrong, and what is acceptable & appropriate & godly behavior.

**Question:** What did David learn from Nathan’s story? [He had allowed the temptation of wanting what didn’t belong to him cause him to ignore God’s commandments and to think only of himself].

After David was visited by the prophet Nathan, and admitted that he had sinned against God, he wrote a Psalm.

**Have the group read Psalm 51.**

1 “Have mercy on me, O God, according to your unfailing love; according to your great compassion blot out my transgressions.

2 Wash away all my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin.

3 For I know my transgressions, and my sin is always before me.

4 Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight, so that you are proved right when you speak and justified when you judge.

5 Surely I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me.

6 Surely you desire truth in the inner parts; you teach me wisdom in the inmost place.

7 Cleanse me with hyssop, and I will be clean; wash me, and I will be whiter than snow.

8 Let me hear joy and gladness; let the bones you have crushed rejoice.

9 Hide your face from my sins and blot out all my iniquity.

10 Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me.

11 Do not cast me from your presence or take your Holy Spirit from me.

12 Restore to me the joy of your salvation and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me.
Then I will teach transgressors your ways, and sinners will turn back to you.

Save me from bloodguilt, O God, the God who saves me, and my tongue will sing of your righteousness.

O Lord, open my lips, and my mouth will declare your praise.

You do not delight in sacrifice, or I would bring it; you do not take pleasure in burnt offerings.

The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise…”

Question: What did David recognize about himself? [David knew that his heart was not pure - verse 10].

Question: What did David recognize about God? [Only He could cleanse him].

David recognized that what God really wanted from him was godly sorrow - sorrow that leads to repentance - a desire to turn away from doing wrong and turn back to pleasing God (verse 17).

Question: How are you & I like David? [Our hearts are not pure and when you or I do wrong things or have wrong thoughts].

Question: What does God want from you & me? [God wants for us to have godly sorrow and turn away from the wrongs we do and confess them and ask for His forgiveness].

Question: God wants you to keep your ways pure. How can you do this? [Put God’s words into your heart].

The Scriptures say, “How can a young person keep his way pure? By living according to your word. I seek you with all of my heart; do not let me stray from your commands. I have hidden your word in my heart, that I might not sin against you” (Psalm 119:9-11).
LESSON # 18: SOLOMON (Part 1)

Review
Last week’s questions & memory verse

Today's Lesson Verse
"Blessed is the man who finds wisdom, the man who gains understanding, for she is more profitable than silver and yields better returns than gold" (Proverbs 3:13-14).

Qualities
Wisdom

Discussion Question
If God said to you, “Ask me for whatever you want, and I'll give it to you,” what would you ask for?

Introduction
Born into slavery on a farm in Missouri, George Washington Carver was raised by his owners after his mother was kidnapped and killed. As a boy, he learned that plants could be used to make medicines, clothes, soap, and that even a scrap of trash could be useful.

He attended Iowa State College, where he studied agricultural science. Carver was then invited to teach at Tuskegee Institute in Alabama, and remained at Tuskegee throughout his career. "I realize that God has work for me to do," Carver said. And that work was to change the lives and futures of his people and country by tapping into the secrets of nature. He would rise at 4 a.m. to be "alone with the things I love the most: my plants and God. At no other time have I so sharp an understanding of what God means to do with me as in these hours of dawn. Where other folk are asleep, I hear God best and learn His plan."

He believed that a personal relationship with the Creator of all things was the only foundation for an abundant life. He acknowledged that God gave him the formula to tap into more than 300 uses for the peanut. He recommended crop rotation to improve the soil and brought an end to the dependence of Southern agriculture on cotton alone. Subsequently, he developed hundreds of industrial uses for peanuts, pecans, and sweet potatoes.

George Washington Carver asked God for wisdom – how to use what God has given us for His purposes. Our lesson today is about a Bible hero who asked God for wisdom.

Background
David & Bathsheba’s first son died. Then Bathsheba gave birth to another son, and they named him Solomon. At the end of King David’s life, he called Bathsheba into his room and before her took this oath: “As surely as the Lord lives, who has delivered me out of every trouble, I will surely carry out today what I swore to you by the Lord, the God of Israel: Solomon your son shall be king after me, and he will sit on my throne in my place” (1 Kings 1:29-30).

Solomon (Part 1)
(Text: 1 Kings 3:3-14)

“Solomon showed his love for the LORD by walking according to the statutes of his father David, except that he offered sacrifices and burned incense on the high places.

4 The king went to Gibeon to offer sacrifices, for that was the most important high place, and Solomon offered a thousand burnt offerings on that altar. 5 At Gibeon the LORD appeared to Solomon during the night in a dream, and God said, "Ask for whatever you want me to give you."

6 Solomon answered, "You have shown great kindness to your servant, my father David, because he was faithful to you and righteous and upright in heart. You have continued this great kindness to him and have given him a son to sit on his throne this very day."
7 "Now, O LORD my God, you have made your servant king in place of my father David. But I am only a little child and do not know how to carry out my duties. 8 Your servant is here among the people you have chosen, a great people, too numerous to count or number. 9 So give your servant a discerning heart to govern your people and to distinguish between right and wrong. For who is able to govern this great people of yours?"

Question: What did Solomon ask the Lord for? [Wisdom].

Question: Why did Solomon ask for wisdom? [He knew he needed help to do a good job of leading God’s people].

10 The Lord was pleased that Solomon had asked for this. 11 So God said to him, "Since you have asked for this and not for long life or wealth for yourself, nor have asked for the death of your enemies but for discernment in administering justice, 12 I will do what you have asked. I will give you a wise and discerning heart, so that there will never have been anyone like you, nor will there ever be. 13 Moreover, I will give you what you have not asked for--both riches and honor--so that in your lifetime you will have no equal among kings. 14 And if you walk in my ways and obey my statutes and commands as David your father did, I will give you a long life."

Question: What area does the Bible say that Solomon needed wisdom in? [Administering justice]. If you remember, wisdom is knowledge of what is right according to God and how to put that knowledge into practice.

Question: Who are people that you can think of that need wisdom? [Our President, law-makers, judges, teachers, parents].

As study leader, take a moment and lead the group in prayer, that our nation would pray for wisdom for our leaders, our teachers, our pastors, our parents, our children.

The Wisdom of Solomon:
Proverbs is a book in the Bible that is a training manual of godly morals and ethics.

Question: What are morals & ethics? [Morals are a measure or standard of what is right and wrong, or good and bad. Ethics are what you do based upon your morals]. King Solomon wrote much of Proverbs. This is what King Solomon says about the importance of wisdom:

1) You will understand the fear of the Lord (respect of God) and find knowledge in the scriptures.

Question: What is one way to respect God? [If you respect God, you listen to what He says].

Question: How do you listen to God? [Reading the Bible, conscience, prayers, advice of parents and others].

2) The fear of God is the beginning of knowledge - what is right (truth) and what is wrong (false).

3) "You will understand what is right - every good path" (Proverbs 2:9). When you make a decision, it affects what path you travel on - God’s words show the right path to take.

Question: What are some areas that you need to make good decisions about? [Being honest, activities you choose to be in, information that goes into your mind].

4) "Discretion will protect you and understanding will guard you" (Proverbs 2:11). You will clearly understand what is right. You will have the knowledge to guard against making poor
decisions. You see, you are free to make any decision, good or bad; however you are not free to choose the consequences of those decisions.

**Question:** You may choose to butt in line in the school cafeteria. What consequences could there be? [Sent to the rear of the line, get butted right back].

5) **“A man of understanding keeps a straight course” (Proverbs 15:21).** Wisdom will save you from patterning yourself after the example of people who disregard what is right and do what is wrong.

**Question:** Why is it important to choose good friends? [Your friends have a tremendous amount of influence upon you. Your close friends should share your faith in God, your values, and encourage and help you to live a godly lifestyle].

**Question:** So how do you get wisdom? [There are three ways to get wisdom]:
1. Accept God’s words: Believe and get to know what’s in the Bible.
2. Store up His commands: Learn and remember Bible verses.

**Question:** How can wisdom help you? [Wisdom gives you good advice to make good decisions].

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The Gospel – by Albert Gutierrez - San Antonio, TX

How do we gain wisdom? The Bible says, “Blessed is the one who does not walk with the wicked or stand with sinners or sit in the company of mockers (who mock God)...” (Psalm 1:1). The Message puts it this way: “Don’t hang out at Sin Saloon, don’t slink along Dead-End Road, and don’t go to Smart-Mouth College.” Pretty clear from my point of view and pretty wise.

Wisdom, understanding and knowledge go together like baseball and hotdogs. In 1869 John A. Roebling decided it would be wise to build a bridge a mile long over the East River connecting Brooklyn and Manhattan (New York). Before inventing the airplane Orville Wright stated, “If birds can glide for long periods of time, then...why can’t I?” Plenty of people thought these men lacked wisdom because of their crazy ideas. What most people did not take into account is that they also had understanding and knowledge, worked hard and planned well. Because of them our world was changed dramatically.

The Bible says that wisdom comes from knowing God. Do you know the God of the Bible personally? God came up with a plan that changed the world dramatically. He sent His Son Jesus to take the sins of all the people in the world - past, present, and future - upon Himself so that whoever believes in Him will not perish but have everlasting life. Jesus did this so you could know God personally and in knowing God, have wisdom to live a life now that honors God. If you want to know God personally, ask Jesus to help you to stop living the way the world does (Psalm 1:1), and live the way He does through the power He gives you to do so. This is the good news of the Gospel.
HEROES OF THE BIBLE

LESSON # 19: SOLOMON (Part 2)

Review
Last week’s questions & memory verse

Today’s Lesson Verse
“What good will it be for a man if he gains the whole world, yet forfeits his soul?” (Matthew 16:26).

Qualities
Faithfulness

Introduction
“Little Hattie May Wiatt lived in a house near the church in which we then worshipped, at Berks and Mervine, which is now occupied by the Christian Church. It was a small church and was crowded, tickets of admission were obtained sometimes weeks in advance for every service. The Sunday school was as crowded as the rest of the congregation, and one day when I came down to the church, to attend Sabbath school, I found a number of children outside. They were greatly disturbed because they could not get in, on account of the crowd of children already in the Sunday school rooms of the church, and little Hattie May Wiatt, who lived nearby, had brought her books and a contribution, and was standing by the gate, hesitating whether to go back home or wait and try to get in later. I took her up in my arms, lifted her to my shoulder, and then as she held on to my head - an embrace I never can forget - I carried her through the crowd in the hall, into the Sunday school room, and seated her in a chair away back in a dark corner.

The next morning as I came down to the church from my home I came by their house and she was going up the street to school. As we met, I said: “Hattie, we are going to have a larger Sunday school room soon”, and she said: “I hope you will. It is so crowded that I am afraid to go there alone.” “Well,” I replied, “When we get the money with which to erect a school building we are going to construct one large enough to get all the little children in, and we are going to begin very soon to raise the money for it”.

Hattie May Wiatt died [in 1886]. She had gathered 57 cents which was left as her contribution towards securing another building for the children. After the funeral the mother handed me the little bag with the gathered 57 cents. I took it to the church and stated that we had the first gift toward the new Sunday school building; that little Hattie May Wiatt, who had gone on into the Shining World, had left behind her this gift towards it. I then changed all the money into pennies and offered them for sale. I received about $250 for the 57 pennies; and 54 of those cents were returned to me by the people who bought them. I then had them put in a frame where they could be seen and exhibited them, and we received by a sale of the $250 changed into pennies money enough to buy the next house north of the church at Berks and Mervine.”

Hattie May, a school-girl, did not come from a wealthy family, yet her faithful life was used by God. By 1912, from her initial 57-cents, the church had grown to over 5,600 members. The house purchased by the sale of the 57-cents became the first classrooms of Temple University in Philadelphia, PA. Samaritan Hospital (now Temple University Hospital), founded by the church was serving over 30,000 per year, not including care for the poor. And over 2,000 young men were trained to preach the Gospel because of the foundations laid by Hattie May’s invested her 57-cents (Quotes taken from The History of Fifty-Seven Cents, - a sermon delivered by Russell Conwell to his Grace Baptist (Temple) church congregation in 1912 due to inquiries about this story).

Hattie May Wiatt was faithful with what God entrusted to her. Today, we’ll continue to meet King Solomon. As long as Solomon was faithful with God entrusted to him, God honored him. But we’ll find out that when Solomon was unfaithful with what God entrusted him, God did not honor him.

Solomon (Part 2)
(Text: 1 Kings 10:23)

“King Solomon was greater in riches and wisdom than all the other kings of the earth.”
Let’s talk about some of the great achievements of King Solomon:

**The Temple**
Solomon’s father David had wanted to build a permanent temple in Jerusalem for God. Ever since the Israelites had left Egypt, the temple had been a large, elaborate tent that was constructed while Moses led the Israelites while they were in the wilderness. But God had told David that he was not the one to build the temple for Him, but be built by his son. So Solomon said, “You know that because of the wars waged against my father David from all sides, he could not build a temple for the Name of the LORD his God until the LORD put his enemies under his feet. But now the LORD my God has given me rest on every side, and there is no adversary or disaster. I intend, therefore, to build a temple for the Name of the LORD my God, as the LORD told my father David, when he said, ‘Your son whom I will put on the throne in your place will build the temple for my Name’ (1 Kings 5:3-5).

So, 480 years after Israel came out of Egypt, King Solomon began to build the temple. Solomon conscripted (drafted or forced) 30,000 men to construct the temple. It was made of large blocks of stone and of cedar wood. In addition, there were 70,000 carriers and 80,000 stonecutters as well as 3,300 supervisors who directed the workmen. The temple was 90 feet long, 30 feet wide, and 45 feet high. Solomon spent 7 years building the temple.

**Solomon’s Palace**
Solomon also built a palace for himself. It took Solomon 13 years to complete the construction of his palace. It too was made of stone blocks and cedar wood. Solomon’s palace was 150 feet long, 75 feet wide, and 45 feet high.

**Question:** What do you notice about Solomon’s palace and God’s temple? [Solomon’s palace took almost twice as long to build and was much larger than God’s temple].

**Question:** What does this tell you about Solomon? [Perhaps his heart was becoming proud]. With all of his wealth and wisdom, maybe he felt that he didn’t need God as much as when he first became king.

**Solomon’s Splendor**
“When the queen of Sheba heard about the fame of Solomon and his relation to the name of the LORD, she came to test him with hard questions. Arriving at Jerusalem with a very great caravan—with camels carrying spices, large quantities of gold, and precious stones—she came to Solomon and talked with him about all that she had on her mind. Solomon answered all her questions; nothing was too hard for the king to explain to her. When the queen of Sheba saw all the wisdom of Solomon and the palace he had built, the food on his table, the seating of his officials, the attending servants in their robes, his cupbearers, and the burnt offerings he made at the temple of the LORD, she was overwhelmed. She said to the king, “The report I heard in my own country about your achievements and your wisdom is true. But I did not believe these things until I came and saw with my own eyes. Indeed, not even half was told me; in wisdom and wealth you have far exceeded the report I heard. How happy your men must be! How happy your officials, who continually stand before you and hear your wisdom! Praise be to the LORD your God, who has delighted in you and placed you on the throne of Israel. Because of the LORD’s eternal love for Israel, he has made you king, to maintain justice and righteousness.”

She said to the king, “The report I heard in my own country about your achievements and your wisdom is true. But I did not believe these things until I came and saw with my own eyes. Indeed, not even half was told me; in wisdom and wealth you have far exceeded the report I heard. How happy your men must be! How happy your officials, who continually stand before you and hear your wisdom! Praise be to the LORD your God, who has delighted in you and placed you on the throne of Israel. Because of the LORD’s eternal love for Israel, he has made you king, to maintain justice and righteousness.”

And she gave the king 120 talents of gold, large quantities of spices, and precious stones. Never again were so many spices brought in as those the queen of Sheba gave to King Solomon” (1 Kings 10:1-10).
Question: What did the queen recognize about Solomon after visiting with him? [It was God who gave him everything that he had].

Question: What lesson does this teach you about God? [Your abilities, your possessions, every step and every breath you take all come as a gift from God].

Solomon’s Wisdom
“The whole world sought audience with Solomon to hear the wisdom God had put in his heart. Year after year, everyone who came brought a gift - articles of silver and gold, robes, weapons and spices, and horses and mules” (1 Kings 10:24-25).

Question: What did the people who visited with Solomon consider to be his greatest possession? [Wisdom]. Everyone who came to see him was wealthy. They had every possession that they wanted. What they wanted more than possessions however, was wisdom because they realized that wisdom is much more valuable than riches or possessions.

Question: Do you remember from last week’s lesson how you and I can have wisdom? [Accept God’s words: believe and know what the Bible says. Store up His commands: learn and remember Bible verses. Call out for understanding: Ask God for wisdom. (Proverbs 2:1-6)].

Solomon’s Wealth
“Solomon accumulated chariots and horses; he had fourteen hundred chariots and twelve thousand horses, which he kept in the chariot cities and also with him in Jerusalem. The king made silver as common in Jerusalem as stones, and cedar as plentiful as sycamore - fig trees in the foothills” (1 Kings 10:26-27).

Question: How did Solomon become so wealthy? [Remember that God gave him riches and honor not because he asked for them, but rather he asked for wisdom].

Question: What does this tell you about what God wants us to value? [God wants us to value wisdom more than riches and honor].

Question: Do you remember from our lessons about Saul and David what God expects and requires from His chosen kings? [He requires them to obey Him completely]. Solomon however, did not follow the Lord completely.

Solomon’s Disobedience
“King Solomon, however, loved many foreign women besides Pharaoh's daughter--Moabites, Ammonites, Edomites, Sidonians and Hittites. 2 They were from nations about which the LORD had told the Israelites, "You must not intermarry with them, because they will surely turn your hearts after their gods." Nevertheless, Solomon held fast to them in love. 3 He had seven hundred wives of royal birth and three hundred concubines, and his wives led him astray. 4 As Solomon grew old, his wives turned his heart after other gods, and his heart was not fully devoted to the LORD his God, as the heart of David his father had been. 5 He followed Ashtoreth the goddess of the Sidonians, and Molech the detestable god of the Ammonites. 6 So Solomon did evil in the eyes of the LORD; he did not follow the LORD completely, as David his father had done” (1 Kings 11:1-6).

Question: What had God warned any Israelite not to do? [Not to marry anyone from any nation who worships other gods]. God knew that their hearts would be turned away from Him and turned toward other gods.
Question: Why was it especially important for Solomon not to do this? [It’s like one big game of follow the leader. If the king follows other gods, the entire nation will begin to follow other gods].

Question: What do you think was God’s response to Solomon’s disobedience? [He took Solomon’s kingship away from him].

Question: Who was another king that we talked about that did not follow God completely? [Saul].

Question: What was God’s response to Saul’s disobedience? [God took Saul’s kingship away and replaced him with another king - David].

Solomon became king because he was David’s son, who became king because of Saul’s disobedience to God’s commands. Like Saul, Solomon disobeyed God, and like Saul, Solomon lost his kingship because he failed to follow God completely.

Question: What were some of Solomon’s achievements? [Solomon was a great hero of the Bible. He was king over Israel for 40 years. He had more wisdom and more wealth than any man who ever lived or ever will live. He achieved all he had desired to do].

Question: What however did Solomon also choose to do? [Solomon also chose to disobey God, and turned away from him].

Question: What can you learn from Solomon today? [Above all else God wants your obedience]. Remember Solomon’s example. Don’t let your desires get in the way of being obedient to God.
LESSON # 20: ELIJAH (Part 1)

Review
Last week’s questions & memory verse

Today’s Lesson Verse
“Ahab son of Omri did more evil in the eyes of the Lord than any of those before him” (1 Kings 16:29-30).

Qualities
Standing up for God

Discussion Question
How would you feel if everyone around you was doing wrong? What would you say to them?

Introduction
On October 31, 1571, he nailed a note to the door of Castle Church in Wittenburg, Germany. The note, posted for all to read, explained how certain practices of the Catholic Church (the only church) in his day did not adhere to the Word of God. He addressed corruption and distortions that kept common people from understanding salvation by faith in Christ alone.

Truly fearful of God, in 1505 he joined a monastery and even within the monastery, to him God remained unapproachably holy, and he could never attain God’s demands of perfection. One day, while studying the Bible, he read, “For in the gospel a righteousness from God is revealed, a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: “The righteous will live by faith” (Romans 1:17). He accepted Christ’s work on the cross as payment for his sin.

He began preaching and teaching at the University of Wittenburg, and people came to hear his message. Drawing power and money away from the established church, he was ordered to appear before the Assembly of church officials and recant (take back) his words. He would not and was declared an outlaw. Hidden by friends, Martin Luther made his greatest contribution to the world: he completed his translation of the Bible into German.

Martin Luther stood up for God even though his message was unpopular with church officials and put him in danger. Our Bible lesson today introduces us to another Bible hero who took a stand for God, even though his stand put his life in danger.

Background
Elijah was a prophet. A prophet is God’s spokesman that God chooses to bring His messages to the people. Most often, a prophet urges the people to return to worshipping God.

Elijah was sent by God to give a message to a man named Ahab, who was king of Israel at the time. Before we meet Elijah, we need to have a little history lesson to understand why God sent him to Israel to speak to king Ahab.

If you remember from our last lesson, God became very angry with Solomon:
“The LORD became angry with Solomon because his heart had turned away from the LORD, the God of Israel, who had appeared to him twice. 10 Although he had forbidden Solomon to follow other gods, Solomon did not keep the LORD’s command. 11 So the LORD said to Solomon, “Since this is your attitude and you have not kept my covenant and my decrees, which I commanded you, I will most certainly tear the kingdom away from you and give it to one of your subordinates” (1 Kings 11:9-11).

Question: What are the first two commandments of the Ten Commandments? (Exodus 20:3-6):
1. You shall have no other Gods before me (keep God the most important person in your life).
2. You shall not make for yourself an idol in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below. You shall not bow down to them or worship them (worship only God).

Question: Did Solomon keep these? [Although he did at first, Solomon eventually started worshipping the gods of his wives].

Question: What’s an idol? [An idol is a figure that someone has made that represents a god, and then worshiped].

Question: Why are idols dangerous? [Idols are things that turn our attention away from God. People begin to pay more attention to these things rather than God].

Here’s an example: Let’s say you get $1 a week for allowance. What’s your first thought: give 10 cents to God, or immediately think of what you’re going to buy with it? No matter how important something is to you, God wants to be more important to you.

Question: Why does God want to be more important to you than anyone or anything else? [If God is not the most important person in our life, then we pay attention to who or what we want and do what we want to do].

Here’s another example: What would happen at recess if everyone wanted to play soccer by his or her own rules? What kind of game would you have? Or what if your teacher says, “Today, you can treat anybody any way you want to. If you want to cut in the cafeteria line or if you want to talk back to the principal - it’s OK!” What kind of day would it be like in your school? [A bit chaotic? Maybe a bit dangerous?].

Now let’s get to why Elijah came to have a little chat with Ahab.

Elijah (Part 1)
At the time when Solomon was King, Israel was divided into two parts: Israel to the North, its capital city was Samaria, & Judah to the South, its capital city was Jerusalem.

Now Solomon was King over all of Israel, both North & South, just as his father David was. When Solomon died, his son Rehoboam became King of all Israel. Rehoboam was a cruel king and the people did not like him. So the people of Israel chose to make Jeroboam, one of King Solomon’s officials their king; only Judah remained loyal to Rehoboam.

God promised Jeroboam that if he followed his commands and walked in his ways as King David had, that he would have descendants as kings for a long time. But Jeroboam did not listen to God, and this is what God told Jeroboam: “You have done more evil than all who lived before you. You have made for yourself other gods, idols made of metal; you have provoked me to anger and thrust me behind your back” (1 Kings 14:9). Rehoboam didn’t do much better, and also led Judah away from God, and there was continual war between Rehoboam and Jeroboam. Lovely.

When Rehoboam died, his son Abijah became king of Judah. “He committed all the sins his father had done before him; his heart was not fully devoted to the Lord his God, as the heart of David his forefather had been” (1 Kings 15:3). Charming.

After Abijah died, his son Asa became king of Judah, and he reigned in Jerusalem for 41 years. Asa was a good king. “Asa did what was right in the eyes of the Lord, as his father David had done” (1 Kings 15:11). Way to go Asa!

Meanwhile, back in Jerusalem, after Jeroboam died, his son Nadab became king of Israel and was king for 2 years. “He did evil in the eyes of the Lord, walking in the ways of his father and in his sin, which he caused Israel to commit” (1 Kings 15:26). Peachy.
Then a guy named Baasha killed Nadab and became king of Israel. “He did evil in the eyes of the Lord, walking in the ways of Jeroboam and in his sins...” (1 Kings 15:34). As soon as Baasha became king, he killed all of Jeroboam’s family; because of the sins Jeroboam committed and had caused Israel to commit. Baasha was king for 24 years, and there was war between he and king Asa of Judah throughout their reigns. When Baasha died, his son Elah became king of Israel, and he was king for 2 years. Then Zimri, one of his officials plotted against him and killed him and succeeded him as king. As soon as Zimri became king, he killed everyone in Baasha’s family, because of all the sins Baasha and his son Elah had committed and had caused Israel to commit. Enchanting.

Zimri was king for 7 days. When the people of Israel heard that Zimri had plotted against Elah and killed him, they proclaimed Omri, the commander of the army as king, and Omri had Zimri killed, because he did evil in the eyes of the Lord, just as Jeroboam had committed. Omri was king for 12 years. “But Omri did evil in the eyes of the Lord and sinned more than all those before him” (1 Kings 16:25). Delightful.

Which brings us to Ahab. “Ahab son of Omri did more evil in the eyes of the Lord than any of those before him” (1 Kings 16:30).

Question: What do you notice about most of the kings we’ve just talked about? [Most of the time, the king’s son became king after him, and except Asa who was a good king, each king’s son was more evil than his father].

Question: Why do you think this is the way things happened? [Like father, like son]. A lot of what sons and daughters learn comes from observing their parents. These boys grew up learning from their father.

Question: Kids, why do you think that your dads bring you to this Bible study? [Because they want you to learn by their example how important it is that you learn God’s word]. You see, you need a standard, by which you can measure your behavior, to know if it’s right or wrong. Jesus Christ is the standard that God has given to us so we may know how to live our lives in the way that’s best.

For all the evil things that all the other kings of Israel had done up to the time of Ahab, he did more to provoke God to anger than any of them. Here’s where Elijah shows up. God sends Elijah to confront King Ahab about abandoning His commands. And we’ll find out just what God did through Elijah in the next lesson.

The Gospel – by Ben Bell – Dallas, TX

Question: When is it easy to stand up for God? [When it doesn’t cost us anything]. It’s easy when we’re doing it as part of a group or without opposition or potential embarrassment.

Question: When is it hard to stand up for God? [When we have to do it on your own]. When we have to stand apart from the crowd.

In 1 Kings Chapter 17, Elijah approaches King Ahab who did more evil than all the kings before him, and tells him that the entire nation of Israel will suffer because of how much he has disobeyed God. Elijah then left before King Ahab could kill him and lived in the wilderness for three years. Elijah could have kept his mouth shut and avoided all that trouble. But he stood up for God!

When we believe we should stand apart from the crowd to do the right thing, we may have to choose between honoring God and fitting in with our friends. Are we always going to do the right thing? [No]. We’re human and we’re going to blow it. But the Bible says, “Be perfect as your Father in heaven is perfect” (Matthew 5:48). Jesus, God’s Son, who never blew it once, honored His Father by dying on the cross to forgive you and me for all of the times we blow it, so God sees us as being perfect, just as He sees His Son who is perfect.
If you want God to see you as He sees His Son, you can do so right now, by asking Jesus to forgive you of your sins and invite Him to come into your life. And then honor Him by allowing Him to help you live a God-honoring life.
LESSON # 21: ELIJAH (Part 2)

Review
Last week’s questions & memory verse

Today’s Lesson Verse
“As the Lord, the God of Israel, lives, whom I serve, there will be neither dew nor rain in the next few years except at my word” (1 Kings 17:1).

Qualities
Confidence in the Lord, Boldness in faith

Discussion Question
If one of your friends wanted you to do something wrong, what would you tell him or her?

Review & Background For Today’s Lesson
Omri’s son Ahab did more evil in the eyes of the Lord and did more to provoke the Lord to anger than all of the other kings before him put together. Ahab married a girl named Jezebel who was the daughter of a king in a neighboring country, and at her urging he began to serve their god Baal and began to worship him.

God then sent the prophet Elijah to give king Ahab this message: “As the Lord, the God of Israel, lives, whom I serve, there will be neither dew nor rain in the next few years except at my word” (1 Kings 17:1). Then Elijah left and hid himself from Ahab at the Lord’s command.

Three years later, God told Elijah to go and meet with Ahab, and that He would send rain upon the land. So Elijah set out to see Ahab. Without rain for 3 years, the famine was so severe in Samaria (the capital city of the Northern kingdom of Israel where Ahab lived), that Ahab sent Obadiah, who was in charge of his palace, out to look for food. Obadiah was a very strong believer in God. In fact, while Ahab’s evil wife Jezebel was going all over Israel killing as many of the Lord’s prophets as she could find, Obadiah secretly took 100 of the prophets and hid them in caves and took food and water to them. As Obadiah was walking, Elijah met him, and said, “Go tell your master, ‘Elijah is here.’ ” (1 Kings 18:8).

Introduction
You were introduced to Watchman Nee in an earlier lesson (Lesson 12: Samuel, pp. 45-48). Here is a story about his confidence in God:

There was a holiday celebration in the Chinese village of Mei-hua, which included offerings to their gods. Watchman Nee was with a group of young preachers who tried to share the Gospel on the streets corners during the celebration. But the crowds would not listen. “We have our own god, Ta-wang (which means the Great King). His feast is two days away and for 286 years, Ta-wang has sent sunshine for his feast day without fail…Then I promise you,” cried Li, (one of the preachers who was with Watchman Nee) “our god, who is the true God, will make it rain on Ta-wang’s feast day.”

…Immediately the villagers were interested…“Agreed!” they cried. “If it rains on Ta-wang’s feast day, then your Jesus is indeed God. We will be ready to hear about Him.”

On the day of the feast day of Ta-wang, it was sunny. Watchman was tempted to beg God to make it rain, but instead heard a small still voice that said, “Where is the God of Elijah?” As Watchman and the other men bowed to thank God for their breakfast, it began to rain. The rain became steady and then became a downpour.

Some of the villagers cried, “Jesus is God!” Ta-wang’s worshipers, though, insisted on carrying their idol in the parade anyway. But the streets flooded, and the parade marchers stumbled and slipped; their idol smashed as it fell. The whole village was eager to listen to the Gospel (Adapted from Hero Tales, by Dave & Neta Jackson, Bethany House, 1997, pp 98-100).
In today’s Bible lesson, we’ll hear from the “God of Elijah” as did Watchman Nee and the village of Mei-hau.

Elijah (Part 2)
(Text: 1 Kings 18:16-39)

“So Obadiah went to meet Ahab and told him, and Ahab went to meet Elijah. 17 When he saw Elijah, he said to him, "Is that you, you trouble of Israel?"

Question: Why did Ahab greet Elijah this way? [There was a severe famine in Israel because it had not rained for three years, and Elijah said that rain would come only when he gave the word. For three years, Ahab had someone in every nation and kingdom searching for Elijah. Ahab blamed the drought on Elijah].

18 "I have not made trouble for Israel," Elijah replied. "But you and your father’s family have. You have abandoned the LORD’s commands and have followed the Baals.

Question: What message does Elijah give Ahab? [The reason that this famine has occurred is because you have stopped worshipping God and have started worshipping other gods].

19 Now summon the people from all over Israel to meet me on Mount Carmel. And bring the four hundred and fifty prophets of Baal and the four hundred prophets of Asherah, who eat at Jezebel’s table."

20 So Ahab sent word throughout all Israel and assembled the prophets on Mount Carmel. 21 Elijah went before the people and said, "How long will you waver between two opinions? If the LORD is God, follow him; but if Baal is God, follow him."

But the people said nothing.

Question: Why was God so mad at Ahab? [Remember, the king’s main job was to be an example to the people of Israel by following all of God’s laws and commands. Ahab was leading the people away from worshipping God and telling the people to worship another god].

Question: What message did Elijah give to the people of Israel? [Return to worshipping the God of Israel].

22 Then Elijah said to them, "I am the only one of the LORD’s prophets left, but Baal has four hundred and fifty prophets. 23 Get two bulls for us. Let them choose one for themselves, and let them cut it into pieces and put it on the wood but not set fire to it. I will prepare the other bull and put it on the wood but not set fire to it. 24 Then you call on the name of your god, and I will call on the name of the LORD. The god who answers by fire—he is God."

Then all the people said, "What you say is good."

25 Elijah said to the prophets of Baal, "Choose one of the bulls and prepare it first, since there are so many of you. Call on the name of your god, but do not light the fire." 26 So they took the bull given them and prepared it. Then they called on the name of Baal from morning till noon. "O Baal, answer us!" they shouted. But there was no response; no one answered. And they danced around the altar they had made.

27 At noon Elijah began to taunt them. "Shout louder!" he said. "Surely he is a god! Perhaps he is deep in thought, or busy, or traveling. Maybe he is sleeping and must be awakened." 28 So they shouted louder and slashed themselves with swords and spears, as was their custom, until their
blood flowed. Midday passed, and they continued their frantic prophesying until the time for the evening sacrifice. But there was no response, no one answered, no one paid attention.

Question: Why was Elijah so confident? [God says first of all, idols cannot help you. They’re made out of the same piece of wood that you use to build a fire (Isaiah 44:15)].

Then Elijah said to all the people, "Come here to me." They came to him, and he repaired the altar of the LORD, which was in ruins. Elijah took twelve stones, one for each of the tribes descended from Jacob, to whom the word of the LORD had come, saying, "Your name shall be Israel." With the stones he built an altar in the name of the LORD, and he dug a trench around it large enough to hold two seahs of seed. He arranged the wood, cut the bull into pieces and laid it on the wood. Then he said to them, "Fill four large jars with water and pour it on the offering and on the wood."

"Do it again," he said, and they did it again. "Do it a third time," he ordered, and they did it the third time. The water ran down around the altar and even filled the trench.

At the time of sacrifice, the prophet Elijah stepped forward and prayed: "O LORD, God of Abraham, Isaac and Israel, let it be known today that you are God in Israel and that I am your servant and have done all these things at your command. Answer me, O LORD, answer me, so these people will know that you, O LORD, are God, and that you are turning their hearts back again."

Then the fire of the LORD fell and burned up the sacrifice, the wood, the stones and the soil, and also licked up the water in the trench.

When all the people saw this, they fell prostrate and cried, "The LORD--he is God! The LORD--he is God!"

Question: What did Elijah prove with his contest? [That the God of Israel was and is the only God, and that Baal was not a god at all]. When the people saw what God did that day, they realized that they had forgotten about Him and they remembered that only the Lord is God.

Question: What can you learn from Elijah’s contest? [Sometimes it’s easy to forget about God]. We get busy with school, homework, friends, and activities, and we forget that we need to spend time with God too.

School and friends and activities are all important. God gave them to us so that we can enjoy them and give Him thanks for all that He has done for us. But God never wants them to become so important to us that we pay more attention to them than to Him.

Question: What two qualities do you think that Elijah had? [Faith & confidence in God]. Let’s look at those two qualities that Elijah possessed:

Elijah Had A Bold Faith In The Lord
Elijah did whatever the Lord commanded him to do.

Question: Why did it take courage and faith in God for Elijah to present himself to Ahab? [Ahab had stirred up the whole nation against Elijah because he told them that Elijah caused the drought. Also, Ahab and Jezebel were killing all of God’s prophets they could find].
**Question: Does it take courage today to be a Christian?** [Yes. You may be made fun of for taking a stand to live God’s way. In some parts of the world, it can be dangerous to let people know you’re a Christian].

As group leader, take a moment to lead your group in prayer for those around the world who are persecuted for their faith.

**Elijah Had Complete Confidence In The Lord**

**Question: How did Elijah show confidence in God?** [Elijah purposefully walked right into an arena where prophets of the Lord were being slaughtered, and Elijah challenged, taunted and angered 450 prophets of Baal who had very sharp swords and spears].

**Question: How can you have confidence in God?** [You can be confident that whatever God says is true].

Elijah was confident that whatever God told him was right and good. In our next lesson, we’ll explore how Elijah developed such a strong confidence in God and how you can too.
LESSON # 22: ELIJAH (Part 3)

Review
Last week’s questions & memory verse

Today’s Lesson Verse
"Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, says the Lord Almighty" (Zechariah 4:6).

Qualities
Confidence in the Lord, Standing by what is right

Discussion
Dads: Describe a time when God either provided for you or carried you through an event that helped you develop confidence in Him. (Note: Have an example ready).

Kids: Tell about a time that your mom or dad helped you get through something difficult, i.e.: illness, class project, a move.

Introduction
"Friends, if you and I take glory for ourselves which belongs only to God, we are as foolish as the woodpecker about which I shall tell you. A certain woodpecker flew up to the top of a high pine tree and gave three hard pecks on the side of the tree as woodpeckers are wont to do. At that instant a bolt of lightning struck the tree, leaving it on the ground, a heap of splinters. The woodpecker had flown to a tree nearby where it clung in terror and amazement at what had taken place. There it hung expecting more to follow, but as all remained quiet it began to chuckle to itself saying, "Well, well, well. Who would have imagined that just three pecks of my beak could have such power as that!"

That was the favorite story of the man who chose as his life’s motto: "Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, says the Lord Almighty" (Zechariah 4:6).

He enrolled in Knox College in Toronto, Canada and on his first day in the city, walked through the slum section praying that God would open a way whereby he might take the Gospel to the needy homes and hearts of that area; and the first Sunday morning found him preaching in a jail. At the opening of the new fall session at college the principal asked him how many homes he had visited during summer vacation. "Nine hundred sixty," was his reply.

On one occasion when scheduled to speak at a certain place on Sunday, he found he had only enough money to buy a ticket one station short of where he was to speak. After praying for God’s guidance he bought the ticket and rode to that station, then began to walk the remaining ten miles. When he had covered approximately eight miles, he came upon a group of men repairing the road. He began a conversation with them and pointed them to the only "name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved" and invited them to them come hear him speak the following day. To his great joy several of them turned up and at least one of them was saved.

He did not hesitate to enter saloons and houses of ill repute and in these places he won for Christ a number of broken, disreputable persons. One night as he was coming out of a street that had a particularly evil reputation, a policeman met him and said, "How do you have the courage to go into those places? We never go there except in twos or threes."

"I never walk alone, either," he replied. "There is always Someone with me."

Jonathan Goforth went on to become a missionary in China from 1888 – 1933. He baptized 960 in one day. Every miraculous act he witnessed God perform developed his confidence in God. Jonathan figured out what the woodpecker didn’t – that he could not accomplish all that he did for God in the mission fields of China without God’s power working within him. Today we’ll see how God developed Elijah’s confidence in Him, by the working of His mighty power in his life.
Review & Background For Today’s Lesson
At Elijah’s word, the Lord kept it from raining in Israel for three years. At Elijah’s word, God sent fire to burn up the sacrifice to show Israel that He alone is God. At Elijah’s word, God returned the sound of rain to the dry land of Israel.

Elijah was so confident in God that he knew whatever God told him to speak would come true, and whatever God told him would happen would come to pass.

Question: How was Elijah sure that it wouldn’t rain? How did he know for sure that God would send fire and burn up his sacrifice when he challenged the prophets of Baal? How was he sure that God would send rain again? How did Elijah develop such strong confidence in God? [Let’s take a look at the two incidents that developed Elijah’s confidence going into the confrontation with Ahab and the prophets of Baal].

Elijah (Part 3)
(Text: 1 Kings Chapter 17)

Elijah & The Ravens
"Now Elijah the Tishbite, from Tishbe in Gilead, said to Ahab, "As the LORD, the God of Israel, lives, whom I serve, there will be neither dew nor rain in the next few years except at my word."

2 Then the word of the LORD came to Elijah: 3 "Leave here, turn eastward and hide in the Kerith Ravine, east of the Jordan. 4 You will drink from the brook, and I have ordered the ravens to feed you there."

5 So he did what the LORD had told him. He went to the Kerith Ravine, east of the Jordan, and stayed there. 6 The ravens brought him bread and meat in the morning and bread and meat in the evening, and he drank from the brook.

7 Some time later the brook dried up because there had been no rain in the land.

Question: Where did God command the ravens to feed Elijah? [In a very specific place - by a brook in a big valley (v 3-4)].

Question: Why do you think that God said specifically ravens & not just any kind of bird? [So that Elijah would know that what God said would happen].

The Bible tells us then that the brook dried up because there was no rain. Remember, God promised it would not rain for three years. Do you think that Elijah began putting 2+2 together?

Elijah And The Widow
8 Then the word of the LORD came to him: 9 "Go at once to Zarephath of Sidon and stay there. I have commanded a widow in that place to supply you with food." 10 So he went to Zarephath. When he came to the town gate, a widow was there gathering sticks. He called to her and asked, "Would you bring me a little water in a jar so I may have a drink?" 11 As she was going to get it, he called, "And bring me, please, a piece of bread."

12 "As surely as the LORD your God lives," she replied, "I don't have any bread--only a handful of flour in a jar and a little oil in a jug. I am gathering a few sticks to take home and make a meal for myself and my son, that we may eat it--and die."
13 Elijah said to her, "Don't be afraid. Go home and do as you have said. But first make a small cake of bread for me from what you have and bring it to me, and then make something for yourself and your son. 14 For this is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: `The jar of flour will not be used up and the jug of oil will not run dry until the day the LORD gives rain on the land.' "

15 She went away and did as Elijah had told her. So there was food every day for Elijah and for the woman and her family. 16 For the jar of flour was not used up and the jug of oil did not run dry, in keeping with the word of the LORD spoken by Elijah.

17 Some time later the son of the woman who owned the house became ill. He grew worse and worse, and finally stopped breathing. 18 She said to Elijah, "What do you have against me, man of God? Did you come to remind me of my sin and kill my son?"

19 "Give me your son," Elijah replied. He took him from her arms, carried him to the upper room where he was staying, and laid him on his bed. 20 Then he cried out to the LORD, "O LORD my God, have you brought tragedy also upon this widow I am staying with, by causing her son to die?" 21 Then he stretched himself out on the boy three times and cried to the LORD, "O LORD my God, let this boy's life return to him!"

22 The LORD heard Elijah's cry, and the boy's life returned to him, and he lived. 23 Elijah picked up the child and carried him down from the room into the house. He gave him to his mother and said, "Look, your son is alive!"

24 Then the woman said to Elijah, "Now I know that you are a man of God and that the word of the LORD from your mouth is the truth."

Question: When Elijah reached the town gate, what happened? [Sure enough the widow was there, and the jar of flour and the jug of oil did not run out].

Question: Why do you think that God allowed the widow's son to die? [As Elijah prayed, God brought the boy back to life! If there was any doubt in Elijah's mind that God would do as He said, it would have been erased by this miracle].

Question: Why do you think God had each of these unusual incidents happen to Elijah? [Each incident built upon the other to build Elijah's confidence in the Lord, the God of Israel who he served, and paved the way for his confrontation with king Ahab and the prophets of Baal, to restore Israel's confidence and trust in God].

Confidence In The Lord
Question: In his contest with king Ahab (1 Kings Chapter 18), what happened as Elijah stood up for what was right in front of the people of Israel? [As a result the whole nation of Israel was brought back to faith in Him. God proved Himself to Elijah and Elijah developed complete faith and trust in God and stood by His words].

Question: Why should you stand up for what is right even if you have to stand alone? [It will help you and others develop confidence in God].

Question: How do your parents help you develop your confidence in them? [Food on the table every day, clothes to wear every day, a roof over your head].
Question: Why is it important that you develop confidence in your parents? [So that when they teach you what is right, you’ll listen to them].

Question: Dads, what responsibility do you have with your child’s confidence in you? [Teach them what is right and true; help them learn to make good decisions].

Question: How can you develop faith and confidence in God? [When you exercise your body, your strength increases and your endurance increases. When you exercise your faith by choosing to do what is right, you increase the strength of your faith]. God gives you opportunities to exercise your faith so that you will develop into the person He wants you to become.

The Gospel – by Al Hammack – Dallas, TX
You see from reading these stories about Elijah that it was God and only God who performed these miracles in Elijah’s life. He is so great, so powerful, so one-of-a-kind. He created all of the heavens and the earth by His great power and outstretched arms. And not only that, His goodness is limitless, His mercy is everlasting, and His love for everyone (that includes me and you) never changes.

If you feel small right now realizing just how great God is, you’re not alone. You and I are like tiny little “islands,” and God is like this great big continent! And we are separated from each other because of our sin with no hope of being joined back together unless there is a way for it to happen.

Question: Does God provide some type of “bridge” from us to Himself? [YES…that bridge is God’s son, Jesus Christ!].

The Bible says that Jesus Christ is the only way for anyone to be saved from separation from God (Acts 4:12).

And Jesus himself said in Luke 19:10 – “For the Son of Man [Jesus] came to seek and to save what was lost.” Jesus also said in Mark10:45 – “For even the Son of Man [Jesus] did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”

Jesus went through an excruciating death on the cross, but He did it so that we could be saved from a life apart from God! Jesus is God’s “bridge” that joins us (that tiny little island) with the Almighty God and His everlasting Kingdom.

The Bridge is open to anyone who wants to cross from death to life. Jesus says, “Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him, and he with me (Romans 3:20).

If you’re ready, you can pray this prayer: “Jesus, You are the Way, the Truth, and the Life, and no one comes to God the Father except through You. Right now, I ask You to be my Lord and Savior. I confess that I have done things that have separated me from God, and this is sin. But Jesus, I believe that God raised You from the dead, even death on the cross, to pay for all of my sins. Please come into my life now. Live in me and me in You. And Lord Jesus, I pray that this is not a one-time thing, but an all-the-time thing. Me and You, together forever. Thank You, Jesus. Amen.”

If you prayed that prayer, and if you allow Jesus truly to come in and reign and rule in your life, then you are now “off the island” and welcomed into the unimaginable, indescribable and priceless Kingdom of God. Who are you going to tell?!
LESSON # 23: JOB

Homework Review
Questions & Memory Verse

Today’s Lesson verse
“…Those who honor me I will honor…” (1 Samuel 2:30).

Character Quality
Integrity

Discussion
1) You are at the 7-11 after school. There are only two of you in the store and the other person, unaware, drops a $20 bill on the way out the door. What do you do?

2) Let’s change the situation: There’s a movie out that you really want to see, but your parents have clearly told you that you cannot watch that movie. On Friday night you go over to a friend’s house to spend the night and your friend brings out the very movie that you are not allowed to watch and says, “This is an awesome movie. My parents said I could rent it for tonight. Let’s watch it!” What do you do?

Question: What is integrity? [A simple definition of integrity is a commitment to doing what is right].

Question: What does integrity tell you to do? [Integrity says that you choose to make the right decision, and then follow through with making the right decision].

Introduction
In 1924, England’s best hope ever to win a gold medal in the 100-meter race at the Olympic Games in Paris, France refused to run. The first heats of the 100-meter were scheduled on Sunday, and Eric said, “I don’t run on Sundays. Sunday is for worshiping God, not sports. At least for me.”

The British officials tried to get the schedule changed, but without success. Some called him stupid. Some called him a traitor. But Eric stuck to a promise he made to honor Sunday as the Lord’s Day, to rest from work and sports. As the first heats of the 100-meter were being run, Eric was speaking at a Scottish church about his commitment to Jesus Christ.

Though not his best event, Eric did qualify for the 400-meter race and made it to the semi-finals. Just before the final race, a trainer handed him a note that said, “He that honors me I will honor” (1 Samuel 2:20). Eric won the 400-meter race – not his best event – in world record time! (Adapted from Hero Tales, by Dave & Neta Jackson, Bethany House, 1997, pp. 81-88).

In 1981, Eric Liddell’s story was told in the Academy Award winning movie Chariots of Fire. Integrity says to make the right decision and follow through with that decision. Eric Liddell was a man of integrity. In this lesson, we’ll meet another hero of the Bible who was a man of integrity.

Job
(Text: Job: Chapter 1- Chapter 2:3)

“In the land of Uz there lived a man whose name was Job. This man was blameless and upright; he feared God and shunned evil. 2 He had seven sons and three daughters, 3 and he owned seven thousand sheep, three thousand camels, five hundred yoke of oxen and five hundred donkeys, and had a large number of servants. He was the greatest man among all the people of the East.

4 His sons used to take turns holding feasts in their homes, and they would invite their three sisters to eat and drink with them. 5 When a period of feasting had run its course, Job would send and have them purified. Early in the morning he would sacrifice a burnt offering for each of them,
thinking, “Perhaps my children have sinned and cursed God in their hearts.” This was Job’s regular custom.

6 One day the angels came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan also came with them. 7 The LORD said to Satan, “Where have you come from?” Satan answered the LORD, “From roaming through the earth and going back and forth in it.”

8 Then the LORD said to Satan, “Have you considered my servant Job? There is no one on earth like him; he is blameless and upright, a man who fears God and shuns evil.”

9 “Does Job fear God for nothing?” Satan replied. 10 “Have you not put a hedge around him and his household and everything he has? You have blessed the work of his hands, so that his flocks and herds are spread throughout the land. 11 But stretch out your hand and strike everything he has, and he will surely curse you to your face.”

12 The LORD said to Satan, “Very well, then, everything he has is in your hands, but on the man himself do not lay a finger.” Then Satan went out from the presence of the LORD.

13 One day when Job’s sons and daughters were feasting and drinking wine at the oldest brother’s house, 14 a messenger came to Job and said, “The oxen were plowing and the donkeys were grazing nearby, 15 and the Sabeans attacked and carried them off. They put the servants to the sword, and I am the only one who has escaped to tell you!”

16 While he was still speaking, another messenger came and said, “The fire of God fell from the sky and burned up the sheep and the servants, and I am the only one who has escaped to tell you!”

17 While he was still speaking, another messenger came and said, “The Chaldeans formed three raiding parties and swept down on your camels and carried them off. They put the servants to the sword, and I am the only one who has escaped to tell you!”

18 While he was still speaking, yet another messenger came and said, “Your sons and daughters were feasting and drinking wine at the oldest brother’s house, 19 when suddenly a mighty wind swept in from the desert and struck the four corners of the house. It collapsed on them and they are dead, and I am the only one who has escaped to tell you!”

20 At this, Job got up and tore his robe and shaved his head. Then he fell to the ground in worship and said: “Naked I came from my mother’s womb, and naked I will depart. The LORD gave and the LORD has taken away; may the name of the LORD be praised.”

22 In all this, Job did not sin by charging God with wrongdoing.

JOB 2:1 On another day the angels came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan also came with them to present himself before him. 2 And the LORD said to Satan, “Where have you come from?” Satan answered the LORD, “From roaming through the earth and going back and forth in it.”
2:3 Then the LORD said to Satan, “Have you considered my servant Job? There is no one on earth like him; he is blameless and upright, a man who fears God and shuns evil. And he still maintains his integrity, though you incited me against him to ruin him without any reason.”

**Question: How does the Bible describe Job?** [Job was a man who did all that was right and was also very rich. But even after he lost everything he owned, including all his children, and endured a terrible sickness (chapter two), Job still maintained his integrity.]

**Question: How did Job maintain his integrity?** [Job did what was right and without fault, because he respected the authority of God and avoided evil]. Job knew what God required of him, which is to trust Him and do all that is right.

God requires from His people a standard of integrity.

**Question: Who is our standard of integrity?** [Jesus Christ is our standard of integrity].

**Question: How has God told us about Jesus?** [God has told us about Jesus through His Word, the Bible].

**Question: How do we know that the Bible is true?** [There are three Bible verses that can help us understand this].

1. “The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth” (John 1:14). The Bible says that Jesus is full of the truth.

2. “This is the message that we have heard from him and declare to you: God is light; in him there is no darkness at all” (1 John 1:5). When the Bible refers to light, it is referring to the truth.

**Question: If there is only light or truth in Jesus, is there room for anything dark or false?** No. Every thought, attitude, word or action that Jesus has or does is true or points to the truth. If this were not so, then Jesus could not be God.

3. “I am the way, the truth, and the life…”(John 14:6). Jesus Christ Himself said that He is the Truth. Since Jesus is God, and the Bible is God’s Word, then you can trust that what the Bible tells you is true.

**Question: Is there other evidence that the Bible is true?** [There are four verses of Scripture that can help us answer this question].

“All Scripture is God-breathed [inspired] and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness” (2 Timothy 3:16).

1) The Bible was written over a period of 1500 years. Yet the Bible has one central message: God’s desire and plan to save men from their sins. What the Bible says fits together perfectly – incapable of explanation by chance. Few if any of these men even lived at the same time as each other. In fact, at the time these men were writing they could not have had any idea that their work would be gathered into what today is the Bible. Nowhere in the Bible is there evidence that its writers were lying or making up information to correlate with current events. That means that the entire Bible is true, not just parts of it.

2) The Bible also says that “God is light and in Him there is no darkness at all” (1 John 1:5). Remember that light means truth. Since God is light it would be impossible for Him to lie (Hebrews 6:18).
3) **“Every word of God is flawless...” (Proverbs 30:5)**. God’s word will never lead you toward anything not true.

4) **“All your words are true; all your righteous laws are eternal” (Psalm 119:160)**. God’s word was true when it was written, it is true today, and it will be true tomorrow.

Another way we can have confidence that the Bible is true is through fulfilled prophecy, which we’ll talk about in our lesson on Isaiah.

The Scriptures say that throughout all of his troubles, Job maintained his integrity (Job 2:3). Job could have chosen not to worship and honor God and blame God in his time of trouble. He could have lost his integrity.

**Question: How can we know what is right and what the right thing to do is?** [You can know what is right because God has revealed truth in the person of Jesus Christ, and through His Word, the Bible].

**Question: How can you practice integrity today?** [When you are challenged with a difficult decision to make, ask God to help you make the right decision].

**Question: Dads – What can you do today to help teach your children integrity?**

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The Gospel – by Andrew Hill – Dallas, TX

I will confess that when I read the story of Job, I’m often amazed at both his strength and his integrity in the face of such terrible misfortune. The story of Job is compelling to us today because of the depth of his conviction and faith. Even God himself in the story says, **“There is no one on earth like him; he is blameless and upright, a man who fears God and shuns evil” (Job 2:3)**.

The truth is that as blameless and upright as Job was, he was not perfect and neither are we. We have all fallen short of God’s command to be perfect – without fault. This shortfall is referred to as sin, and the Bible says that we are all sinners (Romans 3:23). While our sin separates us from God, there is good news! Through the work of Jesus Christ, we have been saved from sin. Since Jesus lived a perfect life, his sacrifice can free us if we confess our sin and believe that God raised Him from death to life.

Would you like to have a relationship with Christ and be free from your own sin? If you’re ready, you can pray a simple prayer like this: “Jesus, I confess that I’m a sinner, I believe that you are the Son of God, and I trust in You alone to save me. I’m asking you to come into my heart.”

If you pray this prayer and make it your own, you have accepted the gift that God has offered to you and all people to be set free from sin and the power to live a God honoring life.
LESSON # 24: NEHEMIAH

Homework Review
Questions & Memory Verse

Today’s Lesson verse
“...O Lord, God of heaven, the great and awesome God, who keeps his covenant of love with those who love him and obey his commands, let your ear be attentive and your eyes open to hear the prayer your servant is praying before you day and night for your servants, the people of Israel...” (Nehemiah 1:5-6).

Character Quality
Prayerful

Bible Hero Trivia.
The Bible is full of people who teach us by their example:

- Which Bible hero found favor with God by being blameless? [Noah found favor with God by being blameless].
- Which hero of the Bible is an example of obedience? [From Abraham we learn obedience].
- Which Bible hero teaches us courage? [Joshua].
- What Bible hero followed God with all of his heart? [David followed God with all his heart].

Today’s lesson is about a man of prayer.

Introduction
He established the first orphanage in England. He lived a life of such faith in God that he would sit down for the next meal when there was no food in the house because he knew that God would provide. And God did. Always. The children never went hungry; they always had what was necessary. There were always the right people to look after the orphans. They always had the money to buy the necessary land. There was always enough money to complete the buildings. He had faith in God and God honored that faith.

In 63 years spent in a faith ministry, the results are staggering. The 72 schools he started collectively had 121,683 students. The orphanage accommodated 10,000 orphans. It is believed that 2,813 orphans left the institution as believers, and they in turn led thousands more to Christ.

The institution also distributed over 281,000 Bibles, nearly 1.5 million New Testaments, and over 111 million tracts. Several hundred missionaries received financial assistance...Sixty-three foreign missionaries were sent out from his church alone. He built 10 other churches.

He wasn’t wealthy, and he didn’t run his ministry according to the standards of the business world. What was unusual was the fact that he didn’t just say that God provided for him after the fact. He said ahead of time that God would provide.

He commented in the early years of his ministry, when he was unpopular and his ministry was small, that he would depend upon God’s supernatural intervention for the sustaining and enlargement of the ministry. He said that it would be evidence to convince skeptics and to encourage Christians. He said these things early on, not after the ministry became so large later in his life.

George Muller was a man of prayer. In today’s lesson, we’ll meet a hero of the Bible who believed that prayer was important, and he prayed continually for others, himself, and the work God had given to him to do.

Background:
In 606 BC, God gave the prophet Jeremiah a message to give to all the people of Judah and to all the people in Jerusalem. This is the word that Jeremiah spoke to them: “God has sent prophets to you again
and again. They have warned you to stop serving and worshipping other gods. But you have not listened or paid any attention to them and you have not stopped worshipping these other gods. Therefore the Lord Almighty has said that He will allow Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, to destroy Jerusalem and exile you to Babylon, to serve him for 70 years.” (Jeremiah 25:1-12).

Although the temple and the city walls and gates of Jerusalem were destroyed, God did not leave his people in exile forever. God promised the Jewish people that when the 70 years were over, that he would gather them from all the nations and places where they were taken into captivity and bring them back to Jerusalem from their exile (Jeremiah 29:10-14).

In 559 BC, Cyrus, the king of Persia (the country of Iran today), in order to fulfill the word of the Lord spoken by the prophet Jeremiah, made a proclamation throughout all the kingdoms of the earth that allowed any Jewish person, wherever they were, to return to Jerusalem in Judah to build the temple of Lord. And so God began to gather His people back to Jerusalem, and they began to rebuild the temple in 534 BC, 70 years after being taken into exile by Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon.

Nehemiah was a Jewish man who was living in Persia during the reign of king Artaxerxes I, and served in his court. Nehemiah gained permission from the king to travel back to Jerusalem. He arrived in Jerusalem in 445 BC and led the people in repairing the walls of the city.

**Nehemiah**
(Text: Nehemiah Chapter 1:3-11)

While Nehemiah was still in Persia, he ran into some men who had come from Judah. Nehemiah was eager to hear about how things were with the Jewish people who had survived the exile and remained in Jerusalem.

“They said to me, "Those who survived the exile and are back in the province are in great trouble and disgrace. The wall of Jerusalem is broken down, and its gates have been burned with fire."

4 When I heard these things, I sat down and wept. For some days I mourned and fasted and prayed before the God of heaven. 5 Then I said:

“O LORD, God of heaven, the great and awesome God, who keeps his covenant of love with those who love him and obey his commands, 6 let your ear be attentive and your eyes open to hear the prayer your servant is praying before you day and night for your servants, the people of Israel. I confess the sins we Israelites, including myself and my father's house, have committed against you. 7 We have acted very wickedly toward you. We have not obeyed the commands, decrees and laws you gave your servant Moses.

8 “Remember the instruction you gave your servant Moses, saying, ‘If you are unfaithful, I will scatter you among the nations, 9 but if you return to me and obey my commands, then even if your exiled people are at the farthest horizon, I will gather them from there and bring them to the place I have chosen as a dwelling for my Name.’

10 “They are your servants and your people, whom you redeemed by your great strength and your mighty hand. 11 O Lord, let your ear be attentive to the prayer of this your servant and to the prayer of your servants who delight in revering your name. Give your servant success today by granting him favor in the presence of this man.”

Let’s talk about how Nehemiah is an example of a man of prayer:

**Question: Whom did Nehemiah pray for?** [Nehemiah prayed for the entire country; confessing the sins they had committed against God].
Nehemiah’s prayers probably echoed what God told Solomon “...if my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land” (2 Chronicles 7:14).

**Question: What does our country need to be healed of today?** [Sins we have committed before God, ways we have acted wickedly, commands that we have not kept].

**Question: What do you think God’s response would be if people sincerely prayed for our country like Nehemiah prayed for his country of Israel?**

[As group leader, if appropriate, lead the Bible study in a time of prayer for our country. There are some suggestions for prayer in the “National Day of Prayer lesson near the back of this book].

**Question: Do you remember a hero of the Bible who taught us the power of prayer?** [Elijah’s prayer stopped the rain in Israel for 3 years].

**Question: Nehemiah was aware of how powerful prayer is God. How does God view our prayers today?** [Your prayers are also powerful and important]. God wants to hear your prayers.

Nehemiah prayed in all circumstances. As he was asking the king’s permission to return to Jerusalem to help rebuild the city walls, he paused in mid sentence to ask a tiny, short prayer to the God of heaven (Nehemiah 2:1-5).

**Question: Do prayers necessarily have to be long?** [No].

**Question: What lesson can you learn from Nehemiah’s prayers?** [We can pray in any circumstance at any time].

**Question: Why do you think that God granted Nehemiah’s requests?** [God had a special job for him to do]. Nehemiah also recognized that the Lord answered his prayers not because he was so good, but because God was gracious to him.

Nehemiah received opposition to the work that God gave him to do from Israel’s enemies. (Nehemiah 2:10). Because the enemy opposition to rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem was so high, Nehemiah prayed continually throughout their work. (Nehemiah 4:6-9).

**Question: What lesson can you learn from Nehemiah’s example of continual prayer?** [We need to pray continually for those things that are on our prayer list].

**Question: Nehemiah prayed for strength to complete his work of rebuilding the wall. What are some special jobs that God has for you to do?** [Being an obedient son or daughter, learning responsibility, being a diligent student, using abilities you have in a way that will bring honor to Him].

Nehemiah was a man who believed that prayer was important, and he prayed continually for others, himself, and the work God had given to him to do.

**Question: Who & what can you pray for today?** [Pray for others around you, pray for the people of this country that they will love God and love their neighbors. Pray that God will help you to use the abilities that He has given to you that whatever you do, it will bring honor to Him].

The Gospel – by Sam Holm – Dallas, TX
As believers in and followers of Jesus, we have full access to God in prayer because one day, Jesus was denied access for us.
After I’ve done something wrong, I sometimes hesitate to pray because I am ashamed – I am reminded that my sin is rebellion against God and it should separate me from Him. Then I remember what God the Father did for us.

The Bible says that right before Jesus died on the cross He cried out “Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani?” which means, “My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?” (Matthew 27:46).

Why did God turn his back on Jesus? Because of our sin. Jesus took our sin and died for it. Now the sin that separates us from God is gone! We now have access to God.

Jesus has already done everything you need to have full access to God. If you’re ready, right now you can have full access to God - all you need to do is receive the gift of access Jesus holds out to you. You can say a simple prayer: Jesus – thank you for dying for me to remove the barrier between me and God. Right now I confess that I have sinned against God, and I no longer want to do that. I die to myself and live for You.” Amen!

The Bible says that because one day Jesus was denied access for us, we can now pray without ceasing (1 Thessalonians 5:17).
HEROES OF THE BIBLE

LESSON # 25: ISAIAH

Homework Review
Questions & Memory Verse

Today’s Lesson verse
"Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, “Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?” And I said, “Here am I. Send me!” (Isaiah 6:8).

Character Quality
Willingness & Boldness to speak God’s Word

Introduction
On January 23, 1996, Joe Wright, pastor of Central Christian Church in Wichita, KS was guest chaplain in the Kansas House of Representatives. As chaplain, Pastor Wright had the privilege of leading the House in prayer. This was his prayer:

Heavenly Father, We come before You today to ask Your Forgiveness and seek Your direction and guidance. We know Your Word says, "Woe to those who call evil good," but that’s exactly what we have done. We have lost our Spiritual equilibrium and inverted our values. We confess that:
We have ridiculed the absolute truth of Your Word and called it pluralism;
We have worshipped other gods and called it multiculturalism;
We have endorsed perversion and called it an alternative lifestyle;
We have exploited the poor and called it the lottery;
We have neglected the needy and called it self preservation;
We have rewarded laziness and called it welfare;
We have killed our unborn and called it choice;
We have shot abortionists and called it justifiable;
We have neglected to discipline our children and called it building self-esteem;
We have abused power and called it political savvy;
We have coveted our neighbor's possessions and called it ambition;
We have polluted the air with profanity and pornography and called it freedom of expression;
We have ridiculed the time-honored values of our forefathers and called it enlightenment.

Search us, O God, and know our hearts today; try us and see if there is some wicked way in us; Cleanse us from every sin and set us free. Guide and bless these men and women who have been sent here by the people of this state and who have been ordained by You, to govern this great state of Kansas. Grant them your wisdom to rule and may their decisions direct us to the center of Your Will. I ask in the name of your Son, The Living Savior, Jesus Christ, Amen.

Joe Wright knew his prayer would be controversial. And it was. During the prayer, one member of the legislative body walked out. Others criticized the prayer. But in the weeks following his prayer, Central Christian Church logged more than 5,000 phone calls with only 47 of those calls responding negatively. The church has received international requests for copies of this prayer from India, Africa, and Korea.

Joe Wright was willing to speak God’s word with boldness. Today, we’ll meet another Bible hero who was willing to speak God’s word with boldness.

Background:
Isaiah, whose name means “The Lord saves," was a prophet of God, who completed most of his ministry around the year 700 BC. Isaiah warned the people of Judah (the Southern kingdom of Israel) that their continuing disobedience to God would bring about their capture and exile (captivity) at the hands of king Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon. Isaiah goes on to predict that after a period of time the people would be
allowed to return home to Judah from their exile. Both of these events occurred well over 100 years after Isaiah predicted they would happen.

Isaiah unveils God’s judgment upon Israel and the nations of the world. Through his writings, Isaiah also reveals God’s plan of salvation, which would later be fulfilled in one person: Jesus Christ.

Discussion Question
What do you think will be going on in this country next year? What about 10 years from now? What about 70 years from now?

Introduction:
One of the reasons that we can know that the Bible is true is because of “fulfilled prophecy.”

Question: What is a prophecy? [A prophecy is simply a message from God - it may be a truth spoken by your pastor on Sunday morning, or as we’ll discover in this lesson, a prediction about what will come true in the future].

Question: How does God deliver His messages - UPS, Federal Express, the Post Office? [God chooses ordinary people like you and me. But at times, God calls “prophets” (remember Elijah?) to be His messengers, and He sends them to deliver His messages to people who He wants to hear the message].

Question: How do we know that a particular prophecy is from God? [Every prophecy or prediction that is made in the Bible, has been fulfilled or come true, - if its time to be fulfilled has come]. Some events that we have been told will happen have not happened - yet! But they will!

Although Isaiah lived more than 700 years before Jesus Christ, Isaiah predicted many things about Jesus’ life: his birth, his ministry, his death and his resurrection. Let’s talk about some of the prophecies of Isaiah that have been fulfilled by Jesus.

Isaiah’s Prophecy of the Birth of Jesus (Isaiah 7:14)
“Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel.”

Question: Do you know what the name Immanuel means? [Immanuel means “God is with us”].

Fulfillment of This Prophecy (Luke 1:26-31)
26 “In the sixth month, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a town in Galilee, to a virgin pledged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of David. The virgin’s name was Mary. 27 The angel went to her and said, “Greetings, you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you.”

29 Mary was greatly troubled at his words and wondered what kind of greeting this might be. But the angel said to her, “Do not be afraid, Mary, you have found favor with God. 30 You will be with child and give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus.”

Question: Do you know what the name Jesus means? [Jesus means “God saves”].

Isaiah’s Prophecy of the Lineage of Jesus (Isaiah 9:6-7)
6 “For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

7 Of the increase of his government and peace there will be no end.
He will reign on David’s throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever.”

**Fulfillment of This Prophecy (Luke 2:11, Luke 1:32-33)**

“Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord.”

“He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever; his kingdom will never end.”

**Question:** Who is David that the Scriptures speak of? [The same David who became king of Israel - to whom God promised that one of his descendants, would be on the throne forever].

**Question:** What was David’s hometown? [Bethlehem].

**Question:** Where was Jesus born? [Bethlehem].

**Question:** How is it that Jesus is a descendant of David? [Jesus’ mother, Mary, and Joseph, Mary’s husband were both a descendant of David]. Thus, Jesus has every legal right to claim the throne of David.

**Isaiah's Prophecy of Jesus’ Life & Ministry (Isaiah 61:1)**

“The Spirit of the Sovereign Lord is on me, because the Lord has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives, and release from darkness the prisoners.”

**Fulfillment of This Prophecy (Mark 1:10-11, Luke 7:21-22)**

“As Jesus was coming up out of the water, he saw heaven being torn open and the Spirit descending on him like a dove. And a voice came from heaven: “You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased.”

“At that very time Jesus cured many who had diseases, sicknesses and evil spirits, and gave sight to many who were blind. So he replied to the messengers, “Go back and report to John what you have seen and heard: The blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cured, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is preached to the poor.”

**Question:** What do the Scriptures mean by “captives” and “prisoners”? [The Bible refers to sin as a prison, and people who are in sin’s prison as captives].

**Question:** What is the good news that the Scriptures refer to? [Jesus is the savior, the Messiah that will save people from their sin].

**Question:** Who are the poor? [Those people who are lacking what will make them wealthy – the desire to hear the good news and accept Jesus into their heart as Savior].

**Isaiah’s Prophecy of Jesus’ Death (Isaiah 53:7)**

“He was oppressed and afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth; he was led like a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearsers is silent, so he did not open his mouth.”

**Fulfillment of This Prophecy (Matthew 27:12-14)**

“When he was accused by the chief priests and the elders, he gave no answer. Then Pilate asked him, "Don't you hear the testimony they are bringing against you?" But Jesus made no reply, not even to a single charge--to the great amazement of the governor.”
Question: What is one of the names that the Bible refers to Jesus as? [The Lamb of God].

Isaiah's Prophecy of Jesus' Death (Isaiah 53:5)
“But he was pierced for our transgressions [sins], he was crushed for our iniquities [wrongs]; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed.”

Fulfillment of This Prophecy (Matthew 27:26)
“Then he released Barabbas to them. But he had Jesus flogged, and handed him over to be crucified.”

Question: What reason does Isaiah give as to why Jesus was crucified? [Because of our sins and our wrongs].

[Note: crucifixion had not even been invented yet when Isaiah lived]!

Isaiah’s Prophecy of Jesus’ Resurrection
“After the suffering of his soul, he will see the light of life and be satisfied; by his knowledge my righteous servant will justify many, and he will bear their iniquities.” (Isaiah 53:11).

Fulfillment of This Prophecy (Matthew 17:22-23)
"The Son of Man is going to be betrayed into the hands of men. 23 They will kill him, and on the third day he will be raised to life."

Question: If you accidentally threw a ball and broke a window, what may you be required to do? [You may be required to pay for the cost of fixing that window].

Question: If a person commits a crime, what may a judge require him to do? [Pay a fine or go to prison as payment for the penalty of his offense].

In each instance we just talked about, there was some sort of penalty given, and that each person was required to pay the penalty for his actions. His actions cost him something.

During the days of the Old Testament, when a person sinned, or committed an offense against God, that person was penalized, and was required by law to pay for his offense. That payment was in the form of a sacrifice. Many people in those days were farmers, so the sacrifice required was usually an animal. Those animals meant food and income to the farmer, so to sacrifice part of his income cost him something.

When we commit a sin, the Bible tells us that we commit a sin not only toward another, but also toward God! And the penalty we receive from just one sin is separation from God - forever! That’s one of God’s laws. Because the sin is against an infinite God, the penalty is infinite, capable of being paid only by God. But because we’re human, only a human can pay the penalty. Which is why God sent Jesus to us, fully God, yet fully human. Jesus is the only person who can pay the penalty for you sin and mine.

No amount of good deeds can pay that penalty. When Jesus died on the cross, God accepted his death as payment for the penalty that you and I owe. And for those people who believe in Jesus as the Son of God, and receive Him into their life as Savior, he will be able to spend eternity in God’s heaven!

Because the words of Isaiah could only come true in Jesus Christ, you can know that what the Bible says is true. You can know that Jesus is who He says He is, the Son of God, and the only way to salvation and a personal relationship with God.
Homework Review

Questions & Memory Verse

Today’s Lesson verse

“Get yourself ready! Stand up and say to them whatever I command you. Do not be terrified by
them, or I will terrify you before them. 18 Today I have made you a fortified city, an iron pillar and a
bronze wall to stand against the whole land—against the kings of Judah, its officials, its priests
and the people of the land” (Jeremiah 1:17-18).

Character Quality

Accountability

Introduction

He was born in Germany in 1906. At 14, he said that he wanted to be a minister and later studied
theology in Berlin and went to Union Seminary in New York.

During this time, Hitler was rising to power in Germany. Many Germans—even Christians—accepted
Nazism without question. But Dietrich Bonhoeffer saw the danger and helped form the “Confessing
Church.” It proclaimed that Jesus alone is Lord and that loyalty to Hitler was idolatry. Along with 6,000
other pastors, he refused to discriminate against anyone of Jewish descent.

On April 9, 1945, he was killed along with several others only weeks before Germany surrendered to end
World War II. His writings are still read widely today (Adapted from Hero Tales, by Dave & Neta Jackson,

Dietrich Bonhoeffer stood up for God even though it cost him his life. Today we’ll meet another Bible
Hero who stood up for God, and put his life on the line.

Background

Jeremiah was a prophet of God in Judah, the southern kingdom of Israel. His ministry began in 626 BC
and continued for 40 years. Jeremiah spoke of God’s judgment upon Judah and the nations surrounding
Judah because of their wickedness. Jeremiah urged his people to stop worshiping other gods and begin
following God’s commands. Because his message was unpopular with the Jewish leaders, Jeremiah’s
life was often in danger.

Question: Are the words of Jeremiah relevant or hold anything for us today - or is this just a
history lesson? [Let’s find out].

Jeremiah

(Text: Selected Verses)

17 “Get yourself ready! Stand up and say to them whatever I command you. Do not be terrified by
them, or I will terrify you before them. 18 Today I have made you a fortified city, an iron pillar and a
bronze wall to stand against the whole land—against the kings of Judah, its officials, its priests
and the people of the land” (Jeremiah 1:17-18).

Question: What are issues that you have to deal with at home, at school, with friends, or in
activities? [Responsibilities, privileges, appropriate language, how to treat individuals who may not be
popular, how to spend your time].

You have to decide how you will handle these situations. There are two lessons you can learn from
Jeremiah that can help you to handle these situations the way that God wants you to:

1. Preparation
2. Willingness to stand up for God’s ways even if it’s unpopular
Preparation:
“Get yourself ready!”

Question: How do you get ready for a test at school? [Study, memorize, get with a friend and quiz each other, pay attention in class, follow the instructions].

Question: How do you get ready for your soccer game? [Practice, listen to your coach or instructor, learn about your opponent, physically get in shape].

To prepare for something, you become knowledgeable about it. You get ready mentally for a test; you get ready physically for a soccer game. But you must also be prepared spiritually to handle situations as they present themselves.

Question: How can you spiritually prepare yourself for some of the situations that you mentioned earlier? [Be ready. Know what God’s Word has to say on the subject].

Question: How can God’s Word help you in these situations? [God’s Word can give you direction, strength and knowledge to deal with the situation correctly]. But, God cannot recall to your mind what isn’t in there already. To draw upon God’s power, commit to putting God’s words into your mind.

Willingness To Stand Up For God’s Ways

“Today I have made you a fortified city, an iron pillar and a bronze wall to stand against the whole land - against the kings of Judah, its officials, its priests and the people of the land” (Jeremiah 1:18).

Let’s talk about some situations that you may come across in school, with friends, or in activities, and then what the Bible says about standing up for the Word of God.

1. You’re hanging around after school, and an unpopular kid walks by. The group you’re with start picking on him, and start saying derogatory things toward him.

Question: What do you do? [Here’s a Bible verse that can help you in this situation]: “Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouth, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those that listen” (Ephesians 4:29).

2. A group of your friends is sitting around the lunch table using bad language.

Question: How can you handle this situation? [Here’s what the Bible has to say about this situation]: “Nor should there be obscenity, foolish talk or coarse joking, which are out of place...” (Ephesians 5:4). This verse says that bad language is improper for God’s holy people.

3. You’re the team captain for a science project at school. There is a big prize for the top three projects. You notice that one of the kids in your class has not been picked to be on a team. You met her in your Sunday school class and have sort of made friends with her. She’s new to your school and it’s obvious that she’s a little slow in the classroom. Your teammates have asked you not to pick her.

Question: What would you do? [Remembering this story might help]: One of the teachers of the law came and heard them debating. Noticing that Jesus had given them a good answer, he asked him, “Of all the commandments, which is the most important?” 29 “The most important one,” answered Jesus, “is this: ‘Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one. 30 Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.’ 31 The second is this: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ There is no commandment greater than these” (Mark 12:28-31).
4. Your Sunday school class just got some Christian T-shirts printed up. On the first day that you wear your shirt, some of the kids at school snicker when you walk by.

**Question: Should you continue to wear the shirt?** [The Bible has this to say]: “If anyone is ashamed of me and my words, the Son of Man will be ashamed of him…” (Luke 9:26). Many times, people abandon following God’s Word for fear of not being popular. In an earlier lesson (#21, Elijah Part 2), we talked about that it’s not always easy to stand up for God’s ways, when they may be unpopular. But the benefits of standing up for God far outweigh the snickering that may come.

**Question: Who benefits from standing up for God’s Word?** [Let’s talk about our examples].

**Question: How can the unpopular boy or the new girl benefit by you standing up for God’s word?** [They benefit because he or she knows someone cares and that there is a friend]. Your demonstration of God’s love can be an example for the others.

**Question: How can others benefit by you not joining in using bad language?** [By working to not pollute your mind with dirt and filth, you let others know that you respect God]. When you stand up for God, you help someone else decide to stand up for Him too.

**Question: How can anyone benefit by you wearing a T-shirt?** [When you speak the truth, even if it’s unpopular, you obey God and please him]. God can work through you to help you reach others - even without saying a word.

**Question: Why is God’s way of thinking not very popular in some situations?** [One reason for this is that sometimes, God’s way of thinking isn’t like ours].

The Scriptures say: “For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways,” declares the Lord. As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts” (Isaiah 55:8).

Just because we don’t always understand God’s way of thinking, doesn’t mean we can just choose when and when not to obey Him. You have a decision to make - whether to go along with the crowd or stand up for what God says.

**Question: What lesson can you learn from Jeremiah’s example?** [Jeremiah risked his life to be faithful and speak God’s message]. While you may never have to risk your life, as a Christian, you must be faithful to uphold the Word of God too.

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**The Gospel** – by Cole Adams – New Braunfels, TX

What are the things that make you stand or even jump up? A big basket made at the end of a game? A bride walking through the chapel doorway? A big time touchdown catch or a homerun? Maybe even an incredible acting performance or a rousing speech?

Those are all great things…but they pale in comparison to what Jesus did for us. What Jesus did for us should propel us to our feet…we should not be able to contain ourselves. God’s Word tells us that He came to die on the cross for our sins and in rising the third day we have hope of living and being with Him forever!

We should literally Take A Stand - Stand Up - for Jesus. Here are the real questions we should be asking:
What do you Stand On? The Gospel. The Good News of Jesus Christ is that He came and died on the cross for our sins and through His grace and mercy we can have everlasting life.

What do you Stand For? Jesus. Ephesians 2:10 tells us we are His workmanship created by Him, and for Him.

What do you Stand Against? Evil. Romans 3:23 tells us that all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God and Romans 6:23 tells us that the wages of sin are death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

If you’d like to make a stand for Jesus, I’m going to ask you to stand up and if you are willing to follow Him and live for Him, while standing, tell Him: Jesus – I’m ready to follow You and make my life all about honoring You. Right now, I turn away from selfish living that’s all about me, and turn to You and give myself completely to You. I can’t do this on my own – please help me. Amen.
LESSON # 27: SHADRACH, MESHACH, & ABEDNEGO

Homework Review
Questions & Memory Verse

Today’s Lesson verse
“If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God we serve is able to save us from it, and he will rescue us from your hand, O king. 18 But even if he does not, we want you to know, O king, that we will not serve your gods or worship the image of gold you have set up” (Daniel 3:17-18).

Character Quality
Loyalty

Discussion Question
Think about one of your very best friends. What makes this person your friend? What is an important quality for a friend of yours to have?

Introduction
There was an article that appeared in Sports Illustrated years ago about Ted Williams – who some consider to be the best hitter baseball has ever known. The article in part talked about Ted’s failing health (indeed, Ted died in July of 2002).

It was clear from reading this article, that the most important thing in Ted’s life were his physical abilities - the quick reflexes & exceptional vision that allowed him to become a great batter. He worshiped his abilities and the game of baseball. It consumed all of his thoughts and all of his attention.

The article also quotes Ted Williams as saying that he is mad at God, because he feels that God has took away his health and tremendous physical abilities with age.

Question: What do you find is curious about this man saying that he's mad at God for taking his abilities away? [Never once did the article mention that this baseball player ever thanked God for giving him the abilities that made him a great baseball player in the first place].

Question: What is a definition for loyalty? [Loyalty is being devoted or faithful].

In our Bible story today, we’re going to meet three young men, who like Ted Williams, were given tremendous physical abilities by God. But what these boys understood is that nothing - their abilities, even their own lives - were more important than being loyal to God.

Background
In about 600 BC, Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon came to Jerusalem and attacked it. He captured the king of Jerusalem along with some of the articles from the temple of God.

Then king Nebuchadnezzar ordered his chief official to take to Babylon some of the Israelite boys from the royal family and other important families.

Question: If you were king Nebuchadnezzar, what abilities would you want these boys to have? [That these young men were strong, handsome, very smart, and could learn quickly].

For 3 years these young men were taught the Babylonian language and everything else they would need to know to serve king Nebuchadnezzar. They were even given new names!

Four of these young men were named Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, and God helped them to learn and understand all that they were taught.
Through all this they remained faithful & loyal to the Lord God of Israel, but their trust in God and their loyalty to Him was about to be tested!

**Shadrach, Meshach & Abednego**  
*(Text: Daniel Chapter 3)*

“King Nebuchadnezzar made an image of gold, ninety feet high and nine feet wide, and set it up on the plain of Dura in the province of Babylon.  

2 He then summoned the satraps, prefects, governors, advisers, treasurers, judges, magistrates and all the other provincial officials to come to the dedication of the image he had set up.  

3 So the satraps, prefects, governors, advisers, treasurers, judges, magistrates and all the other provincial officials assembled for the dedication of the image that King Nebuchadnezzar had set up, and they stood before it.

4 Then the herald loudly proclaimed, "This is what you are commanded to do, O peoples, nations and men of every language:  

5 As soon as you hear the sound of the horn, flute, zither, lyre, harp, pipes and all kinds of music, you must fall down and worship the image of gold that King Nebuchadnezzar has set up.  

6 Whoever does not fall down and worship will immediately be thrown into a blazing furnace."

7 Therefore, as soon as they heard the sound of the horn, flute, zither, lyre, harp and all kinds of music, all the peoples, nations and men of every language fell down and worshiped the image of gold that King Nebuchadnezzar had set up.

8 At this time some astrologers came forward and denounced the Jews.  

9 They said to King Nebuchadnezzar, "O king, live forever!  

10 You have issued a decree, O king, that everyone who hears the sound of the horn, flute, zither, lyre, harp, pipes and all kinds of music must fall down and worship the image of gold, and that whoever does not fall down and worship will be thrown into a blazing furnace.  

12 But there are some Jews whom you have set over the affairs of the province of Babylon--Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego--who pay no attention to you, O king. They neither serve your gods nor worship the image of gold you have set up."

13 Furious with rage, Nebuchadnezzar summoned Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego. So these men were brought before the king,  

14 and Nebuchadnezzar said to them, "Is it true, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, that you do not serve my gods or worship the image of gold I have set up?  

15 Now when you hear the sound of the horn, flute, zither, lyre, harp, pipes and all kinds of music, if you are ready to fall down and worship the image I made, very good. But if you do not worship it, you will be thrown immediately into a blazing furnace. Then what god will be able to rescue you from my hand?"

16 Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego replied to the king, "O Nebuchadnezzar, we do not need to defend ourselves before you in this matter.  

17 If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God we serve is able to save us from it, and he will rescue us from your hand, O king.  

18 But even if he does not, we want you to know, O king, that we will not serve your gods or worship the image of gold you have set up."

19 Then Nebuchadnezzar was furious with Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, and his attitude toward them changed. He ordered the furnace heated seven times hotter than usual and commanded some of the strongest soldiers in his army to tie up Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego and throw them into the blazing furnace.  

21 So these men, wearing their robes, trousers, turbans and other clothes, were bound and thrown into the blazing furnace.  

22 The king's command was so urgent and the furnace so hot that the flames of the fire killed the soldiers
who took up Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, 23 and these three men, firmly tied, fell into the blazing furnace.

24 Then King Nebuchadnezzar leaped to his feet in amazement and asked his advisers, "Weren't there three men that we tied up and threw into the fire?"

They replied, "Certainly, O king."

25 He said, "Look! I see four men walking around in the fire, unbound and unharmed, and the fourth looks like a son of the gods."

26 Nebuchadnezzar then approached the opening of the blazing furnace and shouted, "Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, servants of the Most High God, come out! Come here!"

So Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego came out of the fire, 27 and the satraps, prefects, governors and royal advisers crowded around them. They saw that the fire had not harmed their bodies, nor was a hair of their heads singed; their robes were not scorched, and there was no smell of fire on them.

28 Then Nebuchadnezzar said, "Praise be to the God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, who has sent his angel and rescued his servants! They trusted in him and defied the king's command and were willing to give up their lives rather than serve or worship any god except their own God. 29 Therefore I decree that the people of any nation or language who say anything against the God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego be cut into pieces and their houses be turned into piles of rubble, for no other god can save in this way."

30 Then the king promoted Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego in the province of Babylon."

Question: Why do you think that God saved Shadrach, Meshach & Abednego from the furnace? [Because they chose to remain loyal to God and not worship the idol that Nebuchadnezzar set up].

Question: Why do you think that Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego chose to remain loyal to God, when they knew that they might be killed for their loyalty? [They understood that it was God who gave them good health, knowledge, understanding, and their abilities that enabled them to serve the king well].

They also understood how seriously God forbids idol worship. Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego knew that they could never give their worship to another god, because worship is the exclusive right of God Himself. They wanted to remain loyal to God.

Question: What is one characteristic of a good friend? [One characteristic of a good friend is loyalty].

A loyal friend is someone who is your friend every day - even if you’re not having a very good day.

You know, there’s a friend you have that is a better friend to you than anyone. His name is Jesus. Jesus is completely loyal to you no matter how bad of a day you’re having. He’s always ready to spend time with you.

Question: What are some things that demand your attention? [Homework, sports or other activities, friends].

Question: How could these become more important to you than God? [When you start paying more attention to them than God].
Question: How can you keep something from becoming more important to you than God? [When something comes along that demands to be more important to you than God, remember God’s loyalty to you].

Question: How has God been a loyal friend to you and to all people? [The Bible says, that Jesus laid down his life for you so that you can be with him in heaven one day]. The remarkable thing is that Jesus did this even though you or I don’t deserve what He did for us.

Question: How can you be a loyal friend today? [Being loving, being kind, doing what is right].

The Gospel – by Scott Wood – Dallas, TX

Question: Have you or will you have people disappoint you in your life? People that you trust who you thought were loyal? Of course you will.

How will you handle these kinds of situations when they come up? You can try to manage them yourself and figure them out on your own. Or you can turn to the one true friend who will NEVER let you down. The one who will NEVER disappoint you. His name is Jesus. He is loyal. He is faithful. He is ever present. He will always be with you.

At times, men and women, your friends, and even your parents will disappoint or fail you. But Jesus is our constant and will always lead and guide you in the right direction: “Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths” - Proverbs 3:5-6.
HEROES OF THE BIBLE

LESSON # 28: DANIEL

Review
Last week’s homework questions & memory verse

Today’s Lesson verse
“Now when Daniel learned that the decree had been published, he went home to his upstairs room where the windows opened toward Jerusalem. Three times a day he got down on his knees and prayed, giving thanks to his God just as he had done before” (Daniel 6:10).

Character quality
Trustworthy / Commitment

Discussion question
When was a time that you stuck to what you knew was right even if others disagreed with you?

Introduction
John Bunyan was born in 1628. The official church in England controlled most of the churches. In fact, the British government passed a law saying that only official church ministers could preach. But John preached in small independent churches - he was not part of the official church. He knew that if he continued to preach, he could be arrested. But he also knew that if he gave up preaching out of fear, new Christians in these small churches would give up their faith too, since they were not part of the official church. So, when the day came that John was told to stop, he refused the order. He said he had to obey God. So he was put in prison.

He spent 12 years in prison, but it was there that he wrote his most well known book, Pilgrim’s Progress (Adapted from Hero Tales, by Dave & Neta Jackson, Bethany House, 1997, pp. 21-24).

John Bunyan made a commitment to obey God, even though he knew he would get in trouble. Today’s lesson is about another Bible Hero, who made a commitment to God, even though he knew he would get in trouble.

Background
Daniel was a young man who was captured and taken to Babylon when king Nebuchadnezzar attacked the city of Jerusalem in Judah, the southern kingdom of Israel in about 600 BC. Daniel was buddies with the heroes of our last lesson, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego.

Daniel
(Text: Daniel 6:1-23)
“IT pleased Darius to appoint 120 satraps to rule throughout the kingdom, 2 with three administrators over them, one of whom was Daniel. The satraps were made accountable to them so that the king might not suffer loss. 3 Now Daniel so distinguished himself among the administrators and the satraps by his exceptional qualities that the king planned to set him over the whole kingdom. 4 At this, the administrators and the satraps tried to find grounds for charges against Daniel in his conduct of government affairs, but they were unable to do so. They could find no corruption in him, because he was trustworthy and neither corrupt nor negligent. 5 Finally these men said, "We will never find any basis for charges against this man Daniel unless it has something to do with the law of his God."

6 So the administrators and the satraps went as a group to the king and said: "O King Darius, live forever! 7 The royal administrators, prefects, satraps, advisers and governors have all agreed that the king should issue an edict and enforce the decree that anyone who prays to any god or man during the next thirty days, except to you, O king, shall be thrown into the lions’ den. 8 Now, O king, issue the decree and put it in writing so that it cannot be altered—in accordance with the
laws of the Medes and Persians, which cannot be repealed." So King Darius put the decree in writing.

10 Now when Daniel learned that the decree had been published, he went home to his upstairs room where the windows opened toward Jerusalem. Three times a day he got down on his knees and prayed, giving thanks to his God, just as he had done before. 11 Then these men went as a group and found Daniel praying and asking God for help. 12 So they went to the king and spoke to him about his royal decree: "Did you not publish a decree that during the next thirty days anyone who prays to any god or man except to you, O king, would be thrown into the lions' den?" The king answered, "The decree stands—in accordance with the laws of the Medes and Persians, which cannot be repealed."

13 Then they said to the king, "Daniel, who is one of the exiles from Judah, pays no attention to you, O king, or to the decree you put in writing. He still prays three times a day." 14 When the king heard this, he was greatly distressed; he was determined to rescue Daniel and made every effort until sundown to save him.

15 Then the men went as a group to the king and said to him, "Remember, O king, that according to the law of the Medes and Persians no decree or edict that the king issues can be changed."

16 So the king gave the order, and they brought Daniel and threw him into the lions' den. The king said to Daniel, "May your God, whom you serve continually, rescue you!"

17 A stone was brought and placed over the mouth of the den, and the king sealed it with his own signet ring and with the rings of his nobles, so that Daniel's situation might not be changed. 18 Then the king returned to his palace and spent the night without eating and without any entertainment being brought to him. And he could not sleep.

19 At the first light of dawn, the king got up and hurried to the lions' den. 20 When he came near the den, he called to Daniel in an anguished voice, "Daniel, servant of the living God, has your God, whom you serve continually, been able to rescue you from the lions?"

21 Daniel answered, "O king, live forever! 22 My God sent his angel, and he shut the mouths of the lions. They have not hurt me, because I was found innocent in his sight. Nor have I ever done any wrong before you, O king."

23 The king was overjoyed and gave orders to lift Daniel out of the den. And when Daniel was lifted from the den, no wound was found on him, because he had trusted in his God.”

Darius ruled over a huge kingdom in the Middle East, stretching for hundreds of miles, with more than 120 provinces or areas of countries that needed governing. Daniel so distinguished himself among the king’s other administrators and governors by his exceptional qualities that the king planned to make him the highest administrator in the whole kingdom.

Question: What were some of Daniel’s qualities that made him trustworthy? [Daniel was honest, reliable, dependable and careful with his work].

Let’s talk about two of Daniel’s qualities that can help you to be reliable and dependable with your responsibilities.
**Being Trustworthy**

“At this, the other administrators and governors tried to find reasons for charges against Daniel in the way he handled government business, but they were unable to do so. They could find no corruption [dishonesty] in him, because he was trustworthy and neither corrupt or negligent [careless]” (Daniel 6:4).

The Scriptures say that Daniel was completely trustworthy.

**Question:** What are some things that you are depended upon to do? [Chores, be ready on time, be a good example to younger brother or sister].

**Question:** How can you be trustworthy with your responsibilities? [Be reliable and dependable with whatever you are given to do].

The Scriptures also say that Daniel was not negligent.

**Question:** What does “negligent” mean? [Careless or sloppy]. Daniel was not careless or sloppy in his work.

**Question:** How can you avoid being careless with your responsibilities? [Count on your work to be neat, on time and done completely].

**Question:** Why is it important for you to be reliable and dependable with what you’re given to do? [When the time comes, you’ll be trusted enough to be given more important responsibilities].

Let’s look at three examples of why being trustworthy is important:

1. Your school is putting on a carnival to raise money to help pay for an operation that a young boy in your community needs. One of your classmates is elected to be in charge of counting the money that was raised from the carnival. **Question:** What quality do you want that person to have? [Honesty].

2. Your coach is asking for volunteers to be in charge of bringing the drinks for your team after the baseball game. **Question:** What quality do you want that person to have? [Dependability].

3. You’re working on a team project in school and your grade depends on everyone else doing their part. **What quality do you want that person to have?** [Reliability].

**Being Committed To God**

“Finally these men said, “We will never find any basis for charges against this man unless it has something to do with the law of his God” (Daniel 6:5).

**Question:** What are four ways to be committed to God? [Obey God, give thanks to God, depend upon God, serve God]. Let’s talk about these:

1. Daniel was committed to obeying God. The Bible says, “Now when Daniel learned that the decree had been published, he went home to his upstairs room where the windows opened toward Jerusalem. Three times a day he got down on his knees and prayed, giving thanks to his God just as he had done before” (Daniel 6:10).

**Question:** How can you be committed to God? [Remember Daniel’s example and be more concerned about pleasing God rather than other people].

2. Daniel continually gave thanks to God.

**Question:** How can you give thanks to God? [Give thanks to God for all of the wonderful abilities that God has given to you, and for the opportunities to use them].

3. Daniel continually depended upon God.
**Question: Why do we need to ask God for help?** [Daniel knew that in order to do his job well, he needed to ask God for wisdom and understanding]. We need to do the same.

4. Daniel continually served God. The Bible says, “At the first light of dawn, the king got up and hurried to the lions’ den. When he came near the den, he called to Daniel in an anguished voice, “Daniel, servant of the living God, has your God, whom you serve continually, been able to rescue you from the lions?” (Daniel 6:19-20). Even the king knew Daniel’s character as one of serving God continually. He could see it in the way that Daniel lived every day.

**Question: How can people know if you serve God?** [By the way you live - what you say and do]. Remember Daniel’s example: Be reliable and dependable, and commit to serve God.
HEROES OF THE BIBLE

LESSON # 29: JONAH

Review
Last week’s homework questions & memory verse

Today’s Lesson verse
“But Jonah ran away from the LORD” (Jonah 1:3).

Character quality
Submission to God’s will

Discussion question
When was a time that you really didn’t want to do what your parents told you to do? Did you do it? How did you feel about doing it?

Introduction
One December day as a teenager, he heard from Heaven, “Go for Me to China.” After his call he moved from his parents’ comfortable home in Yorkshire, England to a poverty-stricken area called Drainside to work for a doctor to learn a little medical knowledge, and also to accustom himself to something of the loneliness and dangers of living in a strange land where his only companion would be God.

He learned that God moves men by prayer. He laid all his needs before His Lord. A doctor he worked for in Drainside had forgotten to pay him. But he remembered that in China he would have no one to ask anything of, only God, so he simply asked God to remind the doctor.

Three weeks later, the doctor remembered. At ten o’clock on a Saturday night he paid the young man weeks in advance! Not only could he pay his rent, he had money in hand for weeks ahead. More than that, God had proven again that He answers prayer and moves men. He could go on to China! And he did! There were storms at sea and miraculous deliverances in the five-and-one-half month journey to China. There was civil war when he landed at Shanghai. Fires, famine, fearsome circumstances were all fought by the young missionary on his knees and God delivered him.

In 1865, he made his move from ministering along China’s river towns to the millions in Inland China. While on furlough in Brighton, England, he opened a bank account: “Ten pounds” (Fifty dollars) in the name of “The China Inland Mission.” His initial goal was twenty-four workers. The next May the twenty-four sailed. And upon his death in 1905, J. Hudson Taylor, the first missionary to the interior of China, saw more than eight hundred missionaries and 125,000 Chinese Christians in the China Inland Mission.

At sixteen years of age Taylor found religion dull and wanted very little to do with it. He would rather ride horses, go hunting and enjoy life’s luxuries. He wanted to live life the way he wanted to. Today we’ll meet a man named Jonah who wanted to do things his way. But like J. Hudson Taylor, when he made himself available to God – he became a hero – even if a reluctant one.

Jonah
(Text: Jonah 1:1-3)

“The word of the LORD came to Jonah son of Amittai: 2 “Go to the great city of Nineveh and preach against it, because its wickedness has come up before me.” 3 But Jonah ran away from the LORD and headed for Tarshish. He went down to Joppa, where he found a ship bound for that port. After paying the fare, he went aboard and sailed for Tarshish to flee from the LORD.”

Question: Do you remember what the definition of the word hero is? [A hero is a person who is admired for his qualities & achievements or one that has great courage].

Question: According to the Scripture passage that we just read about Jonah, does the definition of the word hero fit Jonah? [Doesn’t seem to does it?] God told Jonah to go to the city of Nineveh and
tell the people to turn away from their wickedness. But instead of obeying God and going to Nineveh, Jonah hopped aboard a ship and tried to run away from God.

Among all of the heroes in our Heroes of the Bible series this year, Jonah may be the person to who we can relate to the most. He is at best a reluctant hero, and we'll talk about how God accomplished his purpose through Jonah, even though Jonah wanted no part of God’s plan for him.

The Reluctant Hero

Question: Why do you think that Jonah ran away from God? [Let’s talk about three possible reasons]:

1. Perhaps Jonah didn’t feel confident in his abilities to do what God asked him.

Question: Do you remember other heroes in the Bible who didn’t feel confident in their abilities to do what God asked them to do? [Moses, when God asked him to bring the Israelites out of Egypt; Gideon, when God asked him to save Israel from the Midianites].

Despite Moses’ and Gideon’s low self-confidence & objections, God accomplished what He wanted done through them.

Question: What have you been asked to do by a parent, a teacher or a coach that you didn’t feel confident in doing? [Take on a responsibility you feel is too difficult; demonstrate a skill in front of the whole team, give an oral report in front of the class].

Question: Why do you think they asked you to do this? [To build your confidence, help you know what’s expected or required from you].

2. Perhaps Jonah simply didn’t want to do what God asked him to do.

Question: Why do you think that Jonah might not have wanted to go to Nineveh? [Nineveh was in the country of Assyria - a despised and hated enemy of the Jewish people]. Many Jewish people thought that God’s salvation belonged only to them, and not to non-Jewish people - certainly not to the hated Assyrians. There is evidence in the book of Jonah that Jonah may have felt this way.

Question: Why is it difficult for us to help certain groups of people today? [Discomfort of going into a different neighborhood, not wanting to associate with groups of people different from us, someone else is supposed to go help].

3. Perhaps Jonah was afraid of what God wanted him to do.

Question: What reason would Jonah have for being afraid? [Perhaps Jonah thought if he went to Assyria, the Assyrians might hurt him because he was Jewish. Perhaps he thought if he spoke what God wanted him to, he might be made fun of. Perhaps he thought he might fail].

Question: Do you remember other heroes in the Bible who at times were afraid of their task? [Saul, who hid himself as he was about to be presented to the people as their king; Elijah ran away after his contest with the prophets of Baal when he learned that Ahab & Jezebel were out to kill him too, Gideon who claimed to be the weakest and least of his family, Moses, who wanted God to send someone else].

Question: Do you remember a task that you were hesitant to do because you thought you might fail? Well, for whatever reason Jonah had for not wanting to go to Nineveh, he finally went. The Bible says, 1 "Then the word of the LORD came to Jonah a second time: 2 “Go to the great city of Nineveh and proclaim to it the message I give you.” 3 Jonah obeyed the word of the LORD
and went to Nineveh. Now Nineveh was a very important city—\(4\) a visit required three days. On the first day, Jonah started into the city. He proclaimed: "Forty more days and Nineveh will be overturned." The Ninevites believed God. They declared a fast, and all of them, from the greatest to the least, put on sackcloth" (Jonah 3:1-5).

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**Jonah: The Submissive Hero**

“But I, with a song of thanksgiving, will sacrifice to you. What I have vowed I will make good” (Jonah 2:9).

**Question:** Why do you think that Jonah finally went to Nineveh? [Jonah became submissive to God].

**Question:** What does submissive mean? [People today usually associate the word submissive with “giving in.” A closer meaning is for one to come under another and lift up or support]. In other words, Jonah said to God, "I’ll be there for you.”

Earlier in the lesson, I mentioned that God was able to accomplish what he wanted done through Moses, despite his lack of confidence; through Gideon, despite his fear; and through Jonah, despite the fact that he didn’t want to obey.

**Question:** How did God accomplish what He wanted through Moses, Gideon, Jonah, and others? [Because God is Sovereign]. In other words, God has the ability to work through anyone to accomplish what He wants done, without interfering with his or her freedom to make choices. But, just like Moses, Gideon, and Jonah, God wants you to say, “It’s more important for me to be there for you, than bail out because I’m not confident or I’m afraid.

However, God also knows that submission is not an easy thing for you to do sometimes.

**Question:** Why is it sometimes difficult to do what God wants you to do in some situations? [Perhaps you might be a little afraid of a task before you, i.e.: sharing your faith in Jesus on a youth mission trip. Maybe you just don’t want to see a very sick relative in the hospital].

**Question:** What is the only thing that God requires of you in these instances? [Availability].

God didn’t ask Jonah to succeed, just be available to be there when He wants you. He’ll give you the ability and will help you succeed if you make yourself available.

**Question:** Who does the Bible say got credit for saving Nineveh? [Not Jonah. The Bible says that the Ninevites believed God - not Jonah].

**Question:** What did God need Jonah to do? [God simply needed Jonah to go and do what He wanted him to do - and God took it from there].

**Question:** Have you asked God what He wants you to do for Him today?

As we close this lesson, get with your dad or another dad in the room, and pray together. Ask God what He wants you to do for Him - and then ask God to help you accomplish whatever that may be.
THANKSGIVING
A TIME FOR THANKS & GIVING

“Give thanks to the Lord, call on his name, make known among the nations what he has done. Sing to him, sing praise to him; tell of all his wonderful acts” (Psalm 105:1-2).

Thanksgiving is all about being thankful for what we’ve been given. Let’s think about what we’ve received for a moment. Read the following verse:

“The earth is the Lord’s, and everything in it…”(Psalm 24:1).

Question: Where does everything you have come from? [Everything that we have comes from what God has given us].

Question: Has anyone given more generously than God?

- “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life” (John 3:16). God gives us eternal life as a gift.

- “No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love him” (1 Corinthians 2:9). God will give us more than we could ever imagine.

God does assure Christians (those who have invited Jesus Christ into their life as Savior and Lord) that one-day they will live forever with Him in His mansion in heaven! BUT…sometimes we forget about another fantastic promise God makes to us:

“…I have come that [you] may have life, and have it to the full” (John 10:10). Jesus says that not only does He offer to you citizenship in heaven, but also you can have the best life possible on this side of heaven! God offers to us the best of both worlds!

Question: Who are people that have given to you? [Parents who show you God’s love; teachers who help you learn in school; coaches who help you learn to play sports, people who serve in the armed forces to keep our country safe]. Think about how good it feels when someone takes time to give to you.

We certainly have been given much, so we have plenty to be thankful for. Let’s do a little warm-up before a fun game at the end of this lesson:

Question: September 11, 2001 – the day men flew airplanes into the World Trade Center buildings in New York - what was there to be thankful for? [That God allowed less destruction than there could have been, many people have put their faith and trust in Jesus as their Savior, an outpouring of patriotism and giving, renewed prayer life and church attendance].

Question: There’s a severe illness in your family. What can you find to be thankful for? [Health that you enjoy, Christ’ love in action as people help, hope for a better future].

Question: Your sports team is dead last in the league. What can you find to be thankful for? [Physical health just to be able to play, learning and growing in understanding of the game, learning good lessons that you can use outside of sports: self-control, patience, kindness].

Question: Look around your home. What can you find to be thankful for? [Family, that you have a home, clothes, food, etc.].

Question: Look around your church. What can you find to be thankful for? [Jesus Christ, your pastor, place to worship freely and openly].
Question: Let’s say you meet a homeless person and he/she asks you, “What do I have to be thankful for?” [God meets your needs, people care and help - you are not forgotten, you have opportunities to get back on your feet].

We have lots to be thankful for. But the second part of ThanksGIVING, is the giving. So let’s talk about giving.

Question: There are 3 good ways that you can give. What do you think they are?

1. We can give with our time
2. We can give through our abilities
3. We can give our money.

Question: Why Should You Give? The Bible says:

“Freely you have received, freely give.” (Matthew 10:8). [Give because you have been given to].

The Bible says, “Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously. Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion [because you have to], for God loves a cheerful giver” (2 Corinthians 9:6-7). Give what you have because you want to.

Question: When Should We Give? [Share when the opportunity arises]. The Bible says, “Share with God’s people who are in need” (Romans 12:13). Anytime is the right time!

Since Thanksgiving opens up the “Holiday Season,” it’s a time when we naturally look for ways to give.

Question: How can you practice using your abilities, your time, and your money to give?

I can use my abilities:
@ home by Helping plan a family activity.
@ school by Helping a classmate with a science project.
@ church by Singing in the choir.
in the community by Helping an elderly neighbor rake leaves.

I can use my time:
@ home by Doing chores before t.v.
@ school by Helping with a fund raising project.
@ church by Helping in the nursery.
in the community by Participating in a charity or community service project.

I can use my money:
@ home by Buying a special gift for the whole family.
@ school by Buying lunch for a friend.
@ church by Giving 10% of your allowance to the church.
in the community by Giving to a family who needs help.
O come, all ye faithful, joyful and triumphant…

We sang little above a whisper, our eyes darting anxiously up to the barred windows for any sign of the guards.

Joyful and triumphant? Clad in tattered prisoner-of-war clothes, I looked around at the two dozen men huddled in a North Vietnamese prison cell. Light-bulbs hanging from the ceiling illuminated a gaunt and wretched group of men - grotesque caricatures of what had once been clean-shaven, superbly fit Air Force, Navy and Marine pilots and navigators.

We shivered from the damp night air and the fevers that plagued a number of us. Some men were permanently stooped from the effects of torture; others limped or leaned on makeshift crutches.

“O come ye, O come ye to Bethlehem. Come and behold him, born the King of Angels…”

What a pathetic sight we were. Yet here, on this Christmas Eve in 1971, we were together for the first time, some after seven years of harrowing isolation and mistreatment at the hands of a cruel enemy.

We were keeping Christmas — the most special Christmas any of us ever would observe.

There had been Christmas services in North Vietnam in previous years, but they had been spiritless, ludicrous stage shows, orchestrated by the Vietnamese for propaganda purposes. This was our Christmas service, the only one we had ever been allowed to hold, though we feared that at any moment, our captors might change their minds.

I had been designated chaplain by our senior-ranking POW officer, Col. George "Bud" Day, USAF. As we sang "O Come, All Ye Faithful," I looked down at the few sheets of paper upon which I had penciled the Bible verses that tell the story of Christ's birth.

I recalled how, a week earlier, Col. Day had asked the camp commander for a Bible. No, he was told, there were no Bibles in North Vietnam. But four days later, the camp commander had come into our communal cell to announce, "We have found one Bible in Hanoi, and you can designate one person to copy from it for a few minutes."

Col. Day had requested that I perform the task. Hastily I leafed through the worn book the Vietnamese had placed on a table just outside our cell door in the prison yard. I furiously copied the Christmas passages until a guard approached and took the Bible away.

The service was simple. After saying the Lord's Prayer, we sang Christmas carols, some of us mouthing the words until our voices caught up with our pain-clouded memories. Between each hymn I would read a portion of the story of Christ's birth.

"And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day, in the city of David, a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord" (Luke 2: 10-11).

Capt. Quincy Collins, a former choir director from the Air Force Academy, led the hymns. At first, we were nervous and stilted in our singing. Still burning in our memories was the time, almost a year before, when North Vietnamese guards had burst in on our church service, beaten the three men leading the prayers, and dragged them away to confinement. The rest of us were locked away for 11 months in
three-by-five-foot cells. Indeed, this Christmas service was in part a defiant celebration of the return to our regular prison in Hanoi.

And as the service progressed, our boldness increased, and the singing swelled. "O Little Town of Bethlehem." "Hark, the Herald Angels Sing." "It Came Upon the Midnight Clear." Our voices filled the cell, bound together as we shared the story of the Babe "away in a manger, no crib for a bed."

Finally it came time to sing perhaps the most beloved hymn: Silent night, Holy night! All is calm, all is bright…"

A half dozen of the men were too sick to stand. They sat on the raised concrete sleeping platform that ran down the middle of the cell. Our few blankets were placed around the shaking shoulders of the sickest men to protect them against the cold. Even these men looked up transfixed as we sang that hymn.

“Round yon virgin, mother and child. Holy infant so tender and mild…"

Tears rolled down our unshaven faces. Suddenly we were two thousand years and half a world away in a village called Bethlehem. And neither war, nor torture, nor imprisonment, nor the centuries themselves had dimmed the hope born on that silent night so long before.

“Sleep in heavenly peace, sleep in heavenly peace…”

We had forgotten our wounds, our hunger, our pain. We raised prayers of thanks for the Christ child, for our families and homes, for our country. There was an absolutely exquisite feeling that all our burdens had been lifted. In a place designed to turn men into vicious animals, we clung to one another, sharing what comfort we had.

Some of us had managed to make crude gifts. One fellow had a precious commodity - a cotton washcloth. Somewhere he had found needle and thread and fashioned the cloth into a hat, which he gave to Bud Day. Some men exchanged dog tags. Others had used prison spoons to scratch out IOUs on bits of paper - some imaginary thing we wished another to have. We exchanged those chits with smiles and tearful thanks.

The Vietnamese guards did not disturb us. But as I looked up at the barred windows, I wished they had been looking in. I wanted them to see us faithful, joyful and, yes, triumphant.

* Senator McCain spent five and a half years as a prisoner of the North Vietnamese during the Vietnam War.

O Come All Ye Faithful

In sending Jesus to earth, the Father set out to establish a new covenant with all. When Jesus shed His blood on the cross, you and I were given a new way to enter into the presence of almighty God.

When God made covenants with people in the Old Testament, he often changed their name. Abram became Abraham (father of a multitude); Jacob became Israel (prince with God). In each case their name was changed to reflect their change of character and their new relationship with God.

When you become a Christian, you are also given a new name. When you accept Jesus into your life, your spirit is given new life – your spirit is re-born, transformed from a sinner to a saint. Once you were far off, and now you are near His throne as His adopted son or daughter.

The carol, “O Come All Ye Faithful,” expresses our Father God’s heart toward us: “Come, faithful ones. Come and look upon the King of angels. Behold the brightness of his glory. “Come, you who have become my children, and give glory to my Son.”
Our response is to gladly welcome him and lift up a chorus of joyful praise and adoration:

_O Come All Ye Faithful_

O come, all you faithful, joyful and triumphant,
O come ye, O come ye to Bethlehem!
Come and behold Him, born the King of angels

O come, let us adore Him
O come, let us adore Him
O come, let us adore Him
Christ the Lord!

The brightness of glory, Light of light eternal,
Our lowly nature He hath not abhorred:
Son of the Father, Word of God incarnate!

O come, let us adore Him
O come, let us adore Him
O come, let us adore Him
Christ the Lord!

Sing, choirs of angels, sing in exultation,
O sing, all ye citizens of heaven above!
Glory to God, glory in the highest!

O come, let us adore Him
O come, let us adore Him
O come, let us adore Him
Christ the Lord!

Yea, Lord we greet Thee, born this happy morning;
Jesus, to Thee be all glory given;
Word of the Father, now in flesh appearing!

O come, let us adore Him
O come, let us adore Him
O come, let us adore Him
Christ the Lord!
EASTER LESSON:

THE DRAGON *

There was once a great and noble King whose land was terrorized by a crafty dragon. Like a massive bird of prey the scaly beast delighted in ravaging villages with his fiery breath. Hapless victims ran from their burning homes only to be snatched into the dragon's jaws or talons. Those devoured instantly were deemed more fortunate than those carried back to the creature's lair to be devoured at the dragon's leisure.

The King led his sons and knights in many valiant battles against the serpent. Each time they wounded the dragon and he retreated to his hidden lair deep in the mountains. While he healed, the kingdom would be at peace for a time. "Take courage," the King told his people. "One day the dragon will be slain." Riding alone in the forest during a period of calm, one of the King's sons heard his name purred low and soft. In the shadows of the ferns and trees, curled among the boulders, lay the dragon. The creature's heavy lidded eyes fastened on the prince, and the reptilian mouth stretched into a friendly smile.

"Don't be alarmed," said the dragon as gray wisps of smoke rose lazily from his nostrils. "I am not what your father thinks."

"What are you, then?" asked the prince, warily drawing his sword as he kept his fearful horse from bolting by pulling in the reins.

"I am pleasure," said the dragon. "Ride on my back and you will experience more than you ever imagined. Come now. I have no harmful intentions. I seek a friend, someone to share flights with me. Have you never dreamed of flying? Never longed to soar in the clouds?" The sunlight glistened with an iridescent sheen on the dragon's metallic green scales. "Bring your sword for security if you wish, but I give my word no harm will come to you."

Visions of soaring high above the forested hills drew the prince hesitantly from his horse. The dragon unfurled one great webbed wing to serve as a ramp to his ridged back. Between the spiny projections the prince found a secure seat. Then the creature's powerful wings snapped twice and launched them into the sky. Once aloft the dragon wafted effortlessly on the wind streams. The prince's apprehension melted into awe and exhilaration.

From then on, he met the dragon often, but secretly, for how could he tell his father, brothers, or the knights that he had befriended the enemy? The prince felt separate from them all. Their concerns were no longer his concerns. Even when he wasn't with the dragon he spent less time with those he loved and more time alone.

The skin on the prince's legs became calloused from gripping the ridged back of the dragon, and his hands grew rough and hardened. He began wearing gloves to hide the malady. After many nights of riding, he discovered scales growing on the backs of his hands as well. With dread he realized his fate were he to continue, and so he resolved to return no more to the dragon.

But, after a fortnight, he again sought out the dragon, having been tortured with desire. And so it transpired many times over. No matter what his determination, the prince eventually found himself pulled back, as if by the cords of an invisible web. Silently, patiently, the dragon always waited.

One cold, moonless night their excursion became a foray against a sleeping village. Torching the thatched roofs with fiery blasts from his nostrils, the dragon roared with delight when terrified victims fled from their burning homes. Swooping in, the serpent belched again and flames engulfed a cluster of screaming villagers. The prince closed his eyes tightly in an attempt to shut out the carnage, but the agonized cries and smell of burning flesh assailed him. The dragon's long neck snaked and spasmed as
he crunched bone and devoured his roasted prey. The prince retched and clung miserably to his spiny perch.

In the predawn hours, when the prince crept back from his dragon trysts, the road outside his father's castle usually remained empty. But, not tonight. Terrified refugees streamed into the protective walls of the castle. The prince walked among bedraggled women carrying wailing children with gashes from the dragon's talons. Some victims, too badly wounded or burned to walk, were brought in carts or dragged on makeshift pallets.

The prince's heart was torn. Their pain brought tears to his eyes and shame to his soul. "What have I become?" he asked himself. At that moment, he wanted even more desperately to be free of the dragon. Perhaps his father, in all his wisdom, could help. But the prince feared that the truth would make him abhorrent in his father's sight. Surely he would be disowned, exiled, or perhaps even condemned to death.

The castle bustled with frantic activity to care for the refugees thronged in the courtyard. The prince attempted to slip through the crowd to close himself in his chambers, but some of the survivors stared and pointed toward him.

"He was there," one woman cried out, "I saw him on the back of the dragon." Others nodded their heads in angry agreement. Horrified, the prince saw that his father, the King, was in the courtyard holding a bleeding child in his arms. The King's face mirrored the agony of his people as his eyes found the prince's. The son fled, hoping to escape into the night, but the guards apprehended him as if he were a common thief. They brought him to the great hall where his father sat solemnly on the throne. The people on every side railed against the prince.

"Banish him!" he heard one of his own brothers angrily cry out.

"Flay him!"

"Burn him alive!" other voices shouted.

As the King rose from his throne, bloodstains from the wounded shone darkly on his royal robes. The crowd fell silent in expectation of his decree. The prince, who could not bear to look into his father's face, stared at the flagstones of the floor.

"Take off your gloves and your tunic," the King commanded. The prince obeyed slowly, dreading to have his metamorphosis uncovered before the kingdom. Was his shame not already great enough? He had hoped for a quick death without further humiliation. Sounds of revulsion rippled through the crowd at the sight of the prince's thick, scaled skin and the ridge growing along his spine.

The King strode toward his son and the prince steeled himself, fully expecting a back-handed blow even though he had never been struck so by his father.

Instead, his father embraced him and wept as he held him tightly. In shocked disbelief, the prince buried his face against his father's shoulder.

"Do you wish to be freed of the dragon, my son?"

The prince answered in despair, "I have wished it many times, but there is no hope for me."

"Not alone," said the King. "You cannot win against the serpent alone."

"Father, I am no longer your son. I am half beast," sobbed the prince.
But his father replied, "My blood runs in your veins. My nobility has always been stamped deep within your soul. Nothing can take that from you."

With his face still hidden tearfully in his father’s embrace, the prince heard the King instruct the crowd, "The dragon is crafty. Some fall victim to his wiles and some to his violence. There will be mercy for all who wish to be freed. Who else among you has ridden the dragon?"

The prince lifted his head to see someone emerge from the crowd. To his amazement, he recognized an older brother, one who had been lauded throughout the kingdom for his onslaughts against the dragon in battle and for his many good deeds. Others came, some weeping, others hanging their heads in shame. The sister who was known for her beautiful singing came, tearfully removing her slippers to reveal spiked scales on her feet.

The King embraced them all.

"This is our most powerful weapon against the dragon," he announced. "Truth. No more hidden-ness. Alone you cannot resist him. Together you will prevail, for you draw strength from one another. Those of you who think yourselves immune to the serpent's wiles, beware lest you be the next to fall. Those ensnared, you must desire freedom more than the dragon's flight. The struggle will be long and fierce. Over time, you will choose more often against the dragon than for him until finally you go to him no more."

"Will the scales then be gone as well?" asked the sister, looking at her bared feet.

"No, my child," the King answered gently. "But, in time, they will fade. And one day, when the dragon is finally slain, all traces of the scales will disappear."

"Death to the dragon!" someone yelled from the crowd and a great cheer rose up in chorus, "Death to the dragon! Long live the King!"

God, our Great King, loves you. Even though you and I choose at times to fly with the dragon, He loves us. One day, almost 2,000 years ago, God sent us the Truth (John 14:6), His Son, Jesus Christ; the only man who would not ride with the dragon, so that we could be free from the dragon’s power. And on the day that Jesus went to the cross, He defeated the dragon.

To all who accept the Truth, and say, “Death to the dragon! Long live the King,” God’s mercy upon you will begin to fade the scales.

On that day, you become princes and princesses of the King. And when you choose again to fly with the dragon, and confess your secret rides, He forgives you and enables you more and more to choose freedom from the dragon.

One day, on that glorious day, the dragon will be bound and locked up, never to harm anyone again, and you will live with the King forever, and all traces of the scales will disappear!

* By Dr. Melinda Reinicke, From the book **Parables for Personal Growth**
“If my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land” (2 Chronicles 7:14).

The United States Congress set aside a day called “The National Day of Prayer” in 1952. It is a day set apart where all Americans are asked to pray for our country: its leaders, and its people.

Today, we’re going to pray for people in 5 groups:
- Government
- Churches & Ministry Organizations
- Businesses & Industries
- Families
- Ourselves

Suggestions or examples of individuals in each group are given to help you think of people to pray for. Also, one or two Scripture verses accompany each group to help you think of what to pray about for them.

As you gather individually with your son or daughter, or as a group of families, let’s humble ourselves, turn away from wrong and toward good, and call upon Him, that He will hear from heaven and will forgive our sins and will heal our land.

“Our Government

“Blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked or stand in the way of sinners or sit in the seat of mockers. But his delight is in the law of the Lord, and on his law he meditates day and night” (Psalm 1:1-2).

Pray that our leaders will ask God to help them make good decisions, and stand by them, even they are unpopular
- Federal Leaders: President, US senators & representatives, appointed leaders
- Local Leaders: Governor, state senators & representatives, mayors, elected positions
- Judicial System: US supreme court, state supreme court justices,
- Armed Services: Air Force, Army, Navy, Marines, Reserves

“Our Government

“Our Government

“Peter and the other apostles replied: “We must obey God rather than men!” (Acts 5:29).

Churches & Ministry Organizations

“Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap [bring in] a harvest if we do not give up” (Galatians 6:9).

Our nation desperately needs to know that there is One God, and that He has set a standard of truth for all. Pray for:
- Your pastor, your church leaders and teachers, your congregation, your denomination; that the Word of God will be spoken boldly and unashamed and that the Church will be a pure and bright light in a dark world.
- Ministry organizations that you support or help your family, i.e.: Salvation Army, Focus on the Family, Christian Camps, Practice Ministries; that lives will be changed, for God’s words to be put into practice everyday.
Those Imprisoned & Persecuted
“Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid or terrified of them, for the Lord your God goes with you; he will never leave or forsake you” (Deuteronomy 31:6).

- Many times, those people who are in prison because of wrong deeds, need to have their hearts (their thoughts and attitudes) made pure so that they do not commit their crimes again. Only Jesus can change a person’s heart. Pray for their hearts to be changed.

- Some people are “made slaves” to illegal drugs, excessive alcohol use, wrong beliefs about God, and are they are “imprisoned or held hostage” to them. Only Jesus has the key to unlock the chains that hold these people to their captors. Pray for their release.

- Sometimes Christians are made fun of or looked down upon. In other parts of the world, Christians are sometimes put in prison, physically harmed, or have jobs, homes or even family members taken away from them. Pray for their safety and that God will be honored by their words and actions.

Our Society & Cultures
“Blessed are they who keep his laws and seek him with all the ir heart. They do nothing wrong; they walk in his ways. You have laid down rules to live by that are to be fully obeyed” (Psalm 119:2-4).

Everyday we are influenced by what we see, hear, read or are told; whether it is right or wrong, good or bad, Godly or ungodly. Pray for the influence of the wrong the bad and the ungodly to be stopped, and that what is right and good and Godly will be seen, heard, read and told.

Perhaps pick one or two groups from the following list and apply your prayers to people in these fields:

- Business & Industry Communications, financial, law, manufacturing.
- Community Services Charitable organizations, police.
- Educational System Coaches, students, teachers.
- Scientific Community Research & Development.
- The Media Television, radio, newspapers.
- The Entertainment Industry Film, music, print, sports.

The Family
“Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts and you shall teach them to your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up” (Deuteronomy 6:5-7).

- God designed the family to be where His truths and ways are taught. Pray for parents, and especially fathers to lead their family by the example that God and heroes in the Bible set for us.

- Pray for your family members, your friends, your neighbors, your teammates, for broken families, for those who don’t have families.

Personal Renewal & Moral Awakening
“Search me O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way that is everlasting [true and right]” (Psalm 139:23-24).
• Pray that God will show you parts of you that don’t make Him smile, and allow Him to help fix those areas.

• Pray for all people in our country, that they will look for God, and turn around from thinking & doing wrong, and think & do what is right.

“This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us” (1 John 5:14).

* This lesson is adapted from the Dallas Leadership Prayer Breakfast Guide, 1997.
Today's Lesson verse
“One thing I do know. I was blind but now I see!” (John 9:25).

Introduction
In 2001, I helped develop a course called “Story Tellers” for a local church in Dallas, TX, to help people develop and learn how to share their story – how they came into a relationship with Jesus Christ. Story Time is an abbreviated form of this course, but the purpose is still the same – to help you testify to the transforming power of Jesus Christ in your life.

One of the most powerful and intimate moments that you and the kids in your Bible study will experience is when a dad or a son or a daughter simply tells their story.

Whenever you decide to do this as a group, it's time to put aside the Bibles, the workbook, and just listen. It’s an awesome time to spend together. (See note on how to proceed with your group at the end of this lesson).

Story Time
(Text: John 9:1-25)
"As he went along, he saw a man blind from birth. 2His disciples asked him, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" 3"Neither this man nor his parents sinned," said Jesus, "but this happened so that the work of God might be displayed in his life. 4As long as it is day, we must do the work of him who sent me. Night is coming, when no one can work. 5While I am in the world, I am the light of the world." 6Having said this, he spit on the ground, made some mud with the saliva, and put it on the man's eyes. 7"Go," he told him, "wash in the Pool of Siloam" (this word means Sent). So the man went and washed, and came home seeing.
8His neighbors and those who had formerly seen him begging asked, "Isn't this the same man who used to sit and beg?" 9Some claimed that he was. Others said, "No, he only looks like him." But he himself insisted, "I am the man."
10"How then were your eyes opened?" they demanded. 11He replied, "The man they call Jesus made some mud and put it on my eyes. He told me to go to Siloam and wash. So I went and washed, and then I could see." 12"Where is this man?" they asked him. "I don't know," he said.
13They brought to the Pharisees the man who had been blind. 14Now the day on which Jesus had made the mud and opened the man's eyes was a Sabbath. 15Therefore the Pharisees also asked him how he had received his sight. "He put mud on my eyes," the man replied, "and I washed, and now I see."
16Some of the Pharisees said, "This man is not from God, for he does not keep the Sabbath." But others asked, "How can a sinner do such miraculous signs?" So they were divided.
17Finally they turned again to the blind man, "What have you to say about him? It was your eyes he opened." The man replied, "He is a prophet." 18The Jews still did not believe that he had been blind and had received his sight until they sent for the man's parents. 19"Is this your son?" they asked. "Is this the one you say was born blind? How is it that now he can see?"
20"We know he is our son," the parents answered, "and we know he was born blind. 21But how he can see now, or who opened his eyes, we don't know. Ask him. He is of age; he will speak for himself." 22His parents said this because they were afraid of the Jews, for already the Jews had decided that anyone who acknowledged that Jesus was the Christ would be put out of the synagogue. 23That was why his parents said, "He is of age; ask him." 24A second time they summoned the man who had been blind. "Give glory to God " they said. "We know this man is a
sinner.”  

25 He replied, "Whether he is a sinner or not, I don't know. One thing I do know. I was blind but now I see!"

**Telling Your Story**
The thought of “telling your story” can be a little uncomfortable. Perhaps you’re afraid of failing or that you won’t know what to say. That’s why I’ve put this section on “Story Time” together. Everyone has a story to tell, and learning how to tell your story may be just what it takes to bring the good news of Jesus Christ into someone’s life.

**So…What’s Your Story?**
“So…tell me your story.” If you were asked that question, what would be your answer? “Well…I don’t think I have much of a story to tell.” “I suppose I’ve got a story, but it’s not very interesting.” It’s natural to feel that way, but it’s far from the truth. We all have a special, unique and meaningful story to tell unlike that of anyone else. If you’ve met Jesus, you have a story to tell.

Perhaps you already know it well. Perhaps you still need to develop it. Either way, writing and sharing your story can be a powerful reminder of how God is at work in your life. It can provide a powerful witness to those who hear it—especially to your son or daughter!

That’s the purpose of sharing your story - to tell of the transforming power of Christ in your life. When you share your story, you’re telling the Gospel through your story, a Gospel made real and tangible in your life.

**So, here we go…**

If you’ve never thought much of how to tell someone your story, or had the wonderful experience of putting your story down on paper, here are some ideas and suggestions for putting your story together.

**Conversion**
If you remember a specific time, place or event when you accepted Jesus Christ into your life, then perhaps “conversion” fits best. Try shaping your story around these questions:

- What was your life like before you invited Jesus into your life?
- What led (events, conversation, etc.) you to accept Jesus as your Savior?
- How and when did you receive Christ as Savior? As Lord?
- How has Jesus changed your life?

**Journey**
If your faith seems more like a journey, then perhaps “Spiritual Journey” fits best. Try these questions:

- What have been some key events in which God has worked in your life?
- What experiences, circumstances or people have helped to develop your faith in Christ?
- How would your life be different without Jesus? (i.e.: lifestyle, attitudes, priorities, relationships, etc.).

**Sharing The Gospel Through Your Story**
"In Christ, God was reconciling the world to himself.” (2 Corinthians 5:19).
The Gospel is the story of Jesus. The story of Jesus is part of the larger story of scripture, spanning the Creation, through the Fall, to the Redemption (or rescue) that Jesus brings. That’s a big story, yet there is one theme that runs throughout that story: **Reconciliation**! One powerful way to share the good news of Jesus Christ is by weaving the Gospel into your own story.

Try fitting these questions in your story:

**Creation**
How do you understand God’s purpose in creation?
“...to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ” (Ephesians 1:5).

How do you understand your purpose in life?
“Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength...Love your neighbor as yourself” (Matthew 22:27-29).

Fall
How have you experienced sin in your life?
“If you love me you will obey my commandments” (John 14:15).

What are (were) the consequences of that sin?
“But your iniquities have separated you from your God” (Isaiah 59:2).

Rescue
How did you come to put your faith in Jesus Christ (the solution)?
“For it is by grace (undeserved mercy) that you have been saved, through faith, and this is not of yourselves, it is the gift of God – not by works, so that no one can boast” (Ephesians 2:8-9).

How have you been reconciled to God (what were the results)?
“...we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation” (Romans 5:11).

What role has the church or others played for you?
“Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it” (1 Corinthians 12:27).

Putting Your Story Together
- What elements of your story might be interesting to someone else?
- What Bible verses might you include under each of the previous questions?
- What experiences in your life can form illustrations to help you tell your story?
- Write your story as if you were telling someone else
- Keep it between 3-5 minutes

Story Time In Your Bible Study
Some of the dads and kids in your group will be willing to share their testimony. Others may feel that they are not ready. That’s OK.

Before you do this lesson, I suggest that you announce a week ahead of time that this is what the lesson will be. I also suggest telling the group that either you will volunteer to lead off, or have one or two dads who you feel would be willing to lead off agree to do so.

You may spend one session on this or several, as there won’t be enough time to do more than one or two each week. I do encourage you to make enough time to let all who want to give their testimony to be able to do so.

A work sheet for this special lesson is found in the Exploring the Bible workbook.