

ISRAEL: INTO THE WILDERNESS

JUNIOR 1 YEAR 2 BOOK 2



Teacher's Guide and Student Handouts

Teachings in the Book of Numbers (I)

Passages: Num 1; 2; 9; 10; 26

Memory Verse

“At the command of the LORD they remained encamped, and at the command of the LORD they journeyed; they kept the charge of the LORD, at the command of the LORD by the hand of Moses.”
(Numbers 9:23)

Knowledge of God’s Will [God’s Word]	Knowledge of God [God’s Divine Nature]	Good Works [Behavior]
The Israelites’ journey through the wilderness shows God’s guidance, provision, training, and chastisement, all for the purpose of transforming His children into a holy nation.	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. God is our heavenly Father. We can be assured of His love, knowing that He will provide everything that we need on our journey of faith.2. The Lord is our commander. He is the Lord of hosts.3. From the beginning of creation to the end of time, God works tirelessly to save mankind. He is the author and finisher of our faith.	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. We need to revere and fear God, and be faithful in keeping and obeying His commands.2. Have faith and trust in the Lord’s power and presence in good times or bad.

Overview

Events and Spiritual Teachings

- A. Numbering the People
- B. Encampment and Marching Order
- C. The Pillar of Cloud and Fire
- D. The Sound of the Trumpets

Life Application

1. Whose Way Is It Going to Be?
2. Making Jesus Our Commander

Memory Verse

Conclusion: If we follow the guidance of the Holy Spirit and practice His words, we give God His rightful position as Lord and commander in our hearts. We will find that not only is it the best way, but it is the only way to experience the amazing promises and blessings that God has planned for us.

Events and Spiritual Teachings

Introduction

The night the Israelites left Egypt, they were a mass of slaves, untrained, unskilled, and unorganized. Yet the Bible describes the Israelites that night as the army of God (Ex 12:51). Outwardly, they may not have looked nor behaved much like a trained army, but in the eyes of God, the chosen people were His army and God was their commander. To shape and train His army, God led the people into the wilderness. It was at the foot of Mt. Sinai that the training began. Let's explore what God wanted His people to learn.

A. Numbering the People

(Activity, Part One: In small groups, have the students read Numbers 1:1–46. Pass out markers and twelve pieces of construction paper or index cards and assign different tribes to each group. Have them write down their assigned tribes and its total population, one tribe per page/card. Later in the lesson, for part two, the students will use glue/tape and a large poster-sized paper to arrange the tribes according to their assigned camps around the tent of meeting.)

Why do you think God asked Moses to number the people? Taking a census was likely a long and tedious job, but it wasn't pointless. There were several reasons God wanted Moses to do this:

1. To know their identity

Every man twenty years and over was registered and identified according to his name, family, clan, and tribe. By doing this, each man was able to know his own identity and prove that he was a legitimate member of God's people, a descendant of Abraham. This was important, as only descendants of Abraham were able to inherit the blessings and promises of God. Similarly, when we are baptized, our names are registered in the Book of Life, making us members of the household of God and partakers in God's inheritance (cf. Eph 2:19; Col 1:12).

2. To prepare for warfare

To obtain the promised land, the people had to destroy the enemies who lived there, so it was important to take a census of the able-bodied to determine Israel's military strength. Israel had a total of 603,550 soldiers, not including the Levites. This reminds us that every believer is a soldier in God's army. In our journey of faith, all of us are engaged in spiritual combat, with no exceptions. We fight not only to defend our own souls, but also to win souls for God. Through daily spiritual cultivation, and by attending church training programs such as convocations and seminars, we can equip ourselves with the full armor of God and fight our spiritual battle.

3. To know their duties

By taking a census of the people, Moses could assign specific tasks and duties for the different tribes. The service in the tabernacle was carried out by the priests and the Levites, but the other tribes were needed to fight, make offerings of animals and gifts, and use their special abilities to help with the construction of the tabernacle and everything in it. We need to identify and utilize the different gifts that God has given us to edify the church, so that each member can grow and mature in their faith (Eph 4:11–13).

4. To distribute their inheritance (Num 26:2, 51–56)

As the new generation of Israelites were ready to enter the promised land, God instructed that a second census be taken. This time, the population size of each tribe would determine how much land they would get—the larger tribes were to be given more land, the smaller tribes less land. Similarly, when the Lord comes again, He will reward each of us according to the works

we have done. Therefore, our work on earth is not in vain; the more we serve God, the greater our future rewards will be (Mt 16:27, Col 3:24; Rev 22:12).

B. Encampment and Marching Order (Num 2:1–34)

For 600,000 Israelite men, not including women and children, setting up camp would have taken a space of about twelve square miles. For a sense of scale, the John F. Kennedy International Airport is about twelve square miles in size, and the San Francisco International Airport, thirteen square miles. It's also roughly equivalent to half of the island of Manhattan! This would have been one of the biggest campsites the world has ever seen. For such a large number of people to camp and travel in an orderly and efficient manner, they would have had to follow God's specific directions.

The nation of Israel was divided into four camps that surrounded the tent of meeting, Moses, and the priests. The Levites then positioned themselves around the tabernacle. They, in turn, would be surrounded by the twelve tribes:

- North camp: Dan, Asher, and Naphtali
- East camp: Judah, Issachar, Zebulun
- South camp: Reuben, Simeon, and Gad
- West camp: Ephraim, Manasseh, Benjamin

(Activity, Part Two: On a poster-sized paper, have the students display the tribes' camping arrangement using the construction paper/index cards made earlier for part one of the activity. See Figure 1: Arrangement of the Tribal Camps for details.)

What can we learn from the arrangement of the Israelites' campsite?

1. All the tribes pitched their tents according to their camps

Paul exhorted the church in Corinth, "Let all things be done decently and in order (1 Cor 14:40; cf. Mk 6:39–40). This applies not only to the church, but to our everyday lives too. For the church, our family unit, or even society to run smoothly, we need to follow rules and regulations. By doing so, we respect the authority of God, our parents, pastors, and teachers who are appointed by God to shepherd us. Rules also exist to protect ourselves and others, so that we can live in a peaceful and harmonious environment and be blessed by God.

In the Book of Numbers, God's wrath and judgment came down swiftly when Moses' authority was challenged. In each case, they did not know their own positions, nor did they recognize that it was God who appointed Moses as the leader of the people. They did not remain in their "camps" as God had assigned because they did not respect God's authority.

2. Each camp was made up of three tribes

God ordered that each camp be made up of three tribes, which reminds us of the need to get to know the different families and members in the church. It is common to have a habit of mingling with the same group of friends during mealtimes and even services. As a result, some people have plenty of people to talk to while others sit alone. As a part of God's household, we need to promote greater understanding between members, and show care for every individual, not just our closest friends. What are some ways we can do this? *(Examples: Each week, greet someone you are not familiar with; sit beside someone you've never sat with during lunch; share something about yourself with someone you don't know too well, or ask them about their work, family, or hobbies.)*

3. The tabernacle was in the middle of the camp

Our education, friends, hobbies, or extracurricular activities should not be the focus of our lives. Rather, God should be the center of our lives. In all that we do, we need to seek His way and glorify Him. Our hearts and our lives should revolve around the Lord.

C. The Pillar of Cloud and Fire (Num 9:15–23)

One of the miracles that the Israelites experienced was God’s constant presence, in the form of a pillar of cloud by day and of fire by night. But what was the purpose of this pillar?

1. To abide with them

The night the Israelites fled from the presence of Pharaoh and the Egyptians, God went before them in a pillar of cloud and fire (Ex 13:21). Through their years of traversing the wilderness, the pillar was always before them to guide their way (cf. Neh 9:12, 19), and to guard and protect them (Ex 14:19). In the same way, the Holy Spirit continually abides with us as well. The Holy Spirit is our counselor and Helper, sent by God to help us on our journey to the heavenly kingdom. Like the pillar, God’s Spirit is evidence of His vast and unimaginable power, something to respect, fear, and find comfort in.

2. To guide and direct their steps

Numbers 9:15–21 mentions nine times that the Israelites moved only at the command and charge of the Lord. Whether by day or night, or for a duration of days, months, or years, the Israelites would march or stay as God’s pillar moved or stayed. As we travel along our life’s journey, we too need to firmly fix our eyes on Jesus and follow His lead. We cannot run ahead of Him or away from Him but must learn to be totally submissive to His will.

D. The Sound of the Trumpets (Num 10:1–10)

If you were Moses, how would you have made yourself heard above all the people? What method would you have used to give commands to two million Israelites to move forward, stop, camp, defend themselves, or gather to worship? Such a task was no easy feat. But God understood what Moses needed, so shortly after leaving Egypt, He commanded Moses and Aaron to make two trumpets of hammered silver, which would give clear instructions to the Israelites. The trumpets were then used to convey messages with different signals.

- Two trumpets meant that the entire assembly was to gather at the tabernacle (v. 3).
- One trumpet was a summons for only the leaders and heads of the divisions of Israel (v. 4).
- Different trumpet blasts were used to break camp and move onward (vv. 5–6).
- The trumpets were used to sound the alarm during wartime (v. 9).
- The trumpets were also used to sound times of gladness and different feasts and were used during celebrations of the beginning of the month (v. 10).

God clearly thought everything through for the Israelites and for Moses, helping them to come up with a system that could help them communicate more easily. But what can we learn from the trumpets and their signals?

1. They gave instruction

Just as the trumpets called the Israelites to gather, follow, prepare for battle, and to rejoice or celebrate different feasts, God’s word does the same. The Bible has the power to cleanse, sanctify, and equip us for salvation (2 Tim 3:16).

2. Made of hammered silver

The word of God is like silver (Ps 12:6). Being made of hammered silver demonstrates how the

gospel was established through the great sacrifice and sufferings of our Lord Jesus; He was wounded for our transgressions and through His stripes we were healed. Like Jesus Christ, we also need to go through a “hammering” process in order to become useful for God.

3. Blown by the priests

In Moses’ time, only the priests, Aaron and his sons, could blow the trumpets. Today, every believer is a priest of God, with similar duties. We must communicate with our fellow members when there is trouble or joy in the church, and we must call others to the gospel. Moreover, God commanded Moses to make two silver trumpets, not just one. It is impossible for us to serve God alone—we need to work in unity with our coworkers in Christ.

4. Blown during wartime

Communicating danger is of vital importance during wartime, and the danger that we need to communicate today is not physical, but spiritual. When we spread the gospel, we are engaging in a spiritual warfare to rescue the souls of mankind from the hands of Satan. We need to preach the gospel bravely and contend earnestly for the truth.

5. Blown during feasts

Aside from travel or wartime, the trumpets were also blown during days of gladness, “in your appointed feasts, and at the beginning of your months” (Num 10:10). They were also used among God’s people to gather them together. In times of joy, fellowship, and plenty, we should not forget that such blessings are from God.

Check for Understanding

- 1. Why was it important for the Israelites to take a census?** To know their identity; prepare for warfare; know their duties; and to distribute their inheritance.
- 2. What lesson does the tabernacle’s position in the camp teach us?** God should be the center of our lives. In all that we do, we need to seek His way and glorify Him.
- 3. The Israelites traveled and camped according to the pillar of cloud and fire. What can we learn from this?** As we travel along life’s journey, we too need to firmly fix our eyes on Jesus and follow His lead. We cannot run ahead of Him or away from Him but must learn to be totally submissive to His will, as He knows what is best for us.
- 4. What messages did the trumpets convey to the Israelites?** To gather, whether all the Israelites or just the leaders; to break camp and move onwards; to sound the alarm during wartime; and to sound times of gladness, different feasts, and during celebrations at the beginning of each month.
- 5. In the Old Testament, the trumpets were only blown by the priests. What can we learn from this?** We are the priests of God today, so we have similar duties. We must communicate with our fellow members when there is trouble or joy in the church, and we must call others to the gospel.

Life Application

1. Whose Way Is It Going to Be?

Did you know that Burger King’s slogan used to be “Have it your way!”? It was to promote the idea of choice for their customers. Why do customers like having choices? What does this mean to you? We all like to make our own choices and decisions; what we wear, what we eat, what music we listen to, what we do with our spare time, or what kinds of friends we hang out with. This is us having it “our way.” But how many times have you said to God, “Alright, I’ll have it Your way”? Let’s try to think of a few people in the Bible who did or did not say this to God.

- Who in the Bible told God, “I’ll have it Your way”? (Noah, Mary the mother of Jesus, Jeremiah, Paul)
- Who in the Bible told God, “I want it my way”? (The Israelites, Jonah, Judas, King Saul)
- Who in the Bible said, “Sometimes Your way, sometimes mine”? (Gehazi, Peter)

(Activity: Write each response on a separate sheet of paper, then post up in the corners of the room.)

I am now going to read a few scenarios. For each, choose a corner that best reflects your honest response if you were the person in that situation. Would you say to God, “I’ll have it Your way, God!”, “I want it my way,” or “Sometimes Your way, sometimes mine.” After each scenario, I will invite someone to share their reasons for choosing that response.

Scenario 1:

You have finally made it on to the school volleyball team! You’re quite pleased with yourself as you’ve practiced hard, and you love the sport. But you discover that you are obligated to play in Saturday matches that conflict with your RE classes. What do you decide to do?

Scenario 2:

Lately, you and your mother have been arguing a lot over the amount of time you spend playing computer games each day. You tell her that you have finished your homework assignments, and that you should be allowed to use your free time however you’d like. Your mother, on the other hand, feels that your free time should be used more productively. What do you do?

Scenario 3:

Lately, a guy in your math class has been giving you a lot of attention. At first, you don’t really respond to him, but as time passes and you get to know him more, you find that you really enjoy his company, and you eagerly look forward to seeing him each day at school. You confide all this with a church friend who reminds you that you are too young to date, and that you should find someone in the Lord only at the right time. You tell her that he’s simply a friend you enjoy hanging out with at school and that you have no intentions of dating him. But there is a struggle in your heart.

Scenario 4:

You and your friends at school are having a conversation about a certain classmate who recently openly declared that he was a homosexual. Your friends admire his courage and have decided to accept him. They argue that God has made everyone unique, and that we should be respectful of everybody’s differences. Up until now, you have remained silent, but then your friends ask you what you think.

2. Making Jesus Our Commander

Doing things God’s way can be a struggle for us at times. It is especially difficult when we don’t understand His will or are unwilling to accept His will. How then can we submit ourselves to God’s lead?
(Have students brainstorm possible ideas.)

a. Confess and surrender

At times, we may be unaware of things that we hold tightly to and that have taken first place in our heart. These things prevent us from following God closely. Let’s read Matthew 19:16–22. It wasn’t that the rich young ruler didn’t love Jesus. He did, having obeyed the commandments since his youth. But Jesus pointed out that he still loved his riches more than he loved the Lord. In that regard, he needed to change his heart and reprioritize his life. God wants us to do the

same. Take a moment and try writing down the things that you hold tightly to in your heart. This week when you pray, tell God about them, and ask Him to help you surrender these loves and focus your heart on Him instead.

b. Know God

Unless we know the God we worship and obey, we may struggle to entrust everything to Him. What makes this God so special that He deserves all our love and obedience? How wise is this God that we should follow His ways rather than our own? How loving is this God that even in the worst circumstances, His thoughts towards us are always good, to give us a future and a hope? The more we know God, the more we are willing to commit every aspect of our lives to Him, and to make Him our Commander and Lord.

c. Increase our faith

Let's read Hebrews 4:2. "For indeed the gospel was preached to us as well as to them; but the word which they heard did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in those who heard it." The word of God was given to the Israelites, but because they did not receive it with faith, instead of obtaining the blessings and promises of God, they met with wrath and destruction.

We may intellectually understand why we need to obey God, but if we have difficulty putting God's words into action, then it is often because we lack faith in God's words and promises. If this is the case, we need to pray for the fullness of the Holy Spirit and ask God to increase our faith. Our faith can also grow if we reflect upon all the testimonies from the great cloud of witnesses found in the Bible and from the experiences of our brothers and sisters (Heb 12:1).

Memory Verse

"At the command of the LORD they remained encamped, and at the command of the LORD they journeyed; they kept the charge of the LORD, at the command of the LORD by the hand of Moses."
(Numbers 9:23)

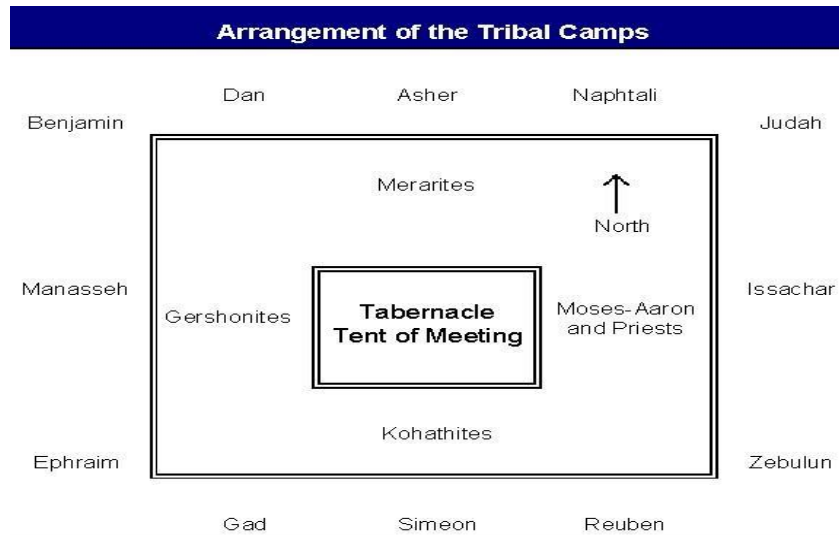
Meaning

The Israelites' entire lives were provided for and guided by the Lord. He not only gave them food and water in a dry desert, but also ensured that their clothes and sandals did not wear out for the forty years that they traveled in the wilderness (Deut 29:5). The pillar of cloud and fire was not only a sign of God's glory, but also of His guidance and everlasting presence. Our own "pillars," God's word and the Holy Spirit within our hearts, are also signs of God's provision, presence, and guidance. We need to learn to follow the Spirit and the truth, just as the Israelites followed the pillar in the wilderness.

Conclusion

God's way of leading His people was direct and clear. They had to look and follow the movement of the pillar of cloud and fire. They had to listen to and hear God's instructions through the trumpet calls. If we follow the guidance of the Holy Spirit and practice His words, we give God His rightful position as Lord and commander in our hearts. When we do, we will find that not only is it the best way, but it is the only way to experience the amazing promises and blessings that God has planned for us.

Figure 1: Arrangement of the Tribal Camps



Lesson 1 Homework Assignment Answer Key

1. What can we learn from the memory verse about how we should live our own lives?
We need to learn to follow the Spirit and the truth, just as the Israelites followed the pillar in the wilderness.
2. "The _____ of the LORD are _____, like _____ tried in a _____ of earth, _____ seven times." (Psalm 12:6)
words, pure, words, silver, furnace, purified
3. Pick one of the four reasons they took a census and explain what it teaches us about our own lives.
 - a. *To know their identity: When we are baptized, our names become registered in the Book of Life, making us members of God's household and partakers of His inheritance.*
 - b. *To prepare for warfare: This reminds us that every believer is a Christian soldier in God's army.*
 - c. *To know their duties: We need to identify and utilize the gifts that God has given us, to edify the church and our fellow members.*
 - d. *To distribute their inheritance: The more we serve God, the greater our future rewards will be.*
4. Explain in detail two of the lessons that you learned from the sound of the trumpets.
See Spiritual Teachings, Section D.
5. Can you think of an aspect in your life in which you avoid saying, "Have it Your way," to God?
Personal answers.
6. Was there ever a time when you or someone you know made Jesus their commander? Briefly share.
Personal answers.

Teachings in the Book of Numbers (II)

Passages: Num 1:1–36:13

Memory Verse

“Then they despised the pleasant land; they did not believe His word, but complained in their tents, and did not heed the voice of the LORD.” (Psalm 106:24–25)

Knowledge of God’s Will [God’s Word]	Knowledge of God [God’s Divine Nature]	Good Works [Behavior]
1. While in the wilderness, the Israelites rebelled in their discontent and lost faith in God. 2. Of the thousands who originally left Egypt, only Joshua and Caleb entered the promised land.	1. God is steadfast. 2. God is judge.	1. Learn to serve God with zeal for His will. 2. Learn to have a steadfast faith. 3. Adopt a heart of contentment by focusing on what we have received from God.

Overview

Events and Spiritual Teachings

- A. Korah and Phinehas
 - **Life Application:** A Heart to Serve God
- B. The Israelites Refuse to Enter Canaan
 - **Life Application:** A Steadfast Faith
- C. True Faith in God
 - **Life Application:** A Heart of Contentment

Memory Verse

Conclusion: The Israelites’ journey to the promised land serves as an example for our own journey of faith. We must have a heart that is zealous for God’s will instead of our own, a steadfast faith, and a heart of contentment. In this way, we can inherit God’s promise of eternal life in His kingdom (1 Pet 1:3–9).

Events and Spiritual Teachings

Introduction

The Israelites' journey from bondage and slavery in Egypt into God's promised land of Canaan is a prefiguration of our own spiritual journey to heaven. Unfortunately, many Israelites fell to their destruction because they were unable to remain steadfast in their faith in God's promises, and they were unable to remain holy and separate from the world. Although their story is very unfortunate and bleak in many ways, if we examine their journey, we can learn several important characteristics needed to complete our journey of faith.

A. Korah and Phinehas

(Teachers: Please see footnote regarding section on Korah.)¹

Numbers records the story of two very different men: Korah, a Levite, and Phinehas, a priest and grandson of Aaron. They were both separated to serve God, but their actions drastically differed from one another. Let's first read about Korah in Numbers 16:1–3.

1. Korah

The Levites were a precious tribe to the Lord because of their refusal to worship the golden calf. Because of this, the Lord set them apart to serve Him in a special way. The Levites' duty was to help the priests manage the tabernacle. The sons of Kohath, Korah included, were even above other families within the Levites, as they had been given the "service of the holy things" (Num 7:9). But Korah was not content with this special duty. He had already received so much from the Lord, but what he had wasn't enough for him. What was the source of this discontent?

a. They were full of pride

The rebels told Moses and Aaron, "You take too much upon yourselves, for all the congregation is holy, every one of them, and the LORD is among them. Why then do you exalt yourselves above the assembly of the LORD?" (Num 16:3). Dathan and Abiram, the sons of Eliab, also refused to obey Moses, saying, "Is it a small thing that you have brought us up out of a land flowing with milk and honey, to kill us in the wilderness, that you should keep acting like a prince over us?" (vv. 12–13).

The rebels' reasoning was dressed up as concern for God's people, but Moses understood the truth. Their words revealed hearts that were focused not on their service to God, but on their "status" within the congregation (v. 10). They did not see Moses' close relationship with God, but a person with a coveted position of "leader." As a result, they were discontent with what they had, were tired of being "lesser," and rebelled against God.

b. They didn't treasure their status

Clearly, the rebels didn't value what God had already given to them. Korah had a special status even within the special tribe of Levi, but it was not enough for him. He and his followers still wanted more because they failed to recognize the significant position that God had already given to them. Let's read what Moses said in Numbers 16:9–10. Moses was trying to point out that what they had was already a blessing of God's grace. What He had given to them was no small thing but a

¹ Please note that Lesson 5 goes into greater detail regarding the incident of Korah's rebellion. As such, you may consider only briefly covering Korah's rebellion in this lesson if your time is limited.

treasure that they should have valued.

2. Phinehas

Because of the Israelites' sexual immorality with the women of Moab and Midian, a plague broke out among them and killed around 24,000 people (Num 25:9; cf. 1 Cor 10:8). Seeing this, Phinehas speared through a couple who had committed sexual immorality. Let's read the details in Numbers 25:8–13. How did God describe Phinehas' actions?

a. "He was zealous with My zeal" (v. 11)

It is clear that Phinehas' concern was for God's glory and holiness. He did not worry about the repercussions, or how the Israelites may have perceived him afterwards. His heart was entirely dedicated to God's holiness and to his concern that the Israelite camp was not defiled with immorality or idolatry.

b. "[He] made atonement for the children of Israel" (v. 13)

While Korah did not serve the people as was his duty, Phinehas acted in the best interests of the Israelites, with the intent of cutting off any sin from their midst. The man that he killed was a leader of a Simeonite family (Num 25:14), but Phinehas disregarded the possible consequences and chose to do the right thing. Because of his actions, he turned away the wrath of God and made atonement for the sin that they had committed.

Phinehas' action may seem extreme and violent until we realize how seriously God regards the holiness of His people. God praised Phinehas because he had protected the Israelites from sin and had "made atonement for the children of Israel."

Life Application: A Heart to Serve God

God often set His people apart for special purposes at various times and places. He considered His people a holy nation, a special treasure, and a kingdom of priests (Ex 19:3–6; Lev 11:44). However, the Israelites often failed to live up to their high status. Both Korah and Phinehas were servants of God, but we can see that their attitudes towards their duties were incredibly different. Korah may have been separated to serve God, but his desire was for his satisfaction and self-glory. Meanwhile, Phinehas acted on behalf of God's glory, not his own, and was "zealous for his God" (Num 25:13).

1. Serving out of self-satisfaction

Korah's rebellion was born out of discontent with what God had already given to him. He failed to treasure God's blessings and set his eyes only on what he did not have, rather than what he already had. It is easy to want more recognition for abilities or talents that we forget are from God. It is also human nature to want more than we have, and to receive praise from those around us. But we need to learn to treasure our status as God's precious children, instead of treasuring our material and social riches.

2. Serving to seek out God's will

Serving God is not about our own ego. Like Korah, we may be tempted to think, "Why does this person have a higher status? I am better and deserve more recognition!" But servitude is not about being "special," or believing that we are better than others. It is about seeking God's glory above all else as Phinehas did.

We are God's holy nation, a kingdom of priests separated for His purpose. We are a special people who have been charged with the duty of serving God and those around us. But we are not special because of anything that we did. We are only different because the Lord especially loved us, chose us, and redeemed us with His life (Jn 15:16, 19; Eph 1:4). God only desires that we love Him in return by seeking out His will above our own.

Remembering this is the first step to serving God with a correct heart. When we have this understanding, we can separate our hearts from the world and focus on God instead of our own worldly desires. God has already given us the blessing of being His chosen people! With this in mind, as God's children, we should not seek to fulfill our own desires, but be zealous for God's will above all else (cf. Eph 4:7–13; 1 Pet 4:10). When we do, just as Phinehas was granted a "covenant of peace" (Num 25:12), we can inherit the many blessings that God has promised.

Discussion

- Have you ever done something for someone else as a form of self-satisfaction, such as pride, in order to "look good" in front of someone, or perhaps to receive something like a material prize or a higher social status?
- How can we train ourselves to change our way of thinking and serve God with a correct heart?

Consider the following scenario and consider how you should react.

When a brother encouraged you to join your local church choir, you happily agreed. Being part of the All-State Choir, you had more experience with singing and music, so you felt that this was a good opportunity to help your brothers and sisters praise God. After a few months, however, you began to feel frustrated. Your fellow choir members weren't as quick to pick up music, and the conductor picked simple, unexciting songs. Eventually, you paid less attention, skipped sessions, and only showed up on time for performances. You were asked to join because you sing better than everyone else, and you don't need as much practice, so you figure there's no harm in being a bit more casual about church choir practice. What is wrong with this attitude, and how can you change yourself in such a situation?

B. The Israelites Refuse to Enter Canaan²

Despite the wonders that God showed the Israelites every day, they often failed to uphold their faith in Him. Let's read Numbers 13:26–14:10. Instead of being excited about the abundant land that the Lord was prepared to give them, almost all the Israelites were so fearful that they were willing to return to slavery in Egypt! Why were they so afraid?

1. They lacked faith

Inheriting God's promises can be likened to a battle. It can be a physical or a spiritual battle, but it is still a fight in many ways. The spies' report was a spiritual battle, and the Israelites lost. They allowed themselves to be spiritually and mentally defeated even before the physical battle had begun. This is because when faced with the prospect of such danger, they forgot about God's power. They lost faith in His omnipotence. Psalm 78:37 says, "For their heart was not steadfast with Him, nor were they faithful in His covenant." They did not truly believe that God would give what He had promised.

² Note that this passage is covered in greater detail in J2 Year 3 Book 2 Lesson 4: *The People Complain and Moses' Prayer*

2. They lacked determination

Other than a lack of faith, the Israelites lacked the determination to receive what He was offering. They had already received so much from Him and had doggedly followed God's commands so far, but at the slightest sign of resistance, their determination crumbled once more. They didn't want to fight for their blessings. Instead, when faced with the prospect of battle, they longed for their old way of life. They did not want to put any effort into receiving the new life God had promised (Num 14:3–4).

Life Application: A Steadfast Faith

In the very beginning of the Book of Numbers, the children of Israel are counted, and Numbers 1:45–46 states that “from twenty years old and above, all who were able to go to war in Israel—all who were numbered were six hundred and three thousand five hundred and fifty.” Yet of these hundreds of thousands of Israelites who left Egypt, only two, Joshua and Caleb, eventually made it into the promised land!

If we examine the book, we can see that the primary reason for this is because the Israelites did not maintain a steadfast faith in the Lord. When we face a difficult situation or challenge that requires faith, we will know if we truly have faith or not. It is through such hardships that we discover whether our faith in God is genuine.

Paul wrote, “Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord” (1 Cor 15:58). Being steadfast in our faith means having a faith that is “immovable.” It means that no challenge, hardship, or obstacle will ever interfere with our purpose towards God, or with our determination to receive His promises.

Consider the following scenario:

You and your school friends have been quite close since middle school and have stuck together right into high school. But you have noticed that they are slowly starting to change. Lately, they've been going to more and more parties where you know they are drinking alcohol, and one of them has even begun to smoke or vape on occasion. You feel obligated to remain their friend since you have been so close for so long, but then they begin to pressure you into coming with them to parties, especially on the weekends. How can you remain steadfast in your faith?

Have you thought about why you might lose faith? Think about a situation where you faced hardships or obstacles. For example, have you ever been attracted to someone at school, or perhaps been tempted to cheat because of pressure to increase your grades? In these two cases, you might have lost faith in His promise of salvation if we remain holy, or His promise to help us when we are in need. There is no single formula to overcoming the challenges to our faith, but one thing is certain: we must have a determination to keep an immovable faith.

C. True Faith in God

Throughout the Book of Numbers, we can see that the Israelites often complained or rebelled against God because they felt like they were lacking. They were not content with what God had given them, despite having experienced the pain of slavery and the joy of freedom through God's power. One of the things they complained about the most was food and water. Let's read

Numbers 11:4–6.

We can see that the Israelites were incredibly shortsighted. They had rejoiced so much after being freed from slavery, but the moment things did not go their way, or they lacked the things they desired, they complained to God. In this case, they even chose to remember only the good things of Egypt while completely forgetting the hardships they endured and the blessing of freedom that God gave them! Food and water were the Israelites' most common complaint (Num 11:4–6; 20:2–5; 21:4–5). But they also complained about their position (Num 12:1–2); the challenge of enemies occupying the promised land (Num 13:27–14:9); their duties of service (Num 16:1–14); being punished for their sins (Num 16:41); the holy priesthood (Num 17:2–10).

The Israelites were greatly dissatisfied about many things. With such endless complaints, it is truly a miracle that God did not simply abandon the Israelites. Out of His love and compassion, He continued to provide for them. But their discontent led to a significant loss: none who wanted to return to Egypt were permitted entry into the promised land.

Life Application: A Heart of Contentment

If discontent was the root of the Israelites' rebellion, then we must learn to do the opposite: we must learn to have a heart that is content. It's easy to feel content when life is good, but what about in times of tribulation? Going through a "wilderness" can be very challenging to our faith. Imagine wandering in a desert without food and water. We normally complain when unhappy or in trouble (Jas 5:9), but complaints reflect a heart of discontent, such as when the Israelites craved meat instead of being thankful for the manna they freely received each and every day.

When we allow discontent to affect our relationship with God, we are venturing towards a very dangerous point in our faith. It means that we are dissatisfied with everything that He has given us and forgotten His grace of salvation, earned only through the blood, suffering, and sacrifice of Jesus Christ. So, we must learn how to be content. This means focusing on the things we have received instead of what we don't have (Phil 4:11–12).

Discussion

- Is there anything that you have complained about repeatedly in your life? Let's read 1 Timothy 6:6–8. What is your attitude towards your possessions? Towards things that your friends have but that you do not? Do you complain when you don't have something, or do you stop to give thanks for what you already have?

Consider the following scenario and consider how you should react.

You have a friend at school who always has the latest electronics, from the newest console to the latest phone or laptop. Your own family isn't exactly poor, but you often have difficulty convincing your parents to buy you such expensive devices without a valid reason. As a result, you often spend time at your friend's house playing the latest games or watch with envy whenever they are using their better, faster phone. It has gotten to the point where you have even begun to resent your parents and have frequently gotten into arguments with them while trying to convince them to buy what you want. How can you adopt a heart of contentment in this situation? What kind of steps can you take?

The Bible says, "We must through many tribulations enter the kingdom of God" (Acts 14:22).

Jesus even warned us, "In the world you will have tribulation" (Jn 16:33). It is inevitable that we will face hardships. But what will our spiritual attitude be when we do? Instead of hoping that we never encounter challenges, we should learn from the Israelites' mistakes by having a heart that is zealous for God's will, keeping a steadfast faith, and learning to be content with what God has already given to us. That way, when we traverse the wilderness, we know that at the end we will enter the promised land that is God's heavenly kingdom.

Check for Understanding

- 1. What important characteristics do we need to complete our journey of faith?** A heart to serve God for His will instead of our own, a steadfast faith, and a heart of contentment.
- 2. What are the key differences between Korah and Phinehas?** Korah was discontent with his position, did not treasure his status, and served only out of self-satisfaction. But Phinehas was zealous for God and acted on behalf of God's glory.
- 3. Why did the Israelites fear entering into Canaan?** They lacked faith and the determination to receive God's promises.
- 4. What does it mean to have a steadfast faith?** It means having a faith that is "immovable." No challenge, hardship, or obstacle will ever interfere with our purpose towards God, or with our determination to receive His promises.
- 5. Why is it important to learn to be content?** When we allow discontent to affect our relationship with God, we are venturing towards a very dangerous point in our faith. Complaints reflect a dissatisfaction with God's promises, and a heart that has forgotten the sacrifice of Jesus Christ.

Memory Verse

"Then they despised the pleasant land; they did not believe His word, but complained in their tents, and did not heed the voice of the LORD." (Psalm 106:24–25)

Meaning

While traveling in the wilderness, the Israelites repeatedly expressed their discontent and dissatisfaction, constantly desiring what they did not have. They failed to treasure what God gave to them and were unable to appreciate the love and care that He offered to His chosen people. As a result of their constant complaints, they were unable to experience God's promises. We must be careful to avoid making the same mistakes, and instead learn to open our eyes to what God has given us!

Conclusion

The Israelites' journey to the promised land serves as an example for our own journey of faith. We must have a heart that is zealous for God's will instead of our own, a steadfast faith, and a heart of contentment. In this way, we can inherit God's promise of eternal life in His kingdom (1 Pet 1:3–9).

Lesson 2 Homework Assignment Answer Key

1. Why did the Israelites repeatedly express their discontent? What was the result?
They constantly desired what they did not have. They failed to treasure what God gave to them and were unable to appreciate the love and care that He offered to His chosen people. As a result, they were unable to experience God's promises.
2. "Now _____ with _____ is great _____. For we brought _____ into this _____, and it is certain we can carry _____ out." (1 Timothy 6:6-7)
godliness, contentment, gain, nothing, world, nothing
3. Why did God praise Phinehas' actions?
Phinehas' action may seem extreme and violent until we realize how seriously God regards the holiness of His people. God praised Phinehas because he had protected the Israelites from sin and had "made atonement for the children of Israel."
4. Why did the Israelites refuse to enter Canaan?
They lacked faith, and they lacked determination.
5. What is a steadfast faith? What in your life has caused your faith to shake in the past?
*Being steadfast in our faith means having a faith that is "immovable."
Personal answers.*
6. Is your heart discontent? How can you learn to be content with what you have?
Personal answers.
7. Think of the blessings that God has given you and write down as many as you can. In your prayers this week, give thanks for each blessing that you write.
Personal answers.

Becoming a Nazirite

Passages: Num 6

Memory Verse

“Therefore ‘come out from among them and be separate, says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean, and I will receive you.’ ‘I will be a Father to you, and you shall be My sons and daughters, says the LORD Almighty.’ ” (2 Corinthians 6:17–18)

Knowledge of God’s Will [God’s Word]	Knowledge of God [God’s Divine Nature]	Good Works [Behavior]
1. Becoming a Nazirite means choosing to dedicate oneself to God. 2. To be a spiritual Nazirite, we must follow God’s will, not our own.	1. God is holy. 2. God is to be glorified above all others.	Be a spiritual Nazirite by dedicating our lives to God and separating ourselves from the fleeting pleasures of this world.

Overview

Events and Spiritual Teachings

- A. The Conditions of a Nazirite
- B. The Conclusion of a Nazirite’s Vows
- C. Nazirites in the Bible

Life Application: A Spiritual Nazirite

- 1. Abstain from Wine: Avoiding Worldly Pleasures
- 2. Uncut Hair: Reflecting God in Our Actions
- 3. Avoid Dead Bodies: Remaining Holy
- 4. A True Spiritual Nazirite

Memory Verse

Conclusion: God has separated us to Himself because He loves us and wants to give the best to us. His only requirement is that we separate ourselves from the world around us and avoid becoming entangled in its many pleasures.

Events and Spiritual Teachings

A. The Conditions of a Nazirite (Num 6:1–7)

A Nazirite was separated to take up the service of God and could be from any tribe. The various rules that a Nazirite had to follow made it clear to others and to himself that he had been separated to serve the Lord. A Nazirite could be called by God, as in the case of Samson (Judg 13:5), be dedicated by a vow of service made by his parents, as in the case of Samuel (1 Sam 1:11), or make a vow himself, as in the case of Paul who consecrated himself for a time (Acts 18:18; 21:23–24).

1. Abstain from wine (vv. 1–4)

Wine was a common fruit product associated with celebration and feasts. Abstinence from wine therefore represented giving up the pleasures of this world to lead a simple life, free from excess and extravagance. A Nazirite should take his focus away from worldly pursuits and focus wholly on the work of God.

2. No razor shall touch his head (v. 5)

Even back then, haircuts were an essential aspect of one's outward appearance! A lack of trimming would have been a visible symbol of the Nazirite's focus on their inward, not outward, appearance. His inner, spiritual character became the focus. This also would have made him stand out, possibly even causing uncomfortable attention or embarrassment. But on the other hand, it was a chance for the Nazirite to share about his life of service to God. Head coverings were also a sign of respect, a concept reflected in a Nazirite's long hair.

3. No contact with dead bodies (vv. 6–7)

Since a Nazirite was to lead a holy life untainted by the things of the world, he needed to keep himself pure by avoiding defilement. If the deceased were a family member, tending to the needs and details associated with the funeral and burial would naturally involve close proximity with the dead body. Keeping a distance meant that they must avoid being entangled with the traditions and administrations of the world. Not being distracted by such worldly details would have also allowed the Nazirite to focus wholeheartedly on his service to God.

B. The Conclusion of a Nazirite's Vows (Num 6:13–21)

A Nazirite's dedication was so important that they also had to undergo several actions to announce the conclusion of their vow to God.

1. Offerings (vv. 13–17)

The offering of the sin, burnt, and peace offerings was a reminder that despite his special service to God, his acceptance was still based on God's forgiveness and blessings. Service to God is a divine privilege accepted by the will of God, not according to the will of man. No matter how much we offer to God, our acceptance, and even our salvation, is still based on God's mercy.

2. Shaving of the head (v. 18)

With the conclusion of his vow, the Nazirite was to shave off all his hair and burn it on the fire used for the peace offering. Burning all his hair was not only a physical sign of the conclusion of his vow. It was also a reminder not to hold on to any past achievements that may arouse pride in his heart. Burning it as an offering to God meant that all his service, no matter how great or small, was for God's glory, not his own. As workers of God, we should resume our "normal service" and not dwell on past works, or we might start to glorify ourselves. Instead, we should quietly go about our business, knowing that God will reward us for our good deeds in His own

time and way.

3. Whatever else his hand is able to provide (v. 21)

If there were any additional personal vows that the Nazirite had made, he wasn't to forget about them, but to continue to fulfill them. As spiritual Nazirites, apart from what we initially set out to offer to the Lord, we shouldn't place limitations or restrictions on whatever other good services we can render to the Lord. Since all we have has come from God, we should use the abilities He has given us to serve Him whenever an opportunity arises.

C. Nazirites in the Bible

1. Samson

One of the most well-known Nazirites in the Bible is Samson. He was an unusual case because the vow of a Nazirite was normally voluntary and temporary. Samson, however, was set aside by the Lord to be a Nazirite for his entire life (Judg 13:6–7). Even more unusual was that God commanded his mother to observe the same restrictions until his birth (vv. 13–14). Samson's case is also unusual in the unfortunate fact that he eventually broke all three requirements of a Nazirite.

2. Samuel

When Hannah, Samuel's mother, begged the Lord for a son, "she made a vow, and said, 'O LORD of hosts, if You will indeed look on the affliction of Your maidservant and remember me, and not forget Your maidservant, but will give Your maidservant a male child, then I will give him to the LORD all the days of my life, and no razor shall come upon his head'" (1 Sam 1:11). Like Samson, Samuel was unusual in that he was set aside to be a Nazirite his entire life, except this vow was placed upon him by his mother: if God gave her a son, she would give her son to God. In exchange for his very birth and life, which would not have occurred without God's intervention, Samuel would dedicate his life to serving the Lord. Unlike Samson, Samuel was a lifelong Nazirite who kept his vows and faithfully served God his entire life.

3. John the Baptist

When an angel of the Lord announced the impending birth of John the Baptist to Zacharias, he said that John "will be great in the sight of the Lord, and shall drink neither wine nor strong drink. He will also be filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother's womb" (Lk 1:15). Like Samson and Samuel, John was an unusual case in that he was a Nazirite for his entire life.

4. Paul

Paul took the Nazirite vow at least twice in his life. The Bible records Paul concluding his vow by cutting off his hair at Cenchrea before setting sail for Syria (Acts 18:18). Later, the Bible records that there were rumors that Paul had been teaching Jews to abandon the Mosaic laws. These rumors interfered with his ability to spread the gospel and shepherd the church (1 Tim 3:7). Paul had never taught the Jews to give up the Mosaic laws, only that Gentiles should not be forced to follow them. So, the apostles advised Paul to join some other brethren who had taken up the Nazirite vow. By following this Mosaic tradition, he would rebuff any reports that he had abandoned the laws (Acts 21:18–26).

As a Nazirite, Samson broke every rule. Yet, God still set Samson aside, used him for His purpose, and answered Samson's prayers. This teaches us that God may use us up to a point, but our own salvation is in jeopardy when our focus is not on God. We cannot let our own self-centered desires hinder His work.

Samuel, John the Baptist, and Paul gave up their own wills and followed God's instead. Whatever gifts God has given us, and however we serve Him, we must do our best to draw closer to God and focus on His will instead of our own desires. When we do so, we can become a true spiritual Nazirite, holy and set apart for God's purpose.

Check for Understanding

- 1. What were the three restrictions that a Nazirite followed?** (1) Abstain from wine; (2) Must not cut their hair; (3) No contact with dead bodies.
- 2. Explain the significance of each restriction.** (1) Abstinence from alcohol represented giving up the pleasures of this world; (2) A lack of trimming would have been a visible symbol of the Nazirite's focus on their inward, not outward, appearance; and (3) Not being distracted by worldly details would allow the Nazirite to focus wholeheartedly on his service to God.
- 3. How did a Nazirite conclude their vows?** By making offerings, shaving their hair, and fulfilling any additional personal vows they had made.
- 4. Who were the Nazirites studied in this lesson?** Samson, Samuel, John the Baptist, and Paul.
- 5. Why were the cases of Samson, Samuel, and John the Baptist unusual?** The Nazirite vow was normally voluntary and temporary, but theirs was lifelong.

Life Application

A Spiritual Nazirite

"Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God." (1 Cor 10:31)

We learned about the rules of being a Nazirite and studied the example of Samson, including the mistakes that he made. It is easy to point out another person's flaws while forgetting to look at our own. Samson's life teaches us that separating ourselves for service to God is not easy. Yet, God wants us to love Him wholeheartedly, to be His priests, and to learn how to be spiritual Nazirites. Considering the rules that we learned today, how can we become a spiritual Nazirite? We are now going to look at a case study as an example. As we go through each section, we'll discuss some questions and personal takeaways that we should reflect upon in our own lives.

1. Abstain from Wine: Avoiding Worldly Pleasures

"All things are lawful for me, but all things are not helpful. All things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any." (1 Cor 6:12)

Case Study, Part 1:

John was a talented soccer player. He loved playing soccer ever since he could walk. Every day, he arrived at school an hour early so that he could play before school started, during every break, and after school for hours on end. He was on the school team and played competitively on a regular basis. John believed that his talent was given by God, so it was clear that he would be a pro soccer player when he grew up. Besides, what better way was there to make a great living than doing the thing he loved best? However, to fulfill his dream, playing for the local school was not enough. He needed to join a group outside of school to get a chance to be scouted by a professional team. After joining a local group, he was soon practicing and playing six days a week. Match days were every Saturday, so he was no longer able to attend the whole day at church.

Discussion

- What would your advice to John be in terms of whether he should pursue his ambition of being a professional soccer player?
- Is taking up a professional sport a sin?

Since we are children of God, we need to be conscious of glorifying God every moment of our lives. There are things in this world that are contrary to the word of God, such as pride, sexual immorality, and hatred. But there are also things that are more “neutral,” such as hobbies, sports, or things we do to relax, such as eating out or going on vacation. However, whatever the activity, we need to ask ourselves: how much time do we spend on things that are not spiritually beneficial for us? If the answer is, “a lot,” do we enjoy the pleasures that this world offers more than finding pleasure in doing the will of God? As a spiritual Nazirite, how can we learn to distinguish and be wary of the distractions of this world?

2. Uncut Hair: Reflecting God in Our Actions

“You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt loses its flavor, how shall it be seasoned? It is then good for nothing but to be thrown out and trampled underfoot by men.” (Mt 5:13)

Case Study, Part 2:

After a few months, John realized that in the long term, he would have to give up going to church entirely. He knew that he was already failing to keep the Sabbath properly, and if he became a professional, there would be no time for church at all. Needless to say, he was already receiving a lot of pressure from church members for playing soccer on the Sabbath day, and he was reminded repeatedly not to focus on fame or riches. For John, neither of these were his prime motivation in playing the sport. He relished the challenge of playing against the best and the joy of playing the sport itself.

He began to ask himself, “Could it be pride? For wanting to show off my talent? But I truly enjoy playing this sport, and the Bible tells us to be joyful. If I can find a life in which I find joy, and at the same time bring others joy in the same sport by playing a good game, is that such a bad thing? But on the other hand, true joy comes from God...” And that was the end of his internal struggle. The true question was, would he find greater joy in playing a professional sport, or in God Himself? Realizing this, John knew that he could not prevail against the truth, as the debate all boiled down to whether he truly believed in God.

John knew if he truly believed in God, he also needed to trust that his joy would not diminish if he chose to give up his dream. He concluded that it was simply not possible to be a professional player and to love God at the same time. He made the right choice in the end and began to play less. This meant that he now had more time to spend on his schoolwork, his family, and church activities. He also realized that while striving to be a pro player, he had spent no time with his brothers and sisters in church. Now, he got to know them better and began to experience the joy of fellowship with them.

Discussion

- If someone you knew was too busy for God because they were working towards a dream or goal, what would you say to them?
- What kind of argument might they respond with, and how would you respond?

It’s not a sin to enjoy something or to be good at it. It is also easy to argue that to be good at anything, time and dedication is a requirement, and that in our later years, most of one’s life is devoted to their work anyway. But for John, soccer was clearly taking up almost all his daily life. Aiming to be a pro athlete directly contradicted his faith, since he would have to give up the Sabbath day.

When a hobby changes from an occasional pastime into something that consumes a large part of our everyday life, we need to consider its impact on our other responsibilities and our relationship with God. It is human nature to spend time on various activities for pleasure, fulfillment, and joy. As Christians, we may find that when we do not find spiritual joy in God, we easily fall into various temptations and addictions. We begin moving from one worldly obsession to another. However, when our relationship with God is good, we will find ourselves living a far more balanced life. The question is, at what point do our lives tip towards an “imbalance”? Let’s continue with part three of our case study.

3. Avoid Dead Bodies: Remaining Holy

“But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed. Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death.” (Jas 1:14–15)

Case Study, Part 3:

By now, John had come to terms with the fact that he was not going to be a professional athlete. However, this did not mean he was no longer an avid fan. He played on occasion and still followed his favorite team. He didn’t watch as much as he used to, but still set time aside to watch big matches. One such occasion was a game that concluded during lunchtime on a Saturday. “Perfect,” he thought to himself. “I can dash out to the bar across the road and catch some of the game before returning for afternoon service.” To his surprise and disappointment, his team lost – and unjustly, in his eyes – which put him in a sour mood when returning to church. The loss was just a reminder that he should not have left church to watch the game, even if during break time. From then on, he no longer watched any soccer on Saturdays.

Sometime later, smartphones became popular, and John had acquired one for himself. Its convenience was irresistible. But he soon discovered a problem: he found himself switching from his Bible app to his soccer app the moment the final prayer of Sabbath day had concluded. His phone made it all too convenient for him to catch up on any games he had missed. Where before he was limited to a TV with a proper subscription, or in absence of that, tuning in to a radio commentary in his car, now he could watch his favorite game anywhere. Soccer was everywhere he was, anytime he wanted.

Discussion

- What can we learn about John’s love of soccer from what has been described so far?
- Why did John find it difficult to get away from soccer, even on the Sabbath day?

When we find ourselves unable to say “no” at any given time to the entertainment of this world, we have allowed ourselves to come under its power. This leaves us vulnerable to temptation and gives the devil great advantage over us. If we sense even a hint of addiction to anything this world has to offer, we need to take urgent action to eliminate whatever has begun to take over our lives. But how does one go about doing this? Let’s continue with the final part of our case study.

4. A True Spiritual Nazirite

“No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon.” (Mt 6:24)

Case Study, Part 4:

John once heard a teaching: “There’s nothing wrong with watching sports, but if we can’t control when we watch, and the sport is instead controlling us, then we have a problem.” John knew that although he

had already taken steps to control his love of soccer, there was an underlying issue that was affecting his self-control. He considered whether he should just stop using a smartphone altogether and whether that would help, but concluded that it would not, since the root of the issue stemmed from his mindset. He now understood the fundamental problem: his love for God was not above all other things. If he truly believed in God and loved God with all His heart, then he would be able to say no to things that could affect his relationship with God, including his soccer-watching habits.

Discussion:

- Based on John’s case study, what are some steps to becoming a true spiritual Nazirite? *(Teachers: Try listing out cohesive steps based on the students’ response. Example: identifying things that take our time away from God; working out a plan to move away from these things; finding someone to help us be accountable; working on our relationship with God through fellowship, church activities, etc.)*

John clearly understood what was pleasing to God, and even took some steps in the right direction. But ironically, having a smartphone revealed to him that his heart was not as faithful to God as he thought. The device itself was not the problem, but it helped reveal to him that he needed to go back to the fundamentals in his faith and fix his relationship with God.

Today, there are an endless number of things in this world that seek to grab our attention. John’s love of soccer is a good representation of anything that can reduce the time that we should be spending with God. But when it comes to living a life that is pleasing to God, we might now realize that it is not an easy process. Reducing our time or abstaining from things that we enjoy is very difficult. Even when we do adjust, we may find more and more obstacles between us and God. Giving up our worldly hobbies and habits relies both on our desire to know God and on the strength of the Holy Spirit.

It may seem like too much effort, or even unfair that we need to give up the things we like. But as spiritual Nazirites, we ought to understand that it is a joy and a rare privilege to be chosen by God. And in exchange for our faith, God has promised us “an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time” (1 Pet 1:4–5).

Memory Verse

“Therefore ‘come out from among them and be separate, says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean, and I will receive you.’ ‘I will be a Father to you, and you shall be My sons and daughters, says the LORD Almighty.’ ” (2 Corinthians 6:17–18)

Meaning

God has called us to be separate from the unclean things of the world, so that we can enjoy the privilege of being His children and receive all the blessings that He has intended for us.

Conclusion

As spiritual Nazirites, God has separated us to Himself because He loves us and wants to give the best to us. His only requirement is that we separate ourselves from the world around us and avoid becoming entangled in its many pleasures. When we strive to be holy and to seek out what God wants instead of what we want, then He will bless us and reward us with treasures in heaven.

Lesson 3 Homework Assignment Answer Key

1. What has God promised us if we remain separate from the world?
We can enjoy the privilege of being His children and receive all the blessings that He has intended for us.

2. “He shall _____ himself from _____ and similar drink; he shall drink neither vinegar made from _____ nor vinegar made from similar drink; neither shall he drink any grape juice, nor eat fresh grapes or raisins.” (Numbers 6:3)
separate, wine, wine

3. Explain the teachings that we can learn from the three vows of a Nazirite.
See Spiritual Teachings, Section A.

4. What in your life can you “abstain” from to improve your relationship with God?
Personal answers.

5. What things can we do less of to make more time for our spiritual cultivation?
Personal answers.

The People’s Complaint & Moses’ Prayer

Passages: Num 11; 14

Memory Verse

“Do all things without complaining and disputing, that you may become blameless and harmless, children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world.” (Philippians 2:14–15)

Knowledge of God’s Will [God’s Word]	Knowledge of God [God’s Divine Nature]	Good Works [Behavior]
1. Because they rebelled against the Lord, the Israelites were denied entry to the promised land. 2. Moses’ prayer of intercession saved the Israelites from destruction.	God is a God of justice who will severely punish those who rebel against Him and reward those who trust in His words.	1. Learn to live a life without complaint. 2. Avoid negatively affecting the church, and instead glorify God with our words.

Overview

Events and Spiritual Teachings

- A. The Israelites Complain to God
- B. The Israelites Rebel Against the Lord
- C. Moses’ Prayer of Intercession

Life Application

- 1. How Can We Live a Life Without Complaining?
- 2. How Can We Glorify God with Our Words?

Memory Verse

Conclusion: Those who fully trust in God will not affect others negatively with complaints, but instead speak words of comfort and encouragement and help bring others to keep God’s commands faithfully and joyfully.

Events and Spiritual Teachings

A. The Israelites Complain to God

The Bible records many complaints from the Israelites while in the wilderness. Just three days after leaving Egypt, they complained about the lack of water (Ex 15:22–24), and later, three days after departing from Mount Sinai, the people once again complained to the Lord (Num 11:1–3). Shortly after, the Israelites complained yet again. Let’s read Numbers 11:4–6.

1. The reasons for their complaints

Looking back at their story, it is easy to think that the Israelites were being utterly foolish, maybe even childish. But instead of judging them, we should examine the reasons they were so quick to complain and make sure we avoid falling to the same mistakes.

a. Negative influences

Let’s read Numbers 11:4 again. “Now the mixed multitude who were among them yielded to intense craving; so the children of Israel also wept again and said, ‘Who will give us meat to eat?’ ” There are two groups of people described here. The first is the “mixed multitude.” Their distinction from the children of Israel implies that they were perhaps Egyptians or fellow slaves who had left Egypt along with the Israelites. There may have been numerous people involved, but it was a particular group of people who started the complaints.

From this, we can see that the intense craving of the mixed multitude impacted the people of Israel in general. This is because negativity and discontent can have a devastating effect and influence others. We need to be mindful of our attitude and avoid becoming someone who creates negativity in the church. At the same time, we also need to be alert to negativity from others and overcome it with the word of God.

b. They yielded to their desires

The Bible says that the mixed multitude yielded to “intense craving.” The Hebrew word can also be translated as, “longing,” “to lust after,” “to covet,” or “to greatly desire.” They desperately wanted something that they didn’t need, allowing their desires to control them entirely, so much so that they forgot about what God had already given them.

Have you ever wanted something so much that you found it difficult to focus on anything else? It may have been for anything, from food, to games, to technology. We’ve probably all experienced this kind of feeling before, to varying degrees. It is dangerous when we allow our desire to overcome our common sense, or worse, to interfere with our relationship with God. Wanting things makes us forget what God has already given to us. To combat this, if we focus our thoughts on God instead, we can avoid letting our desires control our actions.

c. Their nostalgia blinded them

Let’s read Numbers 11:5. “We remember the fish which we ate freely in Egypt, the cucumbers, the melons, the leeks, the onions, and the garlic.” The Israelites fondly remembered all the varieties and abundance of food that they enjoyed in Egypt, conveniently forgetting the suffering that they had endured as slaves, and the fact that they had once cried out to God for freedom. What a contradiction! They desired food that came with bondage and suffering and rejected the miraculous providence of manna that came with God’s guidance and freedom. This is because they allowed their nostalgia for the better parts of the past affect both their memories of Egypt and their vision of the present.

God had parted the Red Sea for the Israelites, was providing them with a daily miracle of manna, and was guiding them constantly with a pillar of cloud and fire. If they had focused on these facts, then perhaps they would not have complained. Unfortunately, they allowed their lustful cravings to prevent them from accepting God's provision with thanksgiving.

2. The consequences of their complaints

Let's first read Numbers 11:1–3. From here, we can see that when they complained, God heard them and became angry. The Bible does not specify what they complained about, but their complaints reflected their lack of faith, as their complaint was an act of rebellion against the Lord. So, out of anger, He struck them with fire. However, the fire only consumed those at the outskirts of the camp, showing God's mercy even when angry.

Let's now look at God's response when they complained about the food. Let's read Numbers 11:10–23, 31–34. Clearly, the level of complaint and rebellion against God was incredibly severe this time, and the guilty suffered terrible consequences. These events remind us that when we complain against God, we are not only showing a lack of gratitude, but are also despising God (v. 20). Since there is a limit to God's tolerance of our complaints, we need to be quick to acknowledge any dissatisfaction towards the Lord. God is merciful, but He is also just.

B. The Israelites Rebel Against the Lord

In a previous lesson, we learned a bit about the spies who went to Canaan and returned with a bad report. We will be looking at this event in a bit more detail today. First, let's read Numbers 13:1–2. God was preparing the Israelites for their entry into Canaan. Notice the wording of God's command. He ordered them to "spy out the land of Canaan, which I am giving to the children of Israel." They weren't there to see if the land was suitable or not. It was already being given to them by God! Let's now read verses 26–33. While Caleb encouraged the people with confidence, the other spies spoke the opposite. Let's examine their responses.

1. The ten spies' report

Each time the other spies spoke, they seemed to amplify the danger of the land! First, they simply said, "Nevertheless the people who dwell in the land are strong; the cities are fortified and very large" (v. 28). Then, they described them as "stronger than we." Worse still, they said the very land "devours its inhabitants" and that they were like grasshoppers in the sight of the giants they spied in the land (v. 33).

Just as they conveniently forgot their slavery while recalling all the different foods they ate in Egypt, these spies once again had a selective memory! They recalled only the dangers that they saw, completely forgetting how bountiful and fruitful the land was. More importantly, they forgot God's power. As a result, they spurned the great gift that He had given to them.

2. Joshua and Caleb's report

Let's now look at Joshua and Caleb's report. First, let's re-read verse 30. Caleb's confident advice was the opposite of his fellow spies' report. Why was he so confident in their ability to possess the land? He had such great confidence because he hadn't forgotten God's power! He also understood that God's command to spy out the land was not to see whether it was possible to take it. The taking of the land was already a given! God had said it; therefore, it would happen.

Let's read Numbers 14:6–10. After the Israelites began to cry out and make plans to return, Caleb and Joshua made one more attempt to convince them otherwise. This time, their words were both in encouragement and in warning. They understood that to reject this gift from God was also to commit a sin worthy of punishment. This shows that they both had a clear understanding of God's nature. His great power was able to save them and give them the land, but it was also entirely within His power to punish those who sinned and rebelled against Him.

Their reactions were completely different because Joshua and Caleb had a clearer understanding of God. The other ten spies allowed their fears to cloud their vision. Worse, they allowed their fears to affect other people. Let's now look at the Israelites' response to the spies' frantic report. Let's read Numbers 14:1–4. When Moses later recounted this incident, he said, "Likewise, when the LORD sent you from Kadesh Barnea, saying, 'Go up and possess the land which I have given you,' then you rebelled against the commandment of the LORD your God, and you did not believe Him nor obey His voice." He also chided them for having been "rebellious against the LORD from the day that I knew you" (Deut 9:23–24).

From their actions, and from Moses' description, we can see that the Israelites did not cherish what God had done for them, and they had no faith in God or His words. They knew His will but chose to disobey and rebel. Unbelief is a choice that reveals the rebellion in our hearts. When we complain to the Lord, it is not that God hasn't done His best for us, but that we have chosen to rebel or argue against him.

C. Moses' Prayer of Intercession

Let's read Numbers 14:11–24. The Israelites had rejected God and did not believe Him despite all the signs He had performed. As a punishment for their lack of faith, He would strike them with a pestilence and "disinherit" the Israelites. The severity of the punishment matched the Israelites' sin. Because they did not believe in God's promises, they would not receive them at all. However, despite all of the frustration and suffering he had experienced in leading the people, Moses stepped in and interceded for the Israelites. Let's examine his prayer more closely.

1. Moses appeals on behalf of God's glory (vv. 13–16)

The first part of Moses' prayer is an appeal not for himself nor for the Israelites, but a prayer for God's glory to be seen. He points out that other nations will misunderstand events and claim, "Because the LORD was not able to bring this people to the land which He swore to give them, therefore He killed them in the wilderness" (v. 16). Moses, first and foremost, did not want anyone maligning the Lord's name, which could very well happen if He destroyed the very people He had through such great miracles brought out of Egypt.

Do you remember the first few lines of the Lord's Prayer? "Our Father in heaven, hallowed by Your name. Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven" (Mt 6:9–10). Every time we pray, we should pray with the intention of bringing glory to God. How many of our prayers have always begun with our own wishes first and foremost? When we kneel to pray, we must remember to put God's glory first, not our own wants or wishes.

2. Moses appeals to God's mercy (vv. 17–19)

In this part of his prayer, he appealed to God's mercy by quoting the Lord's own words when He made two new tablets with the Ten Commandments (Ex 34:6–8). From these words, we can see that Moses understood God's holy nature. He recognized that the Israelites had sinned and acknowledged their iniquity on their behalf. He then humbly asked the Lord to show His great

power not through His punishment, but instead, through His longsuffering and forgiving nature. As a result of this heartfelt appeal, God refrained from destroying the Israelites.

It is easy to underestimate the power of intercession. The Bible says, “Confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much” (Jas 5:16). Jesus is our ultimate interceder, and we should strive to be like Him by interceding for one another with love. If we do, God will listen to our prayers.

In the end, the Lord refrained from destroying the Israelites, but they didn’t escape punishment for their sins, either. Let’s read Numbers 14:26–38. In a twist of events, the very children whom the Israelites had used as an excuse against entering the land (Num 14:3) would be the sole inheritors. Anyone aged twenty and above would die in forty years of wandering the wilderness. Lastly, the ten spies died by the plague because of their evil report. We can see God’s justice in serving the most severe punishment to the greatest perpetrators, and His mercy on those who remained faithful, namely Caleb and Joshua.

God’s power is truly something to be feared, but it is also something to be relied upon. He wants us to do our best to enter the promised land while relying on Him. As He told the Israelites, we have already been given our inheritance in heaven – the Holy Spirit is evidence of that! However, we must learn from the Israelites, and avoid being wrapped up in either the pleasures of the world, or in the trials that we face. Instead, like Joshua and Caleb, we need to focus on the Lord’s promise, and do our best to obediently follow His commands so that we can receive our inheritance.

Check for Understanding

- 1. What were three reasons the children of Israel complained to God?** They were affected by the negative influences from the mixed multitude; they yielded to their desires; and they allowed their nostalgia to blind them to God’s blessings.
- 2. Why is complaining against God such a serious sin?** When we complain against God, we are not only showing a lack of gratitude, but are also despising God and rejecting His blessings.
- 3. Why was the reaction of the ten spies so different from Joshua and Caleb’s?** Joshua and Caleb had a clearer understanding of God, while the other ten spies allowed their fears to cloud their vision of both God’s power and God’s blessing.
- 4. Why was the Israelites’ refusal to enter the promised land such a serious sin?** It showed their rejection of God and showed that they did not believe in Him despite all the signs and wonders that He had performed. As a result, because they did not believe in God’s promises, they would not receive them at all.
- 5. What does Moses’ prayer teach us about how we should shape our own prayers?** Every time we pray, we should pray with the intention of bringing glory to God.

Life Application

1. How Can We Live a Life Without Complaining?

Try thinking about the last time you complained about something. Was it about lacking something? Perhaps it was about a food you didn’t like, or someone’s actions. *(Allow students to share.)*

Complaining may seem harmless at first. But as we learned from the Israelites today, they can cause serious dissent in the church. Complaints lead to arguments, and they may cause bitterness, envy, or stir up controversy. More importantly, when we complain in our hearts, we are showing our resentment towards God. This is because complaining about something means that we are not satisfied with God’s blessings. So, how do we learn to live a life without complaint?

a. Understand our status as God’s children

To live a life without complaint, we need to understand what Christ has called us for. Let’s read Philippians 2:14–16. As His children, God has called us to be a light in this world. This means that our words and actions need to reflect Jesus Christ. By keeping His commandments and carrying out His will, we can focus less on the things that make us complain and more on the blessings that God has given to us because He loves us.

Let’s think about the last time we complained again. If you encounter this situation again, instead of complaining, what can you be thankful for? *(For example: If they were complaining about bad weather, then they can instead thank God for the beauty of nature that is nourished by the rain. If about a bad driver on the road, thank God that we have not gotten into an accident. If about bad food, thank God instead for nourishment that many others do not have.)*

b. Godliness with contentment

We often complain because we want things. The Israelites complained about the manna because they desperately wanted food that they didn’t have. But the Bible teaches us that the things of the world are fleeting and will never fulfill us. Have you ever bought something you wanted, and then after a few months, forgotten entirely about it? Or maybe even wanted a better version of it later? This happens surprisingly often! This is because the things of this world are fleeting. They cannot give us lasting joy or peace.

Let’s read 1 Timothy 6:6–7. “Now godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out.” It is important for us to remember that the things of this world will not last. Let’s now read Colossians 3:1–3. We need to “set our mind on things above.” This means filling our hearts and minds with God, and with our hope for salvation. When we do so, we will learn how to be content.

Think about something that you have really wanted for a long time. Perhaps something that you are saving up for, or something you have asked your parents for over and over again. Now, on a piece of paper, write down at least three reasons you do **not** need it! *(Teachers: If they are quick with this activity, encourage them to think of more than one thing. Examples: I already have many toys/clothing/etc.; my parents are already under financial pressure, and I should avoid burdening them; there will be a new edition next year anyway; it is not a daily necessity; etc.)*

2. How Can We Glorify God with Our Words?

The Bible says that the tongue is the hardest part of our body to control (Jas 3:8). This is because we often speak without thinking, especially if we are very angry or upset. Let’s read Ephesians 4:29. “Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers.” As God’s children, we need to learn to control our words, and only say things that edify ourselves and others. We need to learn to glorify God with our speech.

A great way to ensure that we can constantly glorify God is by examining what we talk about and how we talk about them. Does my speech edify others? Impart grace to the hearers? Bring comfort? Do I help others change for the better, or offer encouragement and hope? Do I use my speech to help bring others closer to God, or do I corrupt both my own faith and that of others’? To help us reflect on these questions, let’s now read a scenario about a boy named John.

Scenario

John grew up in a family with a very negative mindset. As a baby, his parents often argued or complained when he needed caring. Of course, at a few months old, he would not have remembered any of this, but as he grew older, he felt every ounce of stress, anxiety, and anger which proceeded from his parents' words and actions. Since shouting and blaming others angrily was the way his parents spoke to him, he behaved the same way.

As John grew older, when he did not get what he wanted, or even when he was simply trying to communicate, he would glare angrily, shout, or stomp his feet. As he understood more, he often heard his parents arguing with one another or talking about how bad other people were. Their commute to church involved him sitting in the back, listening to his parents talk about other members. As a result, this time shaped his dislike and distrust of other people. In school, he often got into fights, was rude to his teachers, and was also rude to people at church. As a result, he didn't have many friends, and often bullied other children around him.

When he was a teenager, during a student convocation, one of his RE classmates received the Holy Spirit. This really caught John's attention, but he felt upset and frustrated that he had not yet received the Holy Spirit. During one of his prayers, he cried and repented to God for all of his bad behavior towards others and asked God to help him and to give him the Holy Spirit. To John's amazement, God gave him the Holy Spirit in that prayer. Overwhelmed, he shed tears of joy.

After this event, John began to treat others with respect, and he became a lot more approachable. People who found it hard to talk to him in the past were now no longer afraid to speak to him. After a few months of this change in behavior, an elderly sister approached him and said, "Did you know that you used to be a very angry child?" John was not offended by what she said but was genuinely surprised. He had no idea that people had seen him that way. For him, his behavior was just him being him.

As he became a young adult, John began to speak more to his parents. He had a desire to help them, and God gave him the wisdom to encourage and gently teach his parents. Slowly, he helped them see that not all people were as bad as they made them out to be. He helped them to try and see things from the perspective of the people they were talking about. Even if other people did make mistakes, he reminded them that not everyone is perfect, and instead of criticizing them, we should have the compassion to pray for them and, if possible, to help them practically, with the words of God. Ultimately, John's willingness to draw near to God allowed God's Spirit to transform him so that he no longer harmed others but became a light of Christ.

Discussion

- How did John's environment while growing up affect his personality?
- Have you encountered anyone like John? How do you interact with them?
- Do you normally speak without thinking? Try coming up with some techniques for slowing down and thinking before speaking. (Example: if angry, count to ten before saying anything.)

Memory Verse

"Do all things without complaining and disputing, that you may become blameless and harmless, children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world." (Philippians 2:14–15)

Meaning

If we can do all things without complaining and disputing, we can be a blameless and harmless child of God. Blameless, because we show our trust in God in whatever we do, and harmless, because we will not be a negative influence on others. This is one of the ways in which we can shine as lights in this world, because it shows that we are able to keep the word of life with a joyful and willing heart.

Conclusion

From today's lesson, we can see how the heart and thoughts of a single person will manifest in the way they speak and the things that they say. Someone who does not reflect upon or appreciate God's blessings will choose not to believe, and instead will disobey and rebel against God. Such people do not only place their own salvation in jeopardy, but also negatively influence others with their words. As a result, they may lead others to rebel against God, and collectively, disobey His words. On the other hand, someone who fully trusts God will also speak words of comfort and encouragement to others, so that together, they can faithfully and joyfully keep the commandments of God without complaint.

(Note to teachers: This week's homework includes an activity that you can follow-up on. You may want to go over the instructions first with your students to ensure that they understand the activity. For younger students, perhaps ask their parents to help them out. You can also provide them with jars or containers if you'd like, and maybe even decorate them during class, if time permits. Example decorations may be writing the week's memory verse, drawing pictures of angry or happy faces, or gluing on speech bubbles.)

Lesson 4 Homework Assignment Answer Key

1. Why does doing things without complaint or dispute make us blameless and harmless?
Blameless, because we show our trust in God in whatever we do, and harmless, because we will not be a negative influence on others.
2. “Now _____ with _____ is great _____. For we brought _____ into this _____, and it is certain we can carry _____ out.” (1 Timothy 6:6–7)
godliness, contentment, gain, nothing, world, nothing
3. “Let no _____ word proceed out of your _____, but what is good for necessary _____, that it may impart _____ to the _____.” (Ephesians 4:29)
corrupt, mouth, edification, grace, hearers
4. Why is complaining against God such a serious sin?
When we complain against God, we are not only showing a lack of gratitude, but are also despising God and rejecting His blessings.
5. Why was Joshua and Caleb’s report so different from the other spies’ report?
They both had a clear understanding of God’s nature. They knew that His great power was able to save them and give them the land, and that it was also entirely within His power to punish those who sinned and rebelled against Him.
6. Why is it important to learn not to complain in our lives?
Complaints can cause serious dissent in the church. They lead to arguments, and they can cause resentment, envy, or stir up controversy. More importantly, we are showing our resentment towards God, because to complain about something means that we are not satisfied with what God has given us.
7. (Activity) Find a jar or container and choose something easy to fill it with. The chosen item must be easily color-coded (for example: craft beads, paper stars, or rolled up scraps of colored paper). Choose two colors. Each time you say something that negatively influences others, add the first color. Each time you say something that glorifies God, add the second color. At the end of the week, which color is more dominant in your container? Take a picture and show it to your teacher next week!

Korah’s Rebellion

Passages: Num 16

Memory Verse

“Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us have grace, by which we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear. For our God is a consuming fire.” (Hebrews 12:28–29)

Knowledge of God’s Will [God’s Word]	Knowledge of God [God’s Divine Nature]	Good Works [Behavior]
Korah’s rebellion culminated in the tragic deaths of thousands of Israelites because of their sins against God.	God will consume those who go against Him and His appointed workers.	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Learn to be united in heart and spirit, and be a positive influence.2. Do not allow ourselves to be influenced negatively or become part of divisions in the church.

Overview

Events and Spiritual Teachings

- A. Korah: Failure to Value God’s Blessings
- B. Moses’ Response
- C. Dathan and Abiram: Failure to Understand God’s Will
- D. God’s Response
- E. The Israelites: Blind to Sin

Life Application: Learning to Be United in the Church

Memory Verse

Conclusion: Within any community, especially the church, we need to be aware of how our attitude can influence others. We need to be sensitive to the things we say and do, and be careful that we ourselves are not negatively influenced by others.

Events and Spiritual Teachings

Introduction

Today, we will be studying another example of the Israelites' rebellion against the Lord. However, this time, the rebellion was not because they felt that they lacked something or because they were afraid. This time, the rebellion was stirred up by a specific group of people who desired power. The leading figure in this case was a man named Korah, a Levite and one of the sons of Kohath.

The Sons of Kohath

The Bible records that Korah was descended from Kohath, of the tribe of Levi. Numbers 4:4–15 records that the sons of Kohath were in charge of carrying the various items for the tabernacle, such as the dishes, lampstands, and utensils used for making sacrifices. Korah was part of a team with an incredibly important job, as they carried the vessels required for God's holy sanctuary.

A. Korah: Failure to Value God's Blessings

Let's begin by reading Numbers 16:1–3. The Bible describes that Korah brought together a group of people to follow him. This wasn't a casual or accidental gathering. He purposefully recruited influential leaders from among the Israelites in an organized and direct challenge against Moses and Aaron. Unfortunately, they did not seem to realize or care that by opposing Moses, they were directly opposing God Himself. Let's now look at Korah's words.

1. "You take too much upon yourselves..."

Other versions translate this as, "You go too far!" His completely unjust statement ignores the fact that Moses had been appointed by the Lord Himself. Korah is also clearly ignorant of the amount of grief and frustration that Moses has had to endure while shepherding the Israelites.

2. "...for all the congregation is holy, every one of them, and the LORD is among them."

There is great irony in this statement, as he said it shortly after the Israelites' refusal to enter the promised land. Korah was clearly not close enough to God to be able to understand or define holiness. He was simply using it as an excuse to support his argument, and to make it sound like he was speaking for the congregation. Ultimately, this statement merely showed his ignorance regarding both true holiness and the spiritual state of the Israelites. This ignorance would have made him a poor choice as a priest and shepherd for God's flock.

3. "Why then do you exalt yourselves before the assembly of the LORD?"

Again, an unjust statement considering the grief that Moses has experienced, and the multiple times he and Aaron have had to intercede on the Israelites' behalf. In reality, these words are a reflection of Korah's own heart. He accused Moses and Aaron of exalting themselves because he himself wanted to be elevated.

From examining Korah's words, we can conclude that the rebellion arose because there was a problem with their relationship with God. Even though they were God's chosen, Korah and his followers didn't value the blessings that God had already given to them. They thought that they deserved more.

B. Moses' Response

Let's read Numbers 16:4–6. Moses' first reaction was to fall on his face before the Lord. This means that his very first response to the new crisis was to turn to God. He understood that this was a serious matter that required God's hand, and that the results would not bode well for the rebels. He then instructed Korah and his followers to take censers, with fire and incense, and present themselves to the Lord the

next day. This instruction is significant, as offering incense to the Lord was part of the priestly duty that they coveted. Since they deemed themselves worthy, Moses was giving them a taste of what they wanted. He was allowing them to stand directly before God's judgment as priests.

Let's continued by reading verses 8–11. Moses addressed Korah specifically, and through a series of questions, pointed out the true motive behind his actions. Let's take a moment to examine Moses' words phrase by phrase.

1. "Is it a small thing to you that the God of Israel has separated you from the congregation of Israel..."

Korah and his followers did not value the position that they already had. When we have had something for a long time—whether it is a toy, a new piece of technology, or a social status—we tend to forget its value and treat it with less care. The same often applies to our status as God's children. We must never forget that to be separated for God's purpose is a rare and wonderful thing for which we need to give thanks every day.

2. "...to bring you near to Himself..."

Although they had been separated for God's work, it is apparent that they did not hold any particularly special relationship with the Lord. God had brought them near to Him, but they didn't value this relationship, nor did they attempt to deepen their ties to the Lord. We might also forget that although we have the Holy Spirit or have been baptized, we still need to constantly try to draw closer to God in our everyday lives.

3. "...to do the work of the tabernacle of the LORD..."

Because we aren't being paid, or aren't receiving any immediate rewards for it, we often don't care as much about our church work. We might spend less time preparing, or don't even bother preparing at all, for our assigned duties. But as Moses points out, it is not a small thing to do God's holy work. Not everyone can work for Him, so it is important to remember that there is value in our service to God.

4. "...and to stand before the congregation to serve them [...]?"

Korah and his followers probably missed this point entirely: the purpose of their positions was not so that others could exalt them, but instead, so that they could serve others. The world around us associates positions of authority with luxury and power. But in God's realm, leaders have the responsibility to serve (Lk 22:26).

5. "And what is Aaron that you complain against him?"

Here, Moses drew a final conclusion about their rebellion: he and his company were in fact rebelling against the Lord, not against Aaron. This is because Aaron's authority was given by God.

C. Dathan and Abiram: Failure to Understand God's Will

As a part of his response to this uprising, Moses sent for two of the perpetrators. However, they refused to come forward in blatant rebellion against Moses' authority. Let's read what they said in verses Numbers 16:12–14. These two completely forgot or chose to ignore the fact that they were condemned to the wilderness because of their own refusal to enter Canaan. As is often the case when someone is caught up in their own self-righteous pride, they ignored their own mistakes and blamed someone else.

Let's look closely at one particular part of their response. "Is it a small thing that you have brought us up out of a land flowing with milk and honey, to kill us in the wilderness [...]?" (v. 13). In what seemed like the ultimate insult to God, they referred longingly to Egypt. They forgot not only that they were enslaved, but also God's mighty hand in freeing them, and the reason for their current punishment. Overall, we can see that they had a poor relationship with God and, more importantly, didn't understand His will.

D. God's Response

The next day, Korah and his followers gathered at the tabernacle with their censers. Let's read verses Numbers 16:16–19. Notice that Korah "gathered all the congregation against [Moses and Aaron] at the door of the tabernacle of meeting" (v. 19). Perhaps he simply wanted witnesses to the event, or perhaps he had convinced them to join his cause. Regardless, one group's dissent had once again influenced the entire nation to rebel against God's will.

Let's continue and read verses 20–22. Once again, the Lord determined to consume the entire congregation in severe judgment. And once again, despite the false accusations and grief that they were both experiencing, Moses and Aaron interceded on their behalf. Considering how rebellious the people were being, we might feel like they deserved such punishment, so it's difficult for us to understand why they chose to intercede for them. However, we can learn from the heart of Moses and Aaron, and pray for others in such critical moments. Ultimately, however, we should leave any condemnation and judgment in God's hands.

How did Moses and Aaron appeal to God? Let's read verse 22 again. "O God, the God of the spirits of all flesh, shall one man sin, and You be angry with all the congregation?" Their plea is quite optimistic in that they tried to shift the focus to one person. But it was also clear that many had willingly chosen to follow Korah's rebellious example. Consequently, we can see God's justice in His punishment of each man according to his sin. Let's continue with verses 23–35.

Although Moses and Aaron had successfully saved the rest of the congregation from the Lord's wrath, those with the most serious sin of confronting God's decisions received their punishment. Korah, Dathan, and Abiram were swallowed by the earth along with their families. The 250 who were offering incense were also consumed with fire, proving that they were not qualified to be priests. God displayed His great power and justice before the Israelites. However, although Moses and Aaron had interceded on their behalf, the following day, the congregation blamed them for the death of Korah and his followers!

E. The Israelites: Blind to Sin

Let's read Numbers 16:41–50. This last passage is quite incredible. Despite witnessing the wrath and judgment of God in person, the congregation still had complaints against Moses and Aaron! It was as if they were utterly blind to their sins and the sins of those who had been punished. Korah and his followers had died precisely because of their complaining hearts, yet now we have the remainder of the people complaining about the deaths of those who had sinned! When the Lord appeared again, He was once again intent on consuming the Israelites. This time, however, He did not allow Moses nor Aaron to intercede.

Seeing that the plague had already begun, Moses hurriedly sent Aaron out with a censer to offer incense in atonement for the people. Both his and Aaron's reactions are remarkable. These are the very same people who had falsely blamed them and complained against them. Yet Moses immediately reacted to

save them, and Aaron “ran” to the middle of the assembly. The Bible’s description of this event is striking: “And he stood between the dead and the living; so the plague was stopped” (v. 48). In this perilous moment for the Israelites, Aaron served as a wall between life and death!

The original source of this entire conflict may have been one group’s resentment and pride, but it is clear that the rest of the Israelites were blind both to their own sins and to the sins of others. This blindness ultimately culminated in a tragic event that cost the lives of 14,700 Israelites. Overall, the rebellion was rooted in three general problems: the rebels’ failure to value God’s blessings, their blindness to God’s will, and their blindness to sin.

Check for Understanding

- 1. What can we conclude about the reason for Korah’s rebellion after examining his words?** We can conclude that the rebellion arose because there was a problem with their relationship with God. They didn’t value the blessings that God had given to them, and thought they deserved more.
- 2. What is the meaning behind Moses’ words, “And what is Aaron that you complain against him”?** He concluded that Korah and his company were in fact rebelling against the Lord, not against Aaron.
- 3. What do Dathan and Abiram’s words tell us about their relationship with God?** They had a poor relationship with God and, more importantly, didn’t understand His will.
- 4. What did Moses and Aaron do when the Lord told them, “Separate yourselves from among this congregation, that I may consume them in a moment” (v. 21)? Why is this unusual?** They fell on their faces and interceded on the Israelites’ behalf. This is unusual because they were interceding for the same people who were rebelling against them and accusing them unjustly.
- 5. What three problems was this rebellion rooted in?** The rebels’ failure to value God’s blessings, their blindness to God’s will, and their blindness to sin.

Life Application

Learning to Be United in the Church

From examining the Israelites’ actions in the wilderness, we can see that disorder, chaos, and division can have serious effects on the congregation, not just upon individuals. Their refusal to enter Canaan, Korah’s antagonism against Aaron and Moses, and the Israelites’ complaints for food were all rebellions sparked by individuals or groups of people who allowed their physical desires to interfere with everyone’s relationship with God, not just their own. Seeing this, we should try to learn the best ways to remain in unity, to bring up issues without causing conflict, and to solve problems without leading everyone astray from God, all while remaining at peace with each other.

Why do divisions occur?

First, why do divisions occur? When we are self-centered, divisions naturally occur, along with strife and envy, just as in Korah’s rebellion. When we are more concerned with our own interests, we forget that God has called each of us to be united in spirit and in heart. We ignore the fact that God desires for us to look out for each other’s interests so that we can grow together in faith. Moreover, when we cause conflicts, we have forsaken God’s will and endangered our salvation.

Testimony

While a visiting preacher was leading service, a member of the church suddenly stood up and declared angrily in front of the congregation that he would leave the church. He complained against the preacher and the church for not helping local members with certain aids. Some members tried persuading them not to leave, but the member departed, along with some others that followed him.

The next day, this member returned to church, but during the prayer, he was found outside of the building, shaking. When questioned, he said that during prayer, he felt a force dragging him out of the chapel and throwing him out of the building. The members were thankful that during a time of conflict, God Himself directly intervened to deal with the perpetrator. Thankfully, the member who had committed the wrong was able to experience God's punishment for his rebellion and actions in the church. As a result, he later became a very good believer. Although he was poor and had to walk 5 kilometers to church, he became one who was always first to arrive despite it taking him over an hour to walk. He was able to truly appreciate that worshipping God is a privilege and blessing, and no longer caused conflict among the members.

– Anonymous

Discussion

- **What wrong did the member commit?**

He angrily made a public complaint against the preacher during the service, in front of the whole congregation. This abruptly disturbed the speaker and all the members while worshipping the Lord and influenced others to walk out of the church with him. Although he harbored opinions that caused him to be unhappy, he could have spoken calmly at an appropriate time to the visiting preacher. On deeper reflection, he could have re-evaluated his reason for complaining and come to realize the blessings of receiving the words of God through a visiting worker and the privilege of worshipping God with fellow members in peace.

- **Why did God take the drastic action of throwing him out of the church?**

Not only was his public and angry demonstration completely irreverent behavior in the house of God, but he had also already influenced some other members to rebel and caused division within the church. If God hadn't dealt severely with him, his continued rebellion would have had a further negative influence on others. His actions were similar to the actions of Korah, and God had to intervene to put an end to such rebellion. Thankfully, in the case of this member, God was merciful and gave him a chance to change.

How can we be united in the church?

In order to be united, we need to have the correct mentality towards God's work. Paul and Apollos partook in different stages of the work in Corinth. They were not in opposition, but working for the same cause, complimenting each other's works. God is the one who makes the harvest grow, so he who plants, and he who waters are equal. By remembering that we are all equal in Christ, we will be less likely to look down upon or raise other members up unnecessarily. The Bible says, "Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!" (Ps 133:1). What does it mean to dwell in unity though? Let's look at a few verses and see what the Bible says about dwelling in unity.

- *"[B]earing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do. But above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfection." (Col 3:13–14)*

One of the hardest things for us to do is to forgive others. We tend to hold on to grudges or let our past interactions with someone affect how we treat them in the present and future. But even while hanging on the cross, dying for our sins, the Lord Jesus Christ forgave us for it. So, we must do likewise, bear His love for one another, and forgive others. Have you ever let your past

arguments, grudges, or judgments affect how you interacted with someone later?

- *“[I]n lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others.” (Phil 2:3–4)*

It is easy to look out for our own interests more than others’. It is human nature to want what is best for ourselves. But the Bible teaches us that we should place the needs of others above our own. Have you ever given something up for someone else, such as your time, the last piece of your favorite food, or perhaps a treasured item? There are many ways we can place others’ interests above our own. Try brainstorming whose interests or needs you can support this week.

- *“[W]alk [...] with all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love, endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.” (Eph 4:1–3)*

When we dislike or disagree with someone, it is easy to become impatient or even angry with them with each interaction. But the Lord wants us to learn patience and gentleness. No matter how someone acts—even if it is against the Bible’s teachings, or even if you feel that they are in the wrong—we should not lash out at them, but instead treat them gently and patiently, speaking to them with love and not anger. In this way, we can teach them through our actions and avoid forming a rift between you and the other person, or within the church. Think of someone you dislike or have disagreed with. How can you greet them the next time you see them?

From these verses, we can see that while divisions occur when we are self-centered, unity is about walking together in love, forgiveness, and support for each other. Paul wrote, “Bear one another’s burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ” (Gal 6:2) If we see someone who is weak physically or spiritually, or who is facing a difficult problem or trial, then we should do our best to help them with love instead of centering our lives around ourselves. Peter also teaches us that we should have “compassion for one another,” and to love one another “as brothers” (1 Pet 3:8). When we do, our church will be unified in heart and spirit.

Memory Verse

“Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us have grace, by which we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear. For our God is a consuming fire.” (Hebrews 12:28–29)

Meaning

God has given us the chance to receive the heavenly kingdom and appointed us the privilege to serve. However, we must do so with reverence and godly fear, for our God is a consuming fire who will consume those that seek to rebel against Him.

Conclusion

Within any community, especially the church, we need to be aware of how our attitude can influence others. Being a positive influence is not easy, but being a negative influence easily affects many people. We need to be sensitive to the things we say and the way we behave, and be careful that we ourselves are not negatively influenced by others. If possible, we must counteract negativity with words of encouragement, hope, and obedience to God. We should pray for those who are rebelling against God

Junior 1 Year 2 Book 2 Lesson 5

that God may have mercy on them, and that the rest of the church can be protected against divisions, and instead remain unified and rooted in the truth.

Lesson 5 Homework Assignment Answer Key

1. What attitude should we have when serving God?
We should serve Him with reverence and godly fear.
2. “Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in _____ of _____ let each _____ others better than _____. Let each of you look out not only for his own _____, but also for the _____ of _____.” (Philippians 2:3–4)
lowliness, mind, esteem, himself, interests, interests, others.
3. What was the main reason Korah and his followers rebelled against Moses?
They did not value the position that God had already given to them.
4. What can we learn from Moses and Aaron’s reaction when God determined to consume Israel?
We can learn from their intercession and pray for others in critical moments. Ultimately, however, we should leave any condemnation and judgment in God’s hands.
5. Why do divisions occur?
They occur when we are self-centered and are more concerned with our own interests.
6. Pick one Bible verse about dwelling in unity. Explain how you can improve upon what we learned regarding this verse.
See Life Application.
7. Have you ever been part of a conflict? How can you approach such situations in the future?
Personal answers.

Teachings from Balaam

Passages: Num 22–25:3

Memory Verse

“No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon.” (Matthew 6:24)

Knowledge of God’s Will [God’s Word]	Knowledge of God [God’s Divine Nature]	Good Works [Behavior]
<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. God has the power to dictate the events of history.2. He is able to use anyone, even Gentiles, for His purpose.	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. God desires to bless His people.2. No desire of God’s can be withheld from Him.	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Remember that with God on our side, nothing can stand in our way.2. Understand the blinding power of pride and greed.3. Learn to serve God with a pure heart.

Overview

Events and Spiritual Teachings

- A. Who Was Balaam?
- B. Balak Sends for Balaam
- C. Balaam, the Donkey, and the Angel
- D. God Blesses the Israelites Through Balaam

Life Application

1. The Hidden Power of God in History
2. The Blinding Power of Pride and Greed
3. Serving God with a Pure Heart

Memory Verse

Conclusion: We must remember to remove any pride or greed in our hearts so that we do not cause conflict with others. Instead, we must fill our hearts with God’s purpose and His will so that we can serve Him with a pure heart.

Events and Spiritual Teachings

Introduction

Throughout history, God often used Gentiles—entire nations and single individuals alike—to punish and help His chosen people, and to fulfill His messages and purpose. This proves that all things are under God’s control; He can dictate and orchestrate the unfolding events of history in accordance with His will. God has the power to use anyone and everyone for His purpose—even people who do not know Him, worship Him, or believe in Him. Balaam was one such person.

A. Who Was Balaam?

A false prophet who led the children of Israel astray, Balaam received several mentions in the New Testament. Let’s turn to Revelation 2:14. In this passage, the Lord is speaking to the church at Pergamos. He said, “But I have a few things against you, because you have there those who hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balak to put a stumbling block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols, and to commit sexual immorality.” Clearly, Balaam was instrumental in making the Israelites sin against God.

Peter described false prophets as “spots and blemishes, carousing in their own deceptions while they feast with you” (2 Pet 2:13) and added that they follow “the way of Balaam the son of Beor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness” (v. 15). Jude also accused false teachers of being like Balaam in that they were entirely motivated by their greed (Jude 11). Balaam enjoyed the riches and honor that he received for his works of divination. He was a man who served only his own interests and, as a result, had no qualms about destroying the faith of the Israelites in order to reach his own goals.

Before this event, however, Balaam had a direct experience with God Himself. Although he was a sinner who didn’t truly worship God, Balaam served as His messenger in one incident when the Moabite king Balak wanted to curse the Israelites.

B. Balak Sends for Balaam (Num 22:1–21)

While Israel was passing by Moab, Balak was very afraid because there were so many of them, and they had settled nearby. So, he sent for Balaam, seeking divine intervention. He wanted Balaam to curse the Israelites, so that he could drive them out of the land. Let’s read Numbers 22:1–14.

“Divination” refers to the pagan practice of predicting the future through different methods, such as consulting with the dead or divining through animals. A common practice of the time was ritually sacrificing an animal, and then “reading” signs from the gods on its liver. A modern equivalent of divination today might be horoscopes or palm readings. In biblical times, pagan prophets were believed to be able to influence the gods, and Balaam was a particularly famous prophet (Num 22:6) with a well-known reputation. However, although Balaam seemed to speak familiarly with the Lord, he was still a pagan diviner, an idolater, and an enemy of God (Deut 18:10–14).

Let’s continue by reading verses 15–19. Despite Balaam’s words, Balak sent even more people and greater bribes in an attempt to persuade him. From this, we can see that Balak didn’t take Balaam’s original response seriously. By saying, “Please let nothing hinder you from coming to me,” Balak was pleading for Balaam to ignore God’s explicit instructions.

Satan uses many different tactics to make us susceptible to sin. He will often try to arouse our pride, our desires, or even our sympathies to lure us away from God’s commands. In Balaam’s case, he was lured

by flattery and greed. Balaam's heart was already set on the riches that were offered to him (Ezek 14:3). He may have inquired of God, but his inquiry was meaningless because he already knew the answer that he wanted. As a result, although Balaam's words were a picture of obedience, he was unwilling to obey in his heart. Let's read verses 20–21. The Lord instructed Balaam to go with them only if they called to him, but he ignored this condition and simply went in the morning.

Balak and Balaam's actions were those of people who did not respect God. Balak's insistence that Balaam come, and Balaam's desire for honor and rewards, showed that they were both self-serving people. Their words may have given different impressions, but their actions showed hearts that followed their own desires. From this, we can see that when someone's heart is set on sin, they will ignore anything that runs contrary to what they want.

C. Balaam, the Donkey, and the Angel (Num 22:22–34)

Because of Balaam's disobedience, God's anger was aroused against him. Let's continue with Numbers 22:22–27. Balaam may not have seen the Angel of the LORD, but it should have occurred to him that his donkey's actions signaled that he was taking the wrong path. His blindness was in part because of his resolution to disobey God's words. At no point did he stop to reconsider his actions, so there was no reason for him to think that his donkey's actions were a sign. Let's continue reading verses 28–30.

What God did next was a remarkable act of mercy. He was giving Balaam a chance to wake up from his errors. Yet when the donkey questioned why Balaam had struck her, Balaam's response was outrageous and almost comical. Outrageous because Balaam was the one who had inflicted all of the abuse in this situation. Comical because he did not stop to question: "How and why is this donkey speaking to me?" Because of his resolve to sin, his entire perception of the situation was clouded, and he reacted with absurd anger at the donkey's interference.

Let's continue reading verses 31–34. Balaam finally confessed that he had sinned, but his confession did not count for much because he only confessed when he was caught in the situation. He also added, "[For] I did not know You stood in the way against me. Now therefore, if it displeases You, I will turn back." These are not the words of a repentant person. These are the words of someone trying to push his luck. With an Angel of the LORD literally standing in his way, it was clear that Balaam's actions displeased God. But he still tried to get his way with words that seemed submissive but were in fact rebellious.

Sometimes, it is obvious when we are about to act against God's will. But we still like to justify our actions with all sorts of excuses. "It's only a small fib;" "We're only holding hands;" "I'm only taking a little;" or "My parents won't even notice." There are so many ways that we try to convince ourselves that it is okay to be doing what we shouldn't be. Balaam teaches us that it is easy to pretend to repent, but our deeds reflect our true heart. If we are constantly pushing the boundaries of God's laws, then there is a problem with our relationship with God. If we truly loved Him, then we would genuinely want to please Him from our hearts and would avoid risking our eternal lives for the sake of our physical desires.

D. God Blesses the Israelites Through Balaam (Num 22:35–24:24)

Let's continue with the story and read Numbers 22:35–41. The Lord eventually allowed Balaam to meet with Balak, under the condition that Balaam only speak the words that God spoke to him. Balaam, however, greeted Balak with the words, "Look, I have come to you!" It would have been more accurate

to say that he arrived only because God permitted him to. Instead, Balaam's words implied that he had personally granted Balak's request.

The offerings that Balak made were pagan sacrifices to idols. Although Balaam was supposed to be speaking on behalf of the one true God, Balaam still took part in idolatry. He may have served as God's messenger in this short period of time, but he did not belong to God. From this, we can see an important lesson: people who serve the Lord do not necessarily have a close relationship with Him.

1. The first blessing: Israel has been chosen by God (Num 23:1–12)

The message that Balaam gave to Balak was clear: he could not curse whom God had not cursed or denounce whom God had not denounced (Num 23:8). He also blessed Israel, saying, "There! A people dwelling alone, not reckoning itself among the nations. Who can count the dust of Jacob, or number one-fourth of Israel?" (vv. 9–10). The Israelites had been set apart by God and blessed so much that their numbers couldn't be counted.

2. The second blessing: God's blessing cannot be removed (Num 23:13–26)

After the first prophecy, Balak foolishly thought that going to another location could influence the Lord to curse, instead of bless, the Israelites. Naturally, this did not work. No matter where they stood or whatever rituals they performed, God is truth. The Lord emphasized this by proclaiming His message directly to Balak this time: "God is not a man, that He should lie. [...] Has He said, and will He not do?" (Num 23:19). God's blessings for Israel can never be removed no matter how many times those against them may attempt to subvert the Lord. There is no force stronger than God's will, and His will was to let Israel rise "like a lioness, and [lift] itself up like a lion" (v. 24).

3. The third blessing: The strength of Israel (Num 24:1–13)

The third time, Balaam finally realized that there was no purpose in using his sorcery. He set his face towards Israel and this time, "the Spirit of God came upon him." No matter what Balaam or Balak did, God was going to bless His people, even to the point of using an enemy to do so. This time, Balaam described the Israelites as a prosperous nation, whose "king shall be higher than Agag, and his kingdom shall be exalted." (Num 24:7). Their enemies would be overpowered with God's strength; those who bless Israel will be blessed, while those who curse them will be cursed (vv. 8–9).

4. The fourth blessing: The coming Messiah from Israel (Num 24:14–19)

Balak became extremely angry when Balaam blessed Israel for a third time. Balaam's divinations may have gone according to man's will in the past, but this time, God would not let him curse His nation. And on the heels of Balak's anger, God gave Balaam a fourth prophecy. This time, Balaam saw a vision of the One who would ultimately bring down the many nations of sinners, including the Moabites. He prophesied the coming of Jesus Christ out of the Israelites (Num 24:17).

5. The last prophecies: Judgment against the Gentile nations (Num 24:20–24)

The last words the Lord had Balaam speak were against the enemies of Israel. God's power was not limited to that of the Israelites. He was able to influence the future of all the nations of the world, including the Moabites themselves. Just as there was no way to avert God's blessings, there was also no escaping God's judgment.

Like Balaam's anger at the donkey, Balak was so intent on cursing the Israelites that he was unable to see God's prevailing power clearly. As a result, he wrongfully accused Balaam of deliberately going against Balak's wishes and sabotaging his own reward, despite Balaam repeatedly telling him, "All that the Lord speaks, that I must do" (Num 22:38; 23:12, 26; 24:13). Balak simply could not accept that, unlike their false idols, he could not bend the true God to his own will.

Despite the way God made meaningless their pagan rituals, the Moabite king still did not respect or accept His power and protection of the Israelite people. Balak should have seen the fact that he could not turn the Lord's blessing into a curse. Unlike the pagan gods that they worshipped, the Lord cannot be forced to yield to mankind's will.

Check for Understanding

- 1. How do Peter and Jude describe false prophets?** As people who love the wages of unrighteousness, and who are entirely motivated by their greed.
- 2. When Balak told Balaam, "Please let nothing hinder you from coming to me," what was he truly asking Balaam?** He was asking Balaam to ignore God's explicit instructions.
- 3. Though Balaam repeatedly told Balak and the princes that he could only act according to the Lord's will, how do we know that Balaam was not truly God's servant?** Despite his words, Balaam disobeyed God and followed the princes, admitted his sin when he was cornered but did not truly repent, and still tried to push God's limits by attempting to continue onwards.
- 4. Although Balaam was supposed to be speaking on behalf of the one true God, he still took part in idolatry. What lesson does this teach us?** People who serve the Lord do not necessarily have a close relationship with Him.

Life Application

1. The Hidden Power of God in History

From the story of Balaam, we can see that no matter how we may struggle to change or twist the situation, if the Lord wills something to happen, it will happen. Just as with the Israelites, if God wants us to be blessed, we will be blessed, no matter what anyone else says or does to us. We can rely on God's power to take care of us, as everything is under His control. In addition to Balaam, another example of God's power over history can be found in the life of Joseph. He was sold into slavery and imprisoned for years, but, ultimately, the unfortunate events allowed him to save his family from a severe famine. From both stories, we can see that God often uses the wickedness in human hearts to serve His own purpose.

There will be times when we experience hard times in our lives. During those times, we may often feel as if nothing is going right. Our application didn't go through; we couldn't get into the club or course that we wanted; or we simply couldn't do well on the test even though we studied so hard. It is easy to feel like the entire world is against us, and we might even start to question if God is truly taking care of us! But during those times, we need to remember that all things are under God's control.

Let's turn to Romans 8:28, 31, and take a moment to write these verses down in our notebooks:

"And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose. What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us?"

Nothing can stand in our way if God is on our side! He is the almighty God who can change the entire course of history if He wants to. Knowing this, we can be assured that no matter what troubles we are facing, at the end of the day, it's still all in God's control. We just need to learn to be patient and trust in His guidance.

2. The Blinding Power of Pride and Greed

One characteristic that Balaam and Balak shared was the way they both lashed out at others when angry. Balaam, enraged at his donkey's seeming disobedience, struck her three times. Balak, despite being told repeatedly that Balaam was only speaking what the Lord told him, became incredibly angry at Balaam when he was unable to curse the Israelites. This is because both Balaam and Balak were full of pride and greed—Balaam, for riches and honor, and Balak, for a way to rid himself of the Israelites. When we are full of pride, ambition, or desire, we strike out at others, especially when we don't get our way.

The Bible constantly warns us against pride and greed. It teaches us that pride causes nothing but strife (Prov 13:10; cf. Jas 4:1), and Jesus describes pride and covetousness as "evil things [that] come from within and defile a man" (Mk 7:22–23). This is because someone whose heart is full of pride or greed is entirely focused on themselves. Their hearts have no room for anyone else, much less for God. As a result, they will never be able to live in peace and harmony as God desires of us, and they will never be able to draw close enough to God to receive His blessings.

It is sometimes our instinct to lash out or to blame someone when we experience obstacles or difficulties. If we find ourselves doing this, then we need to examine ourselves. Are we constantly getting into arguments? Are we unable to let go and forgive others? Perhaps we are so set on earning money for a specific purchase that we have forgotten that we meant to spend it on a parent's birthday present. Maybe we were so focused on achieving something for ourselves that we didn't notice when we hurt a friend's feelings. All of these are signs of pride and greed in our hearts.

Take a moment to reflect on yourself and identify a recent time you were proud or greedy for something. Perhaps you were set on winning an argument, coveted something that your friends had, or treated your parents harshly for not buying or doing something that you wanted. Share this with a partner or a group and discuss how you can approach a similar situation in the future. Then, write down at least two verses that will remind you to be humble, to avoid conflict, and to seek out the riches not of this world, but of the kingdom of heaven (*Ex: Mt 6:24, 33; 18:4; Rom 12:16; Jas 4:6*).

3. Serving God with a Pure Heart

People are generally motivated entirely by self-interest. We don't like to act without receiving something in exchange, or unless we see some sort of benefit for ourselves. It is human nature to act on our own interests, but not the interests of others. If we were to look at Balaam's words alone, we might think that he was acting as God's servant. He asked for the Lord's instruction when Balak sent for him, and told them repeatedly that he could only do what the Lord told him. But Balaam's actions told us his true motives: he ignored the Lord's instructions by following the princes anyway, repented of his sin only when trapped in a corner, and then pushed to continue despite the angel blocking his way.

a. Exposing Our True Motives

How many times have we said one thing, but meant another? It is easy to convey an impression of obedience to God, but our actions will tell the truth of our hearts. Do we greet our elders politely, only to cut in front of them in the lunch line? Do we laugh and joke with a brother or

sister in church, only to not bother caring for them when they are in trouble or in need? Perhaps we have offered to help cook, but only because we do not want to spend time with God in service.

All of these are examples of someone whose heart is not truly with God. It is very easy for us to hide our motives behind a smiling mask and nice words like Balaam, but God knows the truth of our hearts. Knowing this, we must constantly examine our own hearts. What are our motives when we act? Are we acting out of love for God and for our brethren, or do we normally make decisions out of self-interest?

b. Serving God's Purpose

Another lesson that we can learn from Balaam is the fact that God can and will use anyone for His purpose, regardless of their hidden motives. Sometimes, Christians feel secure in their spirituality because of the amount of work that they do for the church. However, as evidenced by Balaam, being used by the Lord does not guarantee that we have a good relationship with Him.

Knowing this, we must be careful of our spirituality. Ask yourself: do I serve God out of a desire to draw closer to Him, and for the sake of His will? Or do I only serve for self-satisfaction? We must never become proud of what we have accomplished for God, because He can use anyone for His will. Instead, we must humbly give thanks for the opportunities that He gives us and serve with clean hands and a pure heart.

Let's look at a few Bible verses about how to serve God with a pure heart. For each verse, highlight or underline the word "pure," or the words related to purity. Then, for each verse, discuss as a group: according to this verse, what action do I need to take in order to have a clean and pure heart?

- Psalm 24:3–4: "Who may ascend into the hill of the LORD? Or who may stand in His holy place? He who has clean hands and a pure heart, who has not lifted up his soul to an idol, nor sworn deceitfully."
- 1 Peter 1:22: "Since you have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit in sincere love of the brethren, love one another fervently with a pure heart[.]"
- 2 Timothy 2:22: "Flee also youthful lusts; but pursue righteousness, faith, love, peace with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart."
- Psalm 51:10: "Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me."
- 1 John 3:3: "And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure."

Memory Verse

"No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon." (Matthew 6:24)

Meaning

In this verse, Jesus is teaching us that we must be loyal to God with all our heart. This means keeping ourselves from serving another god in our hearts, minds, and actions. Even today, it is very common for people to be enslaved to the riches of the world, just like Balaam. Most people are driven to earn or spend money, so they focus little on anything else in their lives. But to follow this path is to follow the road to destruction.

We must be careful not to deceive ourselves into thinking that we have a good relationship with God, when in truth, we are serving other gods. Instead, take the time to examine our lifestyle. Do we make decisions based on God's will? Or do we make decisions based on our physical desires, whether they are for wealth, social standing, or other riches? Whatever motivates our actions is what our hearts truly value.

Conclusion

From today's story, we can see that God's will cannot be averted. He can and will use anyone for His purpose, even a sinner. Balaam's story serves as a warning to those of us in the church. Knowing God, or even having spiritual experiences with Him, does not equate to being close to God. He can achieve His purposes through us but being used by Him does not guarantee that we have a good relationship with Him. We must remember to remove any pride or greed in our hearts so that we do not cause conflict with others, and instead, fill our hearts with God's purpose and His will so that we can serve Him with a pure heart.

Lesson 6 Homework Assignment Answer Key

1. What does the memory verse teach us about our hearts and serving God?
We must be loyal to God with all our heart. This means keeping ourselves from serving another god in our hearts, minds, and actions. We must be careful not to deceive ourselves into thinking that we have a good relationship with God, when in truth, we are serving other gods.
2. "They have _____ the _____ way and gone _____, following the way of Balaam the son of Beor, who _____ the _____ of _____." (2 Peter 2:15)
forsaken, right, astray, loved, wages, unrighteousness
3. What do Balak and Balaam teach us about a heart that is set on its own desires?
When someone's heart is set on sin, they will ignore anything that runs contrary to what they want. If we truly loved God, then we would genuinely want to please Him, rather than try to push the boundaries of sin.
4. Balaam served as God's messenger, but he did not belong to God. What can we learn from this?
Those who serve the Lord do not necessarily have a close relationship with Him.
5. Why do pride and greed blind us spiritually?
Someone whose heart is full of pride or greed is entirely focused on themselves. Their hearts have no room for anyone else, much less for God.
6. Are there other things in your heart which push God out of your life? Explain.
Personal answers.

A Holy Nation

Passages: Num 5; Lev 6:1–7

Memory Verse

“For I am the LORD who brings you up out of the land of Egypt, to be your God. You shall therefore be holy, for I am holy.” (Leviticus 11:45)

Knowledge of God’s Will [God’s Word]	Knowledge of God [God’s Divine Nature]	Good Works [Behavior]
1. God is holy, and His people needed to be holy for Him to dwell among them. 2. The purpose of the Mosaic laws was to transform the Israelites into a holy nation.	God is holy.	Transform our thoughts and become holy by meditating on and memorizing God’s word.

Overview

Events and Spiritual Teachings

- A. Holiness in the Camp
- B. Holiness Among the People
- C. Holiness in the Family

Life Application: Small Thoughts, Big Differences

- 1. Capturing Negative and Sinful Thoughts
- 2. Memorize and Meditate on the Bible

Memory Verse

Conclusion: We no longer need to follow the Mosaic laws, but we should still follow the teachings and the spirit behind them by transforming our thoughts and becoming a holy nation.

Introduction

After their miraculous departure from Egypt, the Lord led the Israelites to Mount Sinai, where they camped at its base. There, God began to give them His laws. Whenever we read them, the Books of Numbers and Leviticus seem to be all about rules, rules, and more rules! Why did God give the Israelites so many regulations? How were they supposed to follow all of them, and why were they so important?

On a physical level, all of the sanitary, dietary, and ceremonial laws preserved the health and hygiene of the entire camp. By following these regulations, they could stay physically healthy and avoid disease and infection as they journeyed through the wilderness. On a spiritual level, however, God was trying to teach the Israelites what kind of God He was and express the expectations that He had for them. The Lord who brought them out of Egypt was a holy God, and His people also needed to be holy for Him to dwell in their midst.

A. Holiness in the Camp

Let's first read Numbers 5:1–5 to see how the camp was to remain holy. One of the ways the Israelites was to maintain holiness in the camp was by separating certain people from the main body of the camp. Anyone who had come into contact with leprosy, discharge, or corpses, was to be isolated in certain ways. Let's examine each and try to understand the meaning behind them.

1. Leprosy

Leprosy is a disease commonly mentioned in the Bible. First, what exactly is leprosy? In biblical times, people dreaded this disease the most. It was incurable, extremely contagious, and it often led to death. The disease would start to show itself in the skin before spreading and attacking other parts of the body such as the hands, feet, or face. Sometimes, the victim's limbs would become twisted and permanently disfigured.

For example, fingers that curled to form a "claw" hand was a common characteristic among lepers. The disease also affected the victim's nerves, making them lose all sense of pain. As a result, they would often injure themselves without even realizing it. Leprosy was so contagious that God commanded all lepers to be immediately removed and confined outside the camp.

This terrible disease is often used by the Bible as an illustration of sin. Sin, like leprosy, is contagious, and it can slowly eat away at our spiritual life. When the sin becomes habit, we become desensitized to God's words and the movement of the Spirit. Eventually, this lack of sensitivity to sin may lead to spiritual death (cf. 1 Tim 4:1–2; Jas 1:15).

2. Discharge

In the Bible, "discharge" referred to unclean fluids and substances from the body. Spiritually, this refers to the evil thoughts and desires that come from our hearts. Jesus once explained to His disciples that "out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies. These are the things which defile a man" (Mt 15:19–20). The Lord was trying to teach them that if our hearts are good, then our words and actions will also be good. But if our hearts are wicked and unclean, then our words and actions will reflect this.

But why were the Israelites commanded to isolate everyone who had discharge? Like leprosy, there was a chance that it could contaminate others. And in the same way, a person's wicked actions can easily influence and affect others. We need to be careful to guard our hearts and

purge any evil thoughts and desires. At the same time, we also need to guard ourselves against the negative influences of others in our lives.

3. Corpses

Dead bodies, if left unburied, are a source of disease and sickness. Especially when bacteria begin to consume the corpse and it starts to rot. Besides the bad stench, leaving a corpse in the open meant risking contamination, especially if the dead had a contagious disease. Because of this, God instructed that the dead be removed from the camp, and any who touched a dead person was considered defiled until the person was ceremonially cleansed.

Those who are spiritually dead are those who are live in sin and have no relationship with God. They follow the things of the world and uphold material values rather than spiritual. As children of God, we should always strive to follow His word, but it is easy to become influenced by the views and values of the world. For example, social media, movies, music, or ungodly friends all have the potential to alter our minds and hearts.

B. Holiness Among the People

Let's now read Numbers 5:5–10 and Leviticus 6:1–7. With two million people living in such proximity, it was inevitable that they would commit sins against one another. These two passages record what a person needed to do in order to make up for a wrong they committed against their neighbor. The passage in Leviticus gives more specific details about what they had to do to make up for specific offenses, such as lying about something entrusted to them, or finding a lost article without returning it. They had to:

- Pay for or return the original goods
- Pay an additional 1/5th (20%) in interest
- Offer it to the priests if no one claimed the repayment
- Make a sin offering

There are many similar passages in the Mosaic laws regarding how the Israelites were supposed to treat each other. Although we no longer need to follow such specific rules, we still need to understand their teachings and follow the spirit behind each of them.

1. When we offend our brother, we offend God

Let's read Leviticus 6:1–2 again. “[A] person sins and commits a trespass against the LORD by lying to his neighbor[.]” This phrase makes it clear that when we commit a sin against someone, we are also committing a sin against God. In His parables about the kingdom of heaven, the Lord Jesus taught His disciples that, “Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did *it* to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me” (Mt 25:40). In other words, the way we treat others affects our relationship with God.

2. True repentance requires action

One of the hardest parts of repentance is the act of first confessing that we have done something wrong. We don't like being in the wrong, and our pride often makes us fail to admit our mistakes. But to live in harmony, we must set aside our pride and remember that God loves those who are humble at heart.

3. With peace, there is holiness

God gave many different rules about how His people should make up for their mistreatment of

their neighbors. He clearly wants us to live in harmony with each other. This is because when we strive for peace and harmony, we become more holy. Hebrews 12:14 says, “Pursue peace with all people, and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord.” When there is strife or discord between members, negative feelings, such as resentment, hatred, anger, and bitterness, will arise. These feelings create schisms in our relationships with both men and God. Therefore, it is important to be proactive in resolving any misunderstandings and offenses, so that these do not create a breach in our relationships or the church.

Testimony

A sister who was a church council member had many things to attend to each Sabbath. She greeted members, spoke to truth-seekers, made sure the services ran smoothly, and so on. At the end of one Sabbath, she was informed that a church sister was upset with her because the council member did not greet her. The council member could not recall having ignored the sister. She could have felt that this was no fault of hers and could have accused the sister of being petty. However, to maintain the peace and to prevent it from escalating into something bigger, she decided to make amends with the sister. She purchased a small gift and paid her a visit. During the visit, although the matter was not explicitly addressed, peace and harmony was restored.

C. Holiness in the Family

With the creation of Eve, the Lord established a holy union between man and woman. The two would join and become one. They were not to separate. But upon the entry of sin into the world, this union became endangered. Problems began to arise, including unfaithfulness. Numbers, chapter 5, explains what the Israelites were to do if a husband suspected that his wife had been unfaithful to him, but had no concrete evidence. The passage outlines the steps to take “if the spirit of jealousy comes upon [the husband],” even though he is not certain that she has been unfaithful. Before we continue examining this passage, how would you define “jealousy”? (Allow students to answer.)

There are two different types of jealousy. It can be either healthy or unhealthy and, in the context of marriage, can either help or hinder a couple’s relationship. The healthy type of jealousy safeguards our marriage. It means that we care about the marriage, that we are committed to the relationship, and that we want it to work. This type of jealousy helps us to deal with issues in our relationship before they become major problems.

The unhealthy type of jealousy tends to surface when we feel pitiful, inadequate, insecure, or possessive. This type of jealousy can destroy relationships. For this reason, God gave the Israelites a way with which to handle such jealousy when it arises. When left to fester, it can damage, or even break a relationship. Let’s read the full passage in Numbers 5:11–31 and go over each of the steps required.

- The man shall bring his wife to the priest for God to judge.
- They shall bring a grain offering without oil and frankincense. This is because oils were normally added for its pleasing aroma (Lev 2:1). In this case, there is no pleasing aroma in the sacrifice because of the feelings of jealousy and bitterness.
- The woman was to drink bitter water to determine whether she was guilty. If innocent, she would not be cursed. If guilty, she would become sick and cursed among the people.
- The priest would take the grain offering of jealousy and give it as a wave offering to the Lord. He would then take a handful and burn it on the altar.

This passage provides several teachings, not all of which only apply to marriage. We can apply the same principles to our relationships outside of marriage, such as within our family or among our fellow brothers and sisters in church.

1. Bring our problems to the Lord

When we face difficulties or problems with our parents, siblings, friends, or church brethren, we need to bring them to the Lord. If, in the future, we ever face doubt or distrust in our marriage, this is also a step that we need to take. Through prayers, and by seeking out His will in the Bible, we can find ways to resolve our issues. We can also seek support and counseling from ministers or our RE teachers. Through the power of the Holy Spirit, we can get rid of any negative feelings or thoughts and work towards building a trusting and healthy relationship with our family members.

2. Keep the marriage holy

The Lord created marriage as a sacred alliance between man and woman. It is important to protect and safeguard our marriage by never allowing any third party to enter. In the same way, as the bride of Christ, we need to learn to keep our hearts rooted in Christ. When we allow other things to take hold of our lives, such as our hobbies, games, or even other people, then we are endangering our relationship with God.

3. Nothing is hidden from God

This set of instructions reminds us that even though other people may be unaware of our sins, any secret deeds that we perform are seen by God. The Bible says, “The eyes of the LORD are in every place, keeping watch on the evil and the good” (Prov 15:3). The Bible also teaches us that one day, all hidden things will be revealed (1 Cor 4:5). With this in mind, we should act in such a way so that we have no reason to be ashamed of our actions (2 Tim 2:15). To do so, we must walk as children of light (Eph 5:8).

Like the other laws we examined, all these rules were set by God so that we can remain holy. We no longer need to obey the letter of these laws, but God still wants us to understand and follow the spirit behind each of them: to be a holy nation. This means we need to learn to separate ourselves from the rest of the world, maintain peace and harmony within our church, and guard our relationships, both with our family and with the Lord.

Check for Understanding

- 1. What does leprosy represent in the Bible? Explain why.** It is often used as an illustration of sin. Sin, like leprosy, is contagious and can slowly eat away at our spiritual life. When the sin becomes a habit, we become desensitized to God’s words and the movement of the Spirit. Eventually, this lack of sensitivity to sin may lead to spiritual death.
- 2. What three lessons can we learn from the laws regarding the repayment of stolen goods in Leviticus 6:1–7?** When we offend our brother, we offend God; true repentance requires action; and with peace, there is holiness.
- 3. What happens when there is strife or discord between church members?** These feelings create schisms in our relationships with both men and God.
- 4. Describe two different types of jealousy in the context of marriage.** Healthy jealousy means that we care about the marriage, are committed to the relationship, and want it to work. It helps to deal with issues in our relationship before they become major problems. Unhealthy jealousy surfaces

when we feel pitiful, inadequate, insecure, or possessive. This type of jealousy can destroy relationships.

Life Application

Small Thoughts, Big Differences

There is a quote from an unknown author that says, “Watch your thoughts, for they become words. Watch your words, for they become actions. Watch your actions, for they become habits. Watch your habits, for they become character. Watch your character, for it becomes your destiny.” In other words, our thoughts are the father of our deeds; before we do something, we need to have thought about it first. Let’s look up a few examples in the Bible to see how thoughts directly influence actions.

Character	Bible Passage	What were the thoughts?	What action(s) were taken?
Eve	Gen 3:6	She saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food, was pleasant to the eyes, and would make her wise.	She plucked the fruit and ate it, then gave it to Adam to eat, too.
Judas	Jn 12:6; Mk 14:10–11	Judas allowed greed to fester in his heart.	Judas stole from the coinbox and betrayed the Lord for thirty pieces of silver.
Bar-Jesus	Acts 13:6–11	He was full of deceit, an enemy of the truth.	He opposed the apostles and sought to turn the proconsul away from the truth.
David	1 Sam 24:2–7	David firmly believed that Saul was God’s anointed.	Regardless of how much he suffered at the hands of Saul, David did not kill Saul when he had the chance, nor did he allow others to strike Saul down.
Caleb	Num 13:30; 14:6–8; Josh 14:10–14	Caleb firmly believed in God’s promise that He would give to the Israelites the land of Canaan and would help them conquer their enemies to acquire the land.	Caleb held onto God’s promise for forty-five years, and when the Israelites eventually entered Canaan, he received his inheritance.

From these examples, we can see that their thoughts affected their actions, and their actions ultimately reflected their relationship with God. While living in Egypt for 400 years, the Israelites had adopted the thoughts, customs, and practices of the Egyptians. This reflected their lack of a relationship with God. He needed to re-educate His people and make them His holy nation. To do so, He gave them laws and statutes that would help them transform their thoughts, so that their actions would become more holy. In the same way, our first step to becoming holy is to change our thoughts. This is not an easy thing, especially if we have been continuously taught to think and do things in a certain way. So, what can we do to change how we think?

1. Capturing Negative and Sinful Thoughts

Oftentimes, sinful and ungodly thoughts creep into our minds without our even realizing it. If we continue to entertain these thoughts, they can become a part of us. So, how do we rid ourselves of

sinful thoughts? Let's read 2 Corinthians 10:4–5. "For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ." We need to bring "every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ." To do so, we need to first identify the thoughts that we need to capture and remove. Take a moment to reflect on yourselves. Then, from a list, circle which negative and sinful thoughts you need to bring into captivity.

(Teachers: Makes copies of the list below to hand out to your students for this activity.)

Anger	Envy/jealousy	Materialism
Bad language	Flirtation	Pride/boasting
Blame	Hatred	Procrastination
Bitterness	Hopelessness	Rebellion
Complaints	Impatience	Resentment
Compromise	Impulsiveness	Revenge
Covetousness	Laziness	Stubbornness
Criticizing	Lies	Unbelief
Defiance	Loneliness	Unforgiving
Discouragement	Low self-esteem	
Despair	Lustful thoughts	

2. Memorize and Meditate on the Bible

To counter the negative thoughts that we have identified, we must learn to replace them. This means filling our minds with godly thoughts instead, to crowd out and eventually eliminate the sinful ones. This means studying, storing, memorizing, and internalizing God's words. Why is it so important to memorize God's words?

- It is a defense against sin (Ps 119:11)
- It can help us discern the thoughts and intents of our hearts (Heb 4:12)
- It gives us wisdom and understanding (Ps 119:98–99)
- It instructs us in righteousness and good works for our salvation (2 Tim 3:16–17)
- Memorizing Scripture is part of our calling as God's children (Col 3:16; Deut 6:6–9)

Now that we understand why it's so important, what methods can we use to memorize God's words?

(Allow students to come up with ideas.)

a. Choose a verse that speaks to you

Think of a negative thought that you have or a weakness that you need to improve upon, then choose a verse that targets those areas. It is easier to memorize a verse when it is relevant to us and when it touches our hearts.

b. Write it down

Don't just write it once. Write it many times! Physically writing out words is an extremely useful and proven memory aid.

c. Incorporate the verse into your prayers

When you pray, include elements of the verse in your words to God. Ask God to help you fix the verse in your heart and mind so that you can understand and apply the verse to your life.

d. Put it everywhere!

Write the verse on sticky notes and place them anywhere that ensures you will see it many times throughout the day. This could be on your phone's background, on your monitor, your desk, or even your bathroom mirror. Maybe force yourself to remember it by applying it to your password – create your password by taking the first letter of each word of the verse and,

instead of selecting the “remember password” option, type in the password each time. Change your password once you have memorized the verse well!

e. Set it to music

If you remember lyrics better than spoken words, try setting the verse to a simple tune or rhythm.

f. Challenge yourself

Instead of wasting precious time mindlessly browsing the web, use technology to your advantage. There are many good apps which can help you memorize Bible verses.

Memory Verse

“For I am the LORD who brings you up out of the land of Egypt, to be your God. You shall therefore be holy, for I am holy.” (Leviticus 11:45)

Meaning

It was the Lord who delivered the Israelites from a life of bitterness and slavery. He knew their sorrows, heard their cry, and saw their oppression. In response, He broke the yokes of their cruel taskmasters from their necks and delivered them even before the Israelites knew Him. But God did not only liberate them from slavery.

What made the Israelites His chosen people was the fact that He had chosen to be their God. They would be God’s own special people, His holy nation, and His treasure. They would receive His blessings and protection. In exchange for this special privilege, the Israelites must abide by the commandments that God gave them. Like a parent with a child, God used His laws to guide, teach, and discipline His people, so that they could be holy as God is holy.

Conclusion

The laws and regulations outlined in the Mosaic books seem to be oppressive and binding. But from the examples we studied today, we can see that their purpose was to transform the Israelites’ thoughts so that they could become a holy nation, God’s own chosen people. We no longer need to follow these laws, but we should still follow the teachings and the spirit behind them by transforming our thoughts and becoming a holy nation. This means we need to learn to separate ourselves from the rest of the world, maintain peace and harmony within our church, and guard our relationships, both with our family and with the Lord.

Lesson 7 Homework Assignment Answer Key

1. What special privilege did the Israelites receive? How were they to receive this?
They would be God's own special people, His holy nation, and His treasure. They would receive His blessings and protection only if they abided by the commandments that God gave them.
2. "For out of the _____ proceed evil _____, _____, adulteries, fornications, thefts, _____, _____, blasphemies. These are the things which _____ a _____ [.]" (Matthew 15:19–20a)
heart, thoughts, murders, false, witness, defile, man.
3. Pick one of the ways the Israelites kept the camp holy and explain its spiritual teachings.
See Spiritual Teachings, Section A: Holiness in the Camp.
4. Why is it important to strive for peace? What happens if we don't?
Where there is peace, there is holiness. When there is strife or discord, negative feelings, such as resentment, hatred, anger, and bitterness, will arise. These feelings create schisms in our relationships with both men and God.
5. What was the purpose of the laws that God gave to the Israelites?
God was trying to teach the Israelites what kind of God He was, and express the expectations that He had for them. He wanted to transform their thoughts and to turn them into a holy nation.
6. Why is it so important that we control our thoughts?
Because our thoughts are the father of our deeds. To do something, we need to have thought about it first.
7. What sinful or negative thought(s) do you need to bring into captivity? Pick a verse to help you transform the negative thought(s) into a godly one and write it down below.
Personal answers.

Preparing to Enter the Promised Land

Passages: Josh 1–5

Memory Verse

“Have I not commanded you? Be strong and of good courage; do not be afraid, nor be dismayed, for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go.” (Joshua 1:9)

Knowledge of God’s Will [God’s Word]	Knowledge of God [God’s Divine Nature]	Good Works [Behavior]
<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Understand God’s commission to Joshua.2. Learn how the Israelites’ trust in God allowed them to enter the Promised Land.3. Understand the preparations that God wanted His people to undergo before taking the land.	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. God is faithful.2. God wants us to trust in Him.	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Learn to seek God’s abidance and linger in the tabernacle to find strength and courage in God.2. Cultivate fear and trust in God’s power in order to change ourselves.

Overview

Events and Spiritual Teachings

- A. God’s Commission to Joshua
- B. Scouting the Land
- C. Crossing the Jordan River
- D. Gilgal: A Renewal of God’s Holy Nation

Life Application: Be Strong and Courageous

1. Joshua: Strength and Courage as a Worker of God
2. Rahab: Faith that Changes Your Heart

Memory Verse

Conclusion: Just as the Israelites had to undergo preparations before entering the Promised Land, we also must take steps to cultivate our own faith so that we might receive strength and courage to be a part of God’s holy nation.

Events and Spiritual Teachings

Introduction

After wandering in the wilderness for forty years, it was finally time for the Israelites to enter the land God had promised to Abraham. Moses had just passed away on Mount Nebo, and Joshua had now picked up the baton of leadership. The land of Canaan, however, was still occupied, and before going into battle to possess the land, the Israelites had to make a few preparations.

A. God's Commission to Joshua (Josh 1)

Let's begin by reading Joshua 1:1–9. As Moses' spiritual successor, what three commissions did God give to Joshua in this passage?

1. To lead the people into the land and conquer Canaan (vv. 2–5).
2. To divide the land as an inheritance among the Israelites (v. 6).
3. To keep God's commandments (vv. 7–9).

“Be strong and of good courage”

God told Joshua to be strong and courageous three times (vv. 6, 7, 9). Joshua now bore a heavy responsibility on his shoulders. The Canaanites were strong and lived in fortified cities, such as Jericho, and with Moses gone, this would be the first time Joshua held such a heavy responsibility without a spiritual mentor to guide him.

God understood the burden that Joshua now bore and gave him the promise that as long as Joshua remained strong and courageous, God would lead him and the Israelites. But this strength and courage wasn't just about going into battle. It was also about Joshua having the strength and courage to hold on to his faith by trusting in God's promise (v. 6), obeying the laws (v. 7), and remembering that God would be with him as He was with Moses (v. 5, 9).

In the end, we know that the key to Joshua and the Israelites' success was not their personal skills or abilities. Their victories came from a deeper relationship with God. Because of their trust in His power, God gave them strength and courage. Moreover, the God who gave them their victory is the same God we worship today. Therefore, we should also be strong and courageous, knowing that “the living God is among [us]” (Josh 3:10)!

B. Scouting the Land (Josh 2)

Let's read Joshua 2. Joshua sent two scouts before the Israelites crossed into Canaan. This was a normal enough action to take, but this significant event was actually a first test in faith—the last time scouts were sent to Canaan, the Israelites ended up wandering forty years in the wilderness. This time, however, the results were very different.

1. The Scouts' Report

Upon returning, the scouts immediately reported to Joshua. How do their words compare to the report of the spies during Moses' time? Let's read Numbers 13:28–33 and do a quick comparison.

	Spies sent by Moses (Num 13:28–33)	Spies sent by Joshua (Joshua 2:24)
Number sent:	Twelve	Two
Report of majority:	“But the people who dwell in the land are strong [...]. We are not able to go up	“Truly the LORD has delivered all the land into our hands, for indeed all the

	against the people, for they are stronger than we.” (Num 13:28–31)	inhabitants of the country are fainthearted because of us.” (Josh 2:24)
Conclusion:	We can’t possibly enter the land.	The land is already given into our hands.
Result:	Wandered the wilderness for forty years, unable to enter the promised land.	Victory over the Canaanites, able to settle in the promised land.

Trust is something that is clearly expressed in our attitude and decisions. The words of the ten spies, for example, focused entirely on the obstacles that they faced rather than on God’s promise or the richness of the land. They expressed fear over the “giants” in Canaan, but in truth, the actual “giants” they were fighting were the ones within their own hearts: their lack of trust in God and their doubt in His power. On the other hand, the words of the two spies sent by Joshua were focused entirely on God because they trusted that the Lord had already given them the land. This same belief in God’s power also led Rahab to make a very different decision from her fellow citizens in Jericho.

2. Rahab

Of all the houses in Jericho, the two spies came to Rahab’s, and as a result of her actions, she was recorded in the hall of faith in the Book of Hebrews.

a. A leap of faith

Rahab told the two spies, “I know that the LORD has given you the land [...]. For we have heard how the LORD dried up the water of the Red Sea for you when you came out of Egypt” (vv. 9–10). Although the Red Sea crossing had occurred forty years ago, it was clear that the news had left an impression on Rahab—enough that she was willing to change herself entirely.

It couldn’t have been an easy decision for her to turn away from the gods that she used to worship. But Rahab saw that the Israelites’ God was truly the Creator of heaven and earth, so she let her fear of God drive her to change her beliefs, and she received the spies with peace (Heb 11:31). As a result, she was saved from the destruction of Jericho and was given a place in the genealogy of Christ Himself.

b. A scarlet cord

Although Rahab received the spies in peace, their response demanded that she not simply believe. She also had to act by binding the scarlet cord to her window and by keeping her family in her home. It may have been difficult for Rahab and her family to remain still while watching the Israelites march around the city for six days as nothing happened. But they remained inside and chose to trust in His power. As a result, she and her family were saved.

We can see that God allows us to choose whether to seek trust in Him (Ps 37:4–6). Because they chose to trust in God, the scouts were able to experience the blessings of the promised land, and Rahab was saved from the destruction of Jericho.

C. Crossing the Jordan River (Josh 3–4)

After receiving the scouts’ report, the Israelites were almost ready to cross into Canaan. Let’s read Joshua 3:5–8. The crossing at Jordan parallels the Red Sea crossing in many ways, but it was also very different.

1. Place Your Feet in the River

Once the priests stepped into the Jordan, the waters were cut off upstream (Josh 3:14–16). As a result, the Israelites were able to cross over on dry ground. At the Red Sea, God had ordered Moses to lift his staff and stretch out his hand to divide the waters. This time, God commanded the priests to stand in the Jordan River. To place their feet into the waters was a gesture of trust. If the priests had not trusted in God’s power, they would have expressed their doubts, or hesitated to follow His instructions. In a way, stepping into the water was a step forward in the Israelites’ faith—they were no longer simply spectators of God’s miracles. This time, they were active participants.

2. Remember God’s Presence

The ark that the priests carried was a sign of God’s presence. But simply seeing and following it was not enough. After crossing the Jordan River, the Israelites came to Gilgal, which is located on the eastern border of Jericho. They carried with them twelve stones that they had taken from the Jordan River as they crossed and used them to build a memorial at Gilgal. Moreover, Joshua also placed twelve stones in the center of the Jordan riverbed. Why were these remembrances important?

Let’s read Joshua 4:4–9. The memorial was a reminder to the people and a way for them to share what God had done with the following generations. In the same way, the blessings and provision that we experience in our lives are meant to be shared as a testimony to those around us. When we share our personal experiences, we remind ourselves of God’s power, and encourage both ourselves and others to trust in Him.

This time, the Israelites took a more active role in God’s miracles. During their escape from Egypt, they simply followed Moses’ instructions. But now God wanted them to participate—they had to step into the waters, set up a memorial, and pass their experiences on to their children.

D. Gilgal: A Renewal of God’s Holy Nation

After crossing the river, the Israelites did not immediately set about conquering the promised land. First, they had a few important tasks that they had to follow. Let’s read Joshua 5:1–12. Upon first entering Canaan, the Israelites did not immediately prepare themselves for battle. The first thing that they did was spend time at Gilgal doing a few very important tasks. What were they? (*Circumcising the sons of Israel, keeping the Passover, and eating the fruits of the land instead of manna.*)

1. Prioritizing God

Circumcision was not just a symbol or sign, but an important part of a sacred agreement between God and His people. This agreement is important enough that God has chosen to uphold His faithfulness from generation to generation, despite how easy it is for us to forget our part of it. That this was the very first thing they did upon entering Canaan was an indication of God’s position in their lives. He was to be first and foremost in everything that they did.

2. Obeying God’s Commands

The Israelites began and ended their wilderness journey with the Passover, marking its importance to God’s people. This is the third recorded Passover that the Israelites observed since leaving Egypt. It is likely that many of this generation did not experience firsthand the very first Passover that the Israelites observed prior to the tenth plague. But becoming God’s holy nation and entering the promised land meant learning to obey God’s commands. After

observing the Passover, the result was God's blessings—manna ceased to fall and, that very same day, they were able to eat the fruit of the land.

We can see that upon entering Canaan, their priority was not in finding their enemies' weaknesses, gathering their military strength, or preparing for battle. Instead, the Israelites first had to renew their covenant with God and learn to keep His commands. Joshua relied on God's strength, Rahab trusted in God's power, and the two spies saw God's provision rather than the might of their enemies. The entire nation was now united with a similar conviction: God was first and foremost on their minds. As a result, they were able to experience God's provision and blessings and, later, His victory over their enemies.

Check for Understanding

- 1. What three commissions did God give to Joshua (Josh 1)?**
 - a. To lead the people into the land and conquer Canaan (vv. 2–5).
 - b. To divide the land as an inheritance among the Israelites (v. 6).
 - c. To keep God's commandments (vv. 7–9).
- 2. What was the key difference in the reports of the scouts sent by Moses compared to the scouts sent by Joshua?** Due to their lack of trust in God, the words of the ten spies focused on the giants living in Canaan. The two scouts sent by Joshua, however, focused on God, because they trusted that the Lord had already given the land into the Israelites' hands.
- 3. What was remarkable about Rahab's actions?** It may have been difficult for Rahab and her family to remain still while watching the Israelites march around the city for six days as nothing happened. But they remained in her home and kept the scarlet cord in the window. And because they chose to trust in His power, she and her family were saved.
- 4. What was different about the Jordan Crossing compared to the Red Sea Crossing?** This time, the Israelites took a more active role in God's miracles. During their escape from Egypt, they simply followed Moses' instructions. But now God wanted them to participate—they had to step in the waters, set up a memorial, and pass their experiences on to their children.
- 5. What can we learn from the Israelites' actions upon entering the promised land?** They prioritized God by upholding the covenant (performing circumcision) and obeying His commands (keeping Passover). Becoming God's holy nation and entering the promised land meant learning to obey His commands—after, the result was receiving God's blessings.

Life Application

1. Joshua: Strength and Courage as a Worker of God

Joshua was transformed into a faithful worker for God over a lifetime of training. While serving Moses, he saw God's power with his own eyes (Deut 3:21), experienced God firsthand, and was given the commission to "lead this people across and [...] cause them to inherit the land" (v. 28 NIV; cf. 31:23). The responsibility given to him was heavy, but Joshua had spent his lifetime learning how to serve God by relying on God's power and drawing from His strength. So how can we learn to be strong and courageous, as Joshua was? From examining his life under Moses' training, we can find two key actions.

- a. He sought God's abidance**

While serving Moses, Joshua was dedicated to finding God and discovering His will. He sought to serve God each and every day of his life, even from his youth (Num 11:28). At a young age, Joshua already set himself apart from the other Israelites by assisting Moses closely and carrying out God's will (Ex 24:13; 33:11). Following Joshua's example, we need to seek out God's abidance by constantly evaluating God's presence in our daily lives. How meaningful is your

prayer or your Bible study? Do you forget about God for six days of the week outside of Sabbath? Do you actively seek out more time with God, or do you spend only what you feel is the “minimum requirement”?

Discussion

Gaining strength and courage requires seeking out God’s constant presence in our lives. What are signs of a life that lacks God’s abidance? What about a life that is full of God’s abidance? What aspect of your life can you focus on changing in order to make it look more like the latter?

b. He lingered in the tabernacle

Let’s read Exodus 33:11. “So the LORD spoke to Moses face to face, as a man speaks to his friend. And he would return to the camp, but his servant Joshua the son of Nun, a young man, did not depart from the tabernacle.” Joshua’s strength and courage did not suddenly appear on the day God commissioned him. This was the result of a faith built up over time, and most importantly, a result of Joshua choosing to linger in God’s presence at every opportunity he could. Spending time in the tabernacle is what transformed Joshua into a good leader, and his resulting relationship with God made him strong and courageous.

Discussion

A relationship with God requires spending time in His presence. What are some ways we can linger in the tabernacle as Joshua did? (For example: SSC, fasting for the Holy Spirit.) Why do we tend to leave the tabernacle as soon as possible?

It is clear that the strength and courage that Joshua displayed was not just by his own power but was born out of an effort to draw close to God. By dedicating himself to finding God and lingering in the tabernacle to draw close to Him, Joshua built a foundation of strength and courage in God’s power. As a result, he was chosen by God to lead the Israelites successfully.

2. Rahab: Faith that Changes Your Heart

Have you ever tried to make or break a habit, or change your thoughts or attitude? If you have, you likely realized very quickly that people do not change so easily. We learned today that Rahab’s actions were highly unusual, a choice that required a complete change of heart. How was she able to gather the strength and courage to change herself so drastically? Although there were probably many different factors, we can consider two different things that allowed Rahab to change.

a. Fear of God

Rahab told the spies clearly that “our hearts melted” when describing her countrymen’s reaction to God’s power (Josh 2:11). The spies also noted how the Canaanites were afraid of the Israelites, and later, the Bible records that Jericho was “securely shut up because of the children of Israel” (Josh 6:1). On the other hand, Rahab welcomed the spies and hid them in safety despite her countrymen’s fears and any possible punishment. There are two different kinds of “fear” present here, and we can see their differences in the reactions of Rahab compared to the other citizens of Jericho.

One who fears God allows God’s will to drive their actions. For Rahab, that meant taking a leap of faith in entrusting her life to God rather than to her own people. To change ourselves as Rahab did, we need to train ourselves to fear God more than men. However, this also requires a

certain trust in God.

b. Trust in God's power

Trust in God can be very challenging to develop. It is hard to trust in someone whom we not only cannot see, but also whose solutions are so complex and vast that we cannot comprehend them. God's plans are so often beyond our imaginings that we begin to lose hope or even forget about Him when we don't see the immediate solutions that we expect to see. But the Bible says, "Commit your way to the LORD, trust also in Him, and He shall bring it to pass" (Ps 37:5). We may not see God's power at work, and we may not understand how He plans to protect us, but we need to tie the scarlet cord to our window and trust that He will.

Another reason it is difficult for us to trust Him is because we don't like to give up control. It is human nature to rely on our own strength. But King Solomon wrote that we must "lean not on [our] own understanding" (Prov 3:5). Rahab and her family were saved because she relinquished control of their lives over to the God of Israel. In much the same way, when we entrust the steering wheel to God, He will take charge of our lives' directions and take care of us.

We have been given the precious status of God's children, but our actions may not reflect respect or fear towards our Creator and Father in heaven. Do you trust in God more than the knowledge or understanding of mankind, or do you try to wrestle with problems with your own power before turning to God? Do you let Him take control of your decisions? When we cultivate fear and trust in God's power, He will give us the power to change our hearts. When we do so, like Rahab and her family, we will experience His saving grace.

Memory Verse

"Have I not commanded you? Be strong and of good courage; do not be afraid, nor be dismayed, for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go." (Joshua 1:9)

Meaning

When we are able to take courage in the Lord and have a strong conviction in His presence, there is nothing to be afraid of in our lives. Any challenges that we face will seem small compared to our almighty God. He can help us to overcome any struggles that we may have, physically, mentally, or spiritually. He can strengthen us when we are burdened with responsibilities, and He can give us the courage to change ourselves and live boldly for the Lord!

Conclusion

To enter the promised land, Joshua and the Israelites had to demonstrate their trust in God and their resolve to follow His commands. The two scouts saw a land given by God, and Rahab received the spies in peace. The Israelites later followed God's instructions in crossing the Jordan River and in renewing their covenant with God at Gilgal. Just as they had to undergo preparations before entering the promised land, we also must take steps to cultivate our own faith so that we might receive strength and courage to be a part of God's holy nation.

Lesson 8 Student Homework Assignment Answer Key

1. What does this verse teach us about how we can face any obstacles, burdens, or responsibilities?
When we are able to take courage in the Lord and have a strong conviction in His presence, there is nothing to be afraid of in our lives.
2. “[Rahab] said to the men: ‘I _____ that the _____ has _____ you the land, that the _____ of you has fallen on us, and that all the inhabitants of the land are _____ because of you.’” (Joshua 2:9)
know, Lord, given, terror, fainthearted
3. What was so different about the two scouts’ report compared to those sent by Moses in the past?
The words of the ten spies focused entirely on the obstacles that they faced rather than on God’s promise or the richness of the land. On the other hand, the words of the two spies sent by Joshua were focused entirely on God because they trusted that the Lord had already given them the land.
4. What can we learn from the Israelites’ actions upon first entering the promised land?
They prioritized God by upholding the covenant (performing circumcision) and obeying His commands (keeping Passover). Becoming God’s holy nation and entering the promised land meant learning to obey His commands—after, the result was receiving God’s blessings.
5. How did Joshua learn to receive strength and courage from God while serving under Moses?
He sought God’s abidance, and he lingered in the tabernacle.
6. Why is it often difficult for us to trust in God as Rahab did? Share a time when you struggled to trust in God’s plan and instead tried to rely on your own wisdom or understanding. How did God teach you to trust Him after this incident, or how did you turn your heart back to trusting God?
*Because we don’t like to give up control. It is human nature to rely on our own strength.
Personal answers.*

Victory at Jericho

Passages: Josh 5–6

Memory Verse

“For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ[.]” (2 Corinthians 10:4–5)

Knowledge of God’s Will [God’s Word]	Knowledge of God [God’s Divine Nature]	Good Works [Behavior]
<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. God wanted what was best for His nation.2. His plans for the good of the Israelites required their faith and obedience.3. God’s deliverance is different from man’s expectations.	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. God is almighty.2. God’s thoughts are higher than our own.	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Make God the Commander in our lives.2. Tear down any strongholds that keep us apart from Him.3. Learn full obedience by giving to God and putting Him first.

Overview

Events and Spiritual Teachings

- A. Jericho
- B. The Commander of the Army of the Lord
- C. Marching Around Jericho
- D. The Destruction of Jericho

Life Application

1. Who Is the Commander in Your Life?
2. Tearing Down Walls
3. Giving to God and Putting Him First

Memory Verse

Conclusion: God’s abidance allowed the Israelites to have success. In much the same way, we must make God the Commander in our own lives.

A. Jericho

After entering the promised land, Joshua and the Israelites approached the first city that God wanted them to defeat: Jericho, a city located just north of the Dead Sea. The area around it was fertile, and it was also known as “the city of palm trees” (Deut 34:3). We may have heard that Jericho was a well-fortified city. But its history and significance are much greater than that. Let’s read a little bit about the city¹:

Scholars have classified Jericho as one of the oldest cities in the world. By the time Joshua sent the spies, it had a ruler, an army, and strong fortifications, suggesting a certain level of sophistication and prosperity. So the city would clearly have had many more inhabitants apart from Rahab. Many would have been richer and of higher status than she.

From what scholars have discovered, it is apparent that Jericho was a significant city in its time. It was a mighty city, well known across Canaan. Yet despite its fortifications, fame, and development, God chose Jericho to be the first city that He would destroy through His chosen nation.

Physically, Jericho may have been an ideal city to live in. However, the Bible tells us that Canaan was spiritually lost. Their religious practices were perverse and abominable in God’s eyes. The laws in Leviticus give us some idea of pagan practices that existed at the time, including extreme sexual immorality, and the sacrifice of children (Lev 19:20–24; 18:21). Their sins were so great that the land itself was defiled (Lev 18:25). God had given them time to repent, but they had not changed. So, as God had judged Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen 19:24–25), it was now time to cast His judgment on Jericho.

B. The Commander of the Army of the Lord

The Israelites were ready to face their enemies for the first time, but before they headed for Jericho, God appeared before Joshua. Let’s read Joshua 5:13–15. When God gave the Israelites the Mosaic laws, He also told them that He would “send an Angel before you to keep you in the way and to bring you into the place which I have prepared” (Ex 23:20). As long as the Israelites obeyed this Angel’s voice, God promised that He would be “an enemy to your enemies and an adversary to your adversaries” (v. 22). This Angel would clear the way into Canaan for the Israelites. For their part, the Israelites “shall not bow down to [the Canaanite] gods, nor serve them, nor do according to their works” (v. 24).

The nation of Israel had already witnessed the destruction of the Egyptian gods throughout the ten plagues. After only three plagues, the Egyptian magicians confessed to Pharaoh, “This is the finger of God” (Ex 8:19). God would now demonstrate His power over the Canaanite gods as well. Moses had already taught the Israelites that for any who diligently obey the voice of the Lord, He will “cause your enemies who rise against you to be defeated before your face; they shall come out against you one way and flee before you seven ways” (Deut 28:7). Victory was already promised to them before they even entered Canaan! This is the power of the Commander of the Lord’s Army who stood before Joshua.

1. Joshua’s reaction

Joshua’s reaction to the Commander of the Lord’s army is very similar to Moses’ reaction to the burning bush (Ex 3:4–5). From this, we can infer that the “Commander of the army of the LORD” is actually God Himself. As with Moses, God commanded Joshua to remove his sandals because

¹ Caleb Lee, “Conquest of Canaan – Jericho (I)”, *Manna Magazine* 74 (2014): 15, accessed September 27, 2021, <https://tjc.org/elib-single-item-display/?langid=1&itemid=30573&type=pub>.

the place where he stood was holy (cf. Ex 3:5). From this passage, we can see three key aspects of our servitude:

- a. **God is our Commander:** Although Joshua was the leader and commander of Israel, before God, Joshua addressed himself as a “servant.”
- b. **Holiness is key:** The very first command God gave to Joshua was to remove his sandals. To serve God, it is not our skill, ability, or intelligence, but sanctification that comes first and foremost.
- c. **A humble and obedient heart:** Joshua did not argue the point or assert his position. When commanded, he promptly removed his sandals, then asked God what to do.

2. God’s promise and reassurance

As one of the most fortified cities in the region, Jericho was a strange choice for the Israelites’ first attack. This may have made the Israelites nervous before the battle. On the other hand, it may also have made the Canaanites incredibly fearful. As a result, Jericho was “securely shut up” because of the Israelites’ approach. Let’s read Joshua 6:1–5. Despite Jericho’s military strength, God told Joshua, “See! I have given Jericho into your hand, its king, and the mighty men of valor” (v. 2). The city was already set to fall, and its people’s defeat was already ordained by God. After hearing of God’s work in Egypt, Rahab chose to submit to God, while her neighbors chose to resist. How do you think Joshua felt after hearing that their victory was already assured? He probably felt great reassurance and strength in God’s protection.

Although God’s instructions seem odd in our eyes, Joshua did not question them. He trusted in God’s almighty power and understood that his role was to faithfully follow the orders of the Commander. In the same way, we may not always understand God’s will, but we still need to faithfully follow what He has instructed us to do. This is how we can demonstrate our trust in the Lord. When we do, as He promised to Joshua, our enemies will already have been handed over to us!

C. Marching Around Jericho

After his meeting with the Commander of the Lord’s army, Joshua faithfully passed on God’s instructions to the priests and the Israelites. Can you imagine marching around the walls of a city in complete silence for several days while its inhabitants watch? This may have felt foolish, confusing, or even embarrassing, but the Israelites’ obedience to God’s command was crucial to their victory.

1. The Israelites acted with faith

It wasn’t exciting for the Israelites to walk around the city day after day in silence, and they may have experienced derision for it. Yet they were faithful to God’s instruction. Why was silence so important? There are two possible reasons: so that they could hear God’s signal, and as a test of their faith.² The trumpets told the Israelites what they were to do, but they could only obey if they could hear them. In order to hear God’s command, the Israelites first had to quiet themselves. However, as they circled the city again and again, we can only imagine that the people of Jericho would have begun to insult or mock them when nothing happened for six days. On the seventh day, the Israelites had to endure this same situation in complete silence as they circled the city seven times.

We should remember that no matter what God wants us to do, we should follow His

² Caleb Lee, “Conquest of Canaan – Jericho (II)”, *Manna Magazine* 75 (2015): 16, accessed September 27, 2021, <https://tjc.org/elib-single-item-display/?langid=1&itemid=31106&type=pub>.

instructions while patiently waiting on His will. When we continually choose to trust in God's power, He will work miracles in our lives. The Israelites were unified in this decision. As a result, "[by] faith, the walls of Jericho fell down after they were encircled for seven days" (Heb 11:30).

2. **The Israelites acted with persistent obedience**

God instructed them to have seven priests and seven trumpets, and to march around the city for seven days. Today when we study the Bible, we know that the number "seven" represents completion and perfection in Scripture, but it may have seemed a strange number to Joshua or the Israelites. In fact, everything they did was nonsensical in the eyes of man—who would ever imagine that an entire city would be destroyed after marching around it for seven days? Despite this, they did not change God's command, and none complained or murmured against Him.

If the Israelites had given up on the sixth day, they would not have witnessed the destruction of the city. We tend to cut corners or make excuses for ourselves by saying that we are just disobeying this one time. However, if we say we obey God, then we need to always obey God fully. We cannot just obey Him on the Sabbath and then disobey the rest of the week!

Therefore, it is important to train ourselves to obey God fully without cutting corners and to obey Him consistently, each and every day. If we do, then just as the Israelites witnessed the destruction of Jericho's walls, we will experience God's power in our lives.

Joshua and the Israelites believed that God was the only one who could open the way for them. God is also able to help us overcome difficulties that seem impossible to handle. Just as God made the walls of Jericho fall, He can help us in situations where we may feel helpless. With God, nothing is impossible. However, like the Israelites, we must be willing to fully follow His commands daily and have faith in His will, even though it may seem counterintuitive or boring. For example, we may find our daily practice of prayer or Bible-reading habitual rather than edifying, and our weekly services boring instead of restful. But when we have the heart to do according to God's instruction each and every day, He will help us to overcome any walls in our lives.

D. The Destruction of Jericho

God told Joshua, "See! I have given Jericho into your hand, its king, and the mighty men of valor" (Josh 6:2). Their victory was already assured! However, this victory was entirely dependent on the Israelites' obedience to God (Heb 11:30). Let's read Joshua 6:21–27.

1. **Victory from God**

We have probably been to a city of some sort before—can you imagine an entire city crumbling down in a moment? This is what the Israelites experienced! Let's read Deuteronomy 28:9–14. God has repeatedly told His people that obedience to Him will bring forth blessings. A clear example of this blessing can be seen in God's faithful preservation of Rahab and her family.

On the other hand, those who disobey God will be cursed (Deut 28:15–19). Let's read Deuteronomy 9:5. Many who read the Bible believe that God was unreasonable or harsh towards the Canaanites. He repeatedly commanded the Israelites to completely destroy their enemies. But our God is not only merciful, but He is also righteous; He is a God who judges us for our sins. We learned at the beginning of today's lesson that the Canaanites had many evil practices. Even scholars of today acknowledge that their religious practices were among the most perverse recorded in history. As a result, God used His people to enact His judgment upon

the Canaanites, and at the same time, gave the Israelites victory because of their obedience.

2. Acknowledging God's victory

God instructed the Israelites to destroy the city and all within it. Only Rahab and her family were spared, while everything else was burned. However, all the silver, gold, and bronze and iron vessels were to be taken for the treasury of God. Jericho was a mighty city and would have been full of many valuables. It was also the very first city that God conquered for the Israelites. But there was a valuable lesson for them to learn: the firstfruits must go to God. This was an act of acknowledgement that all things come from God. Their victory over Jericho came from God, so it was only appropriate that the valuables be consecrated and added to the Lord's treasury.

After the battle of Jericho, the Canaanites became even more afraid of the Israelites. The Bible records how God was with Joshua, and that his fame spread throughout the land (Josh 6:27). These two statements are closely related; God's abidance and might allowed the Israelites to have this great success. Winning this battle also greatly encouraged them. It was only the first of many to come, yet God gave them such an overwhelming victory through their trust and obedience in Him.

Check for Understanding

1. **Why was Jericho a strange city for the Israelites to attack first?** It was not only a well-fortified city with an army, but it was also one of the oldest cities in the world and likely very sophisticated and prosperous.
2. **How did Joshua react to meeting the Commander of the Lord's army?** Despite being the leader and commander of Israel, he addressed himself as a "servant" and promptly removed his sandals to show his obedience and reverence to God's holiness.
3. **What two characteristics of their actions were crucial for the Israelites' victory?** They acted with faith, and they acted with full obedience to God's commands.
4. **Why did God command the Israelites to completely destroy the Canaanites?** God was using the Israelites to enact His judgment upon the Canaanites, who had many evil practices and refused to repent despite the time that God had given to them.
5. **What did God command the Israelites to do with the valuables of Jericho, and why is this important?** He commanded them to take them for the treasury of God, and not for themselves. They had to learn that the firstfruits must go to God. It was an act of acknowledgement that all things come from God.

Life Application

1. Who Is the Commander in Your Life?

Let's re-read Joshua 5:14–15; 6:6–7. Joshua did not hesitate to worship God, nor did he question God's peculiar instructions. Jesus Christ taught us that if we love Him, we will keep His commandments (Jn 14:15). We need to be "doers" of God's word, and not "hearers" only (Jas 1:22). If God appears before us, will we be hearers only, or will we be able to bring every thought in captivity to Jesus Christ? Are there ever times we try to "bargain" with God's will, or perhaps try to pretend that what we do is okay when we know that it isn't?

- Take a moment to consider times when you have conveniently forgotten God's will, or only obeyed it partially for your own convenience. *(Allow students to brainstorm. Examples may be: skipping Sabbath service to go to a friend's birthday party; obeying our parents only when it is convenient for us; lying to hide something from our family or friends; etc.)*

It is often difficult for us to fully follow God's commands instead of succumbing to our personal desires. Paul often compared our life of faith to a fight or war that we need to persist in. To compete in a race, we need to exert self-control over our body to train ourselves and to continue running. As a soldier of Christ, we need to arm ourselves so that we do not fall to sin. In both cases, the most important thing is that we follow the orders of our overseer and commander, our Father in heaven. But like any race or competition, if we try to bend or break the rules, we will be disqualified.

To avoid this, we need to train ourselves to faithfully follow God's commands. If Joshua or the Israelites had decided to skip a day or change God's instructions, they likely would not have seen the miracle of Jericho's walls collapsing. Let's read today's memory verse, 2 Corinthians 10:4–5.

Discussion

- What is required for “pulling down strongholds? (*God's might*)
- What do you think is “every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God” in our daily lives? (*Ex: Human wisdom, personal understanding, or past experiences that may make us confident enough to act against God's will.*)
- What does it mean to “[bring] every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ”? (Jn 14:15, 23; Jas 1:22; Josh 1:8; 1 Jn 5:3) (*Ex: It means learning to love God with all our heart and knowing God's will through study and prayer. When this becomes the case, we think of God in each and every decision that we make, and we are willing to follow His commands rather than try to bend them to suit our own desires.*)

Destroy the city, and do not let it be rebuilt

The Israelites' complete destruction of Jericho reminds us that once we have overcome our sinful ways, we need to completely remove sin from our lives. We cannot leave any remnants behind. Leaving these open doors behind are often the reason we fall back into our old ways. This is especially true for the things that we are addicted to. When we don't completely remove sin from our lives or separate ourselves from it, we leave room for ourselves to go back into sin. If the Israelites were to allow the Canaanites to dwell among them, they may be influenced and led away from God. They needed to remove anything that could possibly replace God as commander in their lives.

In addition, Joshua gave the command that Jericho never be rebuilt—any who did would be cursed (Josh 6:26). When we “rebuild Jericho,” we are returning to our old sins. Let's read Colossians 3:10. Instead of continuously repenting for the same sin committed repeatedly, we should instead put off the “old man,” and put on the “new” who is “renewed” each day. Though we may be unable to change by our own power, we can root ourselves in the knowledge of God and be transformed through the power of the Holy Spirit! In this way, we will not be ruled by sin, but will instead keep God as our Commander.

2. Tearing Down Walls

Just like the Israelites, there may be walls or obstacles that we need to tear down in order to be able to conquer our enemies. The walls in our hearts can range from anxieties to addictions, but they can be any sin that prevents us from living a life pleasing to God. Often these walls are difficult to overcome, and we are unable to obtain victory on our own. We are powerless by ourselves, so we need God's help to tear down these walls. Once we recognize God as the Commander in our lives, it is time for us to take action: we need to practice obedience to His word and tear down any strongholds that keep us separated from Him.

God's will can seem unexciting and even counterproductive to us. For example, by society's terms, it is more restful to have a day off than to go to church to fulfill our various responsibilities there. Wouldn't we logically find more rest on Sabbath day if we were to stay home and relax instead? But we need to remember that the things we do for God will never make us lose out on anything. We will never "lose" by following His commands. But this is much easier said than done! What steps can we take to begin tearing down any strongholds in our spiritual lives?

a. Discover strongholds and find motivation to remove the enemy!

In order to change, we must first find the desire and motivation within ourselves to change. If we feel like everything is going well, then we won't be compelled to try. This means that the first step is inspecting our own lives to discover any weaknesses that we have in our spiritual lives and finding any walls that are blocking us from drawing closer to God. What are they? Are they fear? Worries? Anxieties? Lack of trust? Once we have identified any strongholds, we can begin removing whatever causes us to stumble. This portion requires honesty with ourselves. Just as God commanded the Israelites to completely destroy the Canaanites, we need to determine to do the same. If we don't, then it is possible that we will return to whatever hindered our faith.

b. Root ourselves in the word of God

Once we have made the decision for ourselves, the next step is to follow God's instructions. We need to root ourselves in His word! In order to follow His commands, the Israelites first needed to know them. In the same way, we need to have a strong and thorough understanding of the Bible so that we can know our sins. Rooting ourselves in God's word will also give us a firm foundation for bringing down the walls that we face.

c. Deepen your communication and obedience towards God

If the Israelites had not obeyed God's instructions, they wouldn't have been able to witness the miracle of Jericho's destruction. Throughout the process of bringing down our walls, we need to constantly increase the time we spend with God, deepen our communication with Him, and practice greater obedience to Him. When we are filled with the power of the Holy Spirit, we will no longer be bound by the things of this world. When we fill our hearts with the Holy Spirit, we are filling ourselves with the love of God. As a result, we will naturally find that we "count all things loss" for Christ (Phil 3:8).

3. Giving to God and Putting Him First

When they attacked Jericho, God gave an additional instruction to the Israelites: they were not to take the gold, silver, and other valuables for themselves, but place them first into the treasury for God. God wanted the Israelites to give the loot from the first city to Him. Only later, after defeating the city of Ai, were the Israelites permitted to take any for themselves. It is clear where God wants our priorities to be. What do you value the most in your life? Aside from material things, you probably enjoy spending your time and energy on things that you like, such as your friends or your personal hobbies. Would you be willing to give these to God first?

As our all-powerful Creator, He does not need anything from us, but as our Father in heaven and Commander of our hearts, God wants us to learn to put Him first. Aside from offering tithe, we can train ourselves to prioritize God when it comes to how we spend our time, our effort, and our energy. As the Bible teaches us, "Commit your works to the LORD, and your thoughts will be established" (Prov 16:3; cf. Mt 6:31-33).

The Israelites experienced each portion of this verse at Jericho, in a very real sense: They witnessed God’s might pulling down a stronghold when they went against human wisdom and instead obediently followed the knowledge of God. We can also experience God’s might in our lives, but we need to first do as Joshua did when he met the Commander of the Lord’s army. When we learn to obey Him completely and tear down any strongholds that prevent us from focusing on Him, we have successfully made Him Commander of our hearts.

Memory Verse

“For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ[.]” (2 Corinthians 10:4–5)

Meaning

See Life Application #1.

Conclusion

The Israelites were able to experience the miracle of Jericho’s destruction because of their faith in His power and their full obedience. Without both, they would not have experienced victory. God’s abidance was what allowed them to have success. In much the same way, we must make God the Commander in our own lives—learn to prioritize Him, tear down any strongholds that interfere with our relationship with Him, and follow His commands with full obedience. When we do, He will help us to overcome any “Jerichos” that we may encounter in our lives!

Lesson 9 Homework Assignment Answer Key

1. What is “every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God” in our daily lives?
Human wisdom, personal understanding, or past experiences that may make us confident enough to act against God’s will.
2. “Now it shall come to pass, if you _____ obey the _____ of the LORD your God, to _____ carefully all His _____ which I command you today, that the LORD your God will set you _____ above all _____ of the earth.”
(Deuteronomy 28:1)
diligently, voice, observe, commandments, high, nations
3. What are two possible reasons the Israelites had to walk around the city in silence?
One was so that they could hear God’s signal. The other was to test their faith. In order to hear God’s command, they first had to quiet themselves.
4. God promised victory, but what two things did the Israelites need in order to experience this?
Their victory was entirely dependent on their faith and obedience to God.
5. Why do we sometimes fail to make God the Commander of our lives?
Because we fail to fully follow God’s commands and instead succumb to our personal desires.
6. What are “strongholds” in our lives? How do we tear them down?
Any obstacles or sin that prevent us from living a life pleasing to God. We are powerless on our own, so we need God’s help to tear down these walls.

Achan's Sin and Defeat at Ai

Passages: Josh 7–8

Memory Verse

“Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body, that you should obey it in its lusts. And do not present your members as instruments of unrighteousness to sin, but present yourselves to God as being alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God.” (Romans 6:12–13)

Knowledge of God's Will [God's Word]	Knowledge of God [God's Divine Nature]	Good Works [Behavior]
<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Achan's sin affected all of the Israelites, leading to many deaths and their defeat in battle.2. Only by sanctifying themselves were the Israelites able to experience the blessing of God's presence.	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. God is all-knowing.2. God desires our honest prayers.	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. We must learn to walk according to the Spirit, not according to the flesh.2. To walk in God's way, we must confront and remove any sin in our lives.

Overview

Events and Spiritual Teachings

- A. Achan's Sin
- B. Defeat at Ai
- C. Victory over Ai

Life Application:

- 1. How Do We Walk?
- 2. Confronting Sin

Memory Verse

Conclusion: From their initial defeat and subsequent victory over Ai, the Israelites were able to learn and witness God's just and holy nature. He did not allow sin to remain among His people, and He reminded them of the importance of obeying His commandments.

Introduction

After winning the battle of Jericho, the Israelites were greatly encouraged and ready to take on the next city, Ai. The Israelites likely expected an easy victory, as Ai was not as large as Jericho. However, it is often when we are the most confident in our own abilities that we lose sight of God, the one who allows our success.

A. Achan's Sin

During the battle of Jericho, God had commanded the Israelites to add all the spoils from Jericho to the Lord's treasury. They were not allowed to take any of it for themselves. Let's read Joshua 7:1, 21. What items did Achan take from Jericho? (*He took gold, silver, and a Babylonian garment.*) The items that Achan took made up a tiny portion of all that was taken from the city. But God knew what Achan had done in secret, and His anger burned against the Israelites. What was the problem with Achan's actions? There are three things that we can learn from this event.

1. The dangers of desire and covetousness

a. Lust of the eyes

Due to his desires, Achan sinned and took these items for himself. From his sin, we can see how dangerous the lust of our eyes can be. As visual beings, what we see can have a huge impact on our desires. Let's read verse 21. There is a clear progression to Achan's sin: he first "saw," then "coveted," "took," and lastly, "hid." This is why it is so important that we guard our eyes and think about what we see on a daily basis. Just by being aware of the things that we look at on our phones and the media that we consume, we can guard our eyes better and limit our exposure to things that can lead us to sin against God.

b. Covetousness

What does it mean to covet? When we see and desire possessions or wealth, this desire leads to covetousness. Paul describes coveting something as a form of idolatry (Eph 5:5; Col 3:5). What we covet may be security, pleasure, praise, or power that comes from materialism. But whatever form it takes, any form of covetousness reveals a dissatisfaction with our current life. We can see that Achan failed to find satisfaction and contentment in God's goodness and care.

2. We cannot hide sin from God

Apart from following his material desires, Achan also tried to hide what he had done. There were plenty of opportunities for him to confess that he had sinned, but he did not admit to his fault until the drawing of lots singled him out. He didn't realize that we may be able to hide things from our parents or our friends, but God sees and knows all that we do. Before they entered into Canaan, Moses warned the Israelites that if they fail to follow God's commands, "you have sinned against the LORD; and be sure your sin will find you out" (Num 32:23). Achan's sin was revealed before the people, and he was punished for submitting to his desires, as well as for failing to confess his sin to God.

3. Our sins affect others

Although Achan was the only one who took the items, the Bible tells us that all of the Israelites had committed a trespass. And as a result of his sin, men died. In the same way, our actions can impact others and affect those around us. We may think that our actions are our own, and that

even the sins that we commit are our own. But the Bible often compares sin to yeast—it has a tendency to spread, and its consequences can affect others, even if we may not see these effects right away.

Even though the items Achan stole only comprised a small portion of the loot taken from Ai, he was stealing from God, which was an enormous sin. In addition, the Bible also describes the items that he took as “accursed.” Achan’s actions showed his lack of fear towards God, a lack of sensitivity towards sin, and an indifference to the idolatry and evil of the city. His disobedience showed his preferential treatment towards the objects and idols of this world, rather than towards God.

B. Defeat at Ai

Let’s read Joshua 7:2–9. Joshua and the other Israelites had no idea what Achan had done. As a result of his sin, the Israelites were paralyzed with fear during the battle, many men died, and even Joshua experienced confusion and despair. It was clear that Achan’s sin was a serious matter that led to serious consequences. However, his sin was not the only reason for their defeat:

1. They were overconfident

Joshua had sent spies to search out the city of Ai before the battle, and the report that they gave showed their overconfidence. They saw how small the city was compared to Jericho, and thought it would be an easy victory. But such self-confidence can lead to destruction. When we rely on human wisdom and make hasty assumptions based on our past victories, we forget to rely on the Lord. However, without God’s wisdom or power, we may easily be defeated by seemingly small problems or obstacles.

2. They did not inquire of the Lord

Unlike the battle of Jericho, Joshua and the Israelites did not inquire of God before going into battle. They had forgotten that the key to winning the battle was not the size of their army, but their reliance and total trust in God! It is clear that without prayer, we cannot receive God’s blessing or understand His will.

From the Israelites’ mistake, we can see the importance of relying on God instead of on our own strength. When everything is going smoothly, it is easy to forget that God was the one who helped us along the way. This is why it is so important for us to remember God’s sovereignty and control in our lives. Let’s read Psalm 20:7. “Some trust in chariots, and some in horses; but we will remember the name of the LORD our God.” The successes that we are able to achieve are because God allows us to be victorious, not from any strength or power of our own. This understanding makes it all the more important that we strive to obey His commands.

The Assembly Is Sanctified

Let’s read Joshua 7:6–26. After their defeat, Joshua took a few immediate steps to handle the situation:

1. He first consulted with God

Upon their defeat, Joshua was completely astonished. He could have tried again with more men, or perhaps tried a different strategy. Yet Joshua clearly understood that their defeat was linked to the fact that God had not been with them. So, what was the first thing that he did? He “fell to the earth on his face before the ark of the LORD until evening, he and the elders of Israel.” These actions and Joshua’s questions show us their despair and confusion (vv. 6–9).

What three questions did Joshua bring before God in his prayer? (*Why did you allow us to be*

defeated? What shall I say when Your people run from their enemies? What will happen to Your great name when Your people are defeated?) Joshua did the right thing in bringing his doubt, self-pity, and complaint to God without hesitation. In immediately bringing his confusion to prayer, he demonstrated his instinctive desire for God’s help and wisdom.

Joshua’s prayer was desperate and heartfelt—in much the same way, God desires our honest prayers. Joshua’s reaction is a reminder that when we have failed, the first thing we need to reflect upon ourselves, understand the cause of our defeat, and come to God with an honest and humble heart. “God resists the proud, but give grace to the humble” (Jas 4:6)

2. Under God’s command, he then isolated and identified the sin

Let’s read 7:10–15. God cares deeply about the lives of His people. He revealed Himself to Joshua by telling him to “Get up!” As a spiritual leader, Joshua could not lead His people by putting his face on the ground the whole time. In much the same way, God wants us to get up and deal with our mess by being attentive to what He wants to say. God wants us to listen to Him. He is ready to deliver us, but we must first take up our responsibilities! Instead of wallowing in self-pity or spending time feeling sorry for ourselves, we need to “get up” and deal with our sins (Prov 28:13) by fixing our eyes on God and seeing the lessons He wants to teach us.

3. Lastly, he removed the sin completely

Joshua obeyed God’s instruction to identify and reveal the Israelites’ sin. In contrast, Achan had many opportunities to admit what he had done, yet he refused to face his own sin. He may have thought that he would not be caught, or perhaps was scared to confess what he had done. Whatever his reasoning, he did not say anything until his name was finally drawn. Covering his actions only led to more sin, until he was past the point of no return.

When Joshua spoke to Achan, he asked him to “give glory to the LORD God of Israel, and make confession to Him.” Achan’s sin affected all of the Israelites, but ultimately it was a sin against God. God’s instructions to His people was clear: they must be holy, because God is holy. Their victories depended on their obedience to God.

Note to teachers: *This passage may bring students to question why Achan’s family was also punished for his sin. If this question comes up, you may want to take a few moments to explain the following. Otherwise, due to the length of the lesson, feel free to omit this portion.*

Although Achan was the one who sinned, his sin affected many. God saw his failure as a national sin—Achan’s sin revealed his indifference to the evil and idolatry of this age at a time when the entire nation had to be committed to holiness during their conquest of the land. The Israelites as a whole needed to take responsibility for any lack of discipline, so when even one person failed, in God’s eyes, it was a collective failure.

Achan’s lack of action is a reminder to us. When we sin, we need to confess what we have done and repent. We cannot be in denial about the fact that God sees all, and that our sins cannot remain hidden. If we fail to confess and repent, then God’s judgment will be even worse when it comes. It takes great courage to confess our sins, but we will find that when we do repent from the depths of our hearts, God is willing to show us His mercy and His grace.

C. Victory over Ai

After removing the sin from their assembly, God once again encouraged Joshua and gave him instructions on how to conquer the city of Ai. Let's read Joshua 8:1–9.

During the battle, Joshua did not draw his hand back until all of the inhabitants of Ai were completely destroyed (Josh 8:18, 26). His actions echo Moses in the battle against the Amalekites, recorded in Exodus 17. Like Moses, Joshua carried out his duty until the very end. He had faithfully picked up the baton that Moses had passed on to him, and as the rightful successor of Moses, God was abiding with Joshua just as He had with Moses.

We can see that removing any sin from their midst made such a huge difference! This time, God's presence is clear (Josh 8:1). The city of Ai was burned and the people completely destroyed, just like Jericho. Moreover, this time God allowed the Israelites to take the spoils from the city for themselves. He did not want His people to leave empty-handed. Through these two battles, they learned an important lesson: God is the one who gives them victory, and He expects them to follow His commands.

1. Victory comes from God

When we examine the battles of Jericho and Ai, we can see that the key to victory was not the Israelites' own strength, but their obedience to God. Jericho was a mighty city, but they were able to defeat it easily with God's help. On the other hand, the city of Ai was much smaller, yet they suffered a crippling defeat at its hands because of Achan's disobedience. Moreover, if Achan had simply waited, he would have been able to rightfully take a share of the spoils from Ai. Instead, his impatience brought about destruction to him and his whole family. This defeat was a clear warning of the importance of following God's instructions and waiting for His timing instead of relying on their own strength.

2. Nothing is hidden from God

Achan's punishment may seem harsh to us, but sin is not a small matter. It is outright rebellion against God. When Saul disobeyed God under the pretense of wanting to offer sacrifice, Samuel reprimanded him with the words, "Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed than the fat of rams" (1 Sam 15:23). Like Saul, we may try to cover our sin, or pretend our actions are not actually against God's will. We may be able to fool others or even ourselves, but we can never fool God. Hiding our sins only obstructs our spiritual walk with God, and can affect others as Achan's did. Therefore, we must be careful. Paul warned us, "Do not be deceived, God is not mocked, for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap" (Gal 6:7).

God is not only all-knowing, but also all-powerful. Since only God has such qualities, we can trust Him to lead us to victory in our spiritual journey to enter into His heavenly kingdom. However, such blessings will only come after we remove any sin from our lives. When we follow Him wholeheartedly, we will experience victory.

Check for Understanding

1. Name three things that can we learn from Achan's sin.

- a. Lust of the eyes: As visual beings, what we see can have a huge impact on our desires.
- b. We cannot hide sin from God: God is able to see and know all that we do.
- c. Our sins affect others: Sin is like yeast—it has a tendency to spread, and its consequences can affect others.

2. What was Achan's second mistake? He failed to come forward and confess his sin.

3. **Aside from Achan’s sin, what were two other reasons the Israelites were defeated?** They were overconfident in their own abilities; they did not inquire of the Lord.
4. **What did Joshua do after their defeat?** He first consulted with God; then under God’s command, he isolated and identified the sin; and lastly, he removed the sin completely from the assembly.
5. **What prerequisites must we follow to achieve victory in our spiritual lives?** We need to remove any sin from our lives and follow God wholeheartedly.

Life Application

1. How Do We Walk?

Achan’s disobedience was a serious sin that had a great impact on the rest of the Israelites. He made this choice because he decided to walk according to the flesh instead of according to the Spirit. Let’s read Romans 8:5–11. Read through the verses and list the differences between those who walk according to the flesh and those who walk according to the Spirit.

Those who walk according to the flesh	Those who walk according to the Spirit
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Set their minds on the things of the flesh</i> - <i>Will be led to death</i> - <i>Become an enemy of God</i> - <i>Are not subject to the law of God</i> - <i>Cannot please God</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Set their minds on the things of the Spirit</i> - <i>Will be led to peace and life</i> - <i>Have God dwelling within them</i> - <i>Belong to God</i>

We can see that walking according to the flesh means acting on our sinful nature and desires, while walking according to the Spirit means denying our sinful nature by relying on the Holy Spirit. There are real consequences to walking according to the flesh. Some of them are more visible, such as when Achan’s sin affected the rest of the Israelites, and other consequences affect our relationship with God, our family members, and even our future. It produces a lifestyle that is displeasing to God, and that ultimately leads to death. On the other hand, walking according to the Spirit gives us peace in our hearts and everlasting life.

Whether we walk according to the Spirit or according to the flesh is a conscious decision that we have to make. Do we decide to submit to our worldly desires, or do we instead submit to God’s teachings? We may find ourselves often struggling to choose between what we desire and what God desires. It is a struggle that we can only overcome with God’s help. To walk in the Spirit, we must rely on the Spirit!

For each of the following scenarios, discuss how each person can walk according to the Spirit instead of the flesh.

- a. *Ben was walking past his teacher’s desk when he spied from the corner of his eye a piece of paper on the floor. He bent to pick it up—only to realize it was the quiz that they would be given later on that day. When he realized this, he hesitated. The teacher was busy with other students at the moment, so she had not noticed him yet. Moreover, he was unsure if he would be able to pass this quiz. Wouldn’t it be okay if he just took a quick peek at the questions? What can you say to Ben in order to encourage him to walk in the Spirit? (2 Cor 8:21; Lk 16:10; 1 Pet 2:12)*
- b. *Jenny was playing music on her phone when she noticed something. Her account, she realized, was subscribed to the music app, even though she didn’t remember adding a subscription. When she checked her account details, she suddenly remembered that several months ago, her mother*

had helped her sign up for a free three-month subscription by adding her credit card information to her account. However, both of them had forgotten to cancel the renewal. Her mother had clearly not noticed the extra charge, however, and Jenny had become accustomed to being able to play and download any music she wanted. Surely it would be okay if she left the subscription running? Even if her mother realized, she could just tell her that she had forgotten. What can you tell Jenny in order to encourage her to walk in the Spirit? (Col 3:9; Prov 10:9; Heb 13:18)

2. Confronting Sin

The first thing Joshua did when they were defeated was to turn to God and address the mistake that had been made. Even if we have gone against God's will, it is important to acknowledge what we have done and take immediate steps to confront our sin. Achan had many opportunities to confess his sin, from the instant he took the items, to the moment where the Israelites were defeated, and even during the process of drawing lots. When his sin was finally revealed, however, it was too late for him to confess.

Are there any sins in your life that you haven't yet confronted? What are some steps that we should take in order to face the sin in our lives?

a. Turn to God

Do you remember what sin is? Like Joshua, the first thing we need to do is turn to God, reflect on ourselves, and ask God to help us to identify any sin in our lives. John wrote, "Whoever commits sin also commits lawlessness, and sin is lawlessness" (1 Jn 3:4). We can only know what sin is when we know God's law. This means having a thorough understanding of His word. When we do, it becomes easier for us to understand how to walk according to the Spirit instead of according to the flesh.

b. Isolate and identify the sin

Take a few minutes to think of any personal behavior that you would like to change because it affects your spiritual life negatively. Do you have any habits that are against God's will? Do you tend to make decisions that you know He would not like? Examples may be the way you spend your time at home, the way you treat your parents, or perhaps a lack of diligence in your school life. Write down two things.

c. Remove the sin completely

The Bible teaches us: "He who covers his sins will not prosper, but whoever confesses and forsakes them will have mercy" (Prov 28:13). True repentance requires a change of heart—it doesn't mean we can just say "sorry" and return to our old ways. It means completely "forsaking" our sin. But it is not easy to change our nature as humans. Confronting our sins requires praying for the power of the Holy Spirit and making proactive decisions that help us to avoid similar situations in the future.

Consider what you wrote: What do you think is the root cause of this behavior? Are there any factors that enable it? For example, if you want to avoid playing too many games, then it would be best to avoid downloading or buying them. For some things, however, the root causes are more difficult to avoid, such as spending too much time on the internet. In this case, can you think of a method that will help you to reduce the time you spend on your computer or on your phone? If you need help, try brainstorming together with the class.

Let's read our memory verse, Romans 6:12–13. "Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body, that you should obey it in its lusts. And do not present your members as instruments of unrighteousness to

sin, but present yourselves to God as being alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God.”

Since we have been saved and have a new life in Christ, we should not let sin continue to rule over our lives. If we do, then we become slaves to our sinful desires, which then rule over us. We need to instead remember that we are instruments and vessels for God’s use, made alive in Christ and freed from our sins. To remain free, we need to confront any sin in our lives and be determined to forsake it entirely instead of allowing our desires to rule our actions. When we do, we will no longer be “instruments of unrighteousness to sin,” but will instead be “instruments of righteousness to God.”

Memory Verse

“Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body, that you should obey it in its lusts. And do not present your members as instruments of unrighteousness to sin, but present yourselves to God as being alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God.” (Romans 6:12–13)

Meaning

See Life Application #2.

Conclusion

From their initial defeat and subsequent victory over Ai, the Israelites were able to learn and witness God’s just and holy nature. He did not allow sin to remain among His people, and He reminded them of the importance of obeying His commandments. If they failed to obey, then God would not be with them. But as long as they chose to follow His commands, He would lead them to victory. We likewise need to remain free of sin in our lives, and instead obey God’s commandments. When we do, we will find that God will always be with us, and He will lead us into victory!

Lesson 10 Homework Assignment Answer Key

1. How do we present ourselves as “instruments of righteousness to God”?
By confronting any sin in our lives and being determined to forsake it entirely instead of allowing our desires to rule our actions.
2. “He who _____ his sins will not _____, but whoever _____ and _____ them will have _____.” (Proverbs 28:13)
covers, prosper, confesses, forsakes, mercy
3. What did Achan’s actions show us about his attitude towards God and sin?
He showed a lack of fear towards God, a lack of sensitivity towards sin, and an indifference to the idolatry and evil of the city. His disobedience showed his preferential treatment towards the objects and idols of this world, rather than towards God.
4. What were two reasons for the Israelites’ defeat at Ai? What can we learn from this incident?
They were overconfident; they did not inquire of the Lord. We can see the importance of relying on God instead of our own strength.
5. Why is it so important that we avoid sin and follow God’s commands?
Sin is not a small matter. It is outright rebellion against God. The blessings that He offers will only come after we remove any sin from our lives. When we follow Him wholeheartedly, we will experience victory.
6. What does it mean to walk according to the Spirit?
It means denying our sinful nature by relying on the Holy Spirit. It means making the conscious decision to follow what God desires, not what we desire.

Junior 1 Year 2 Book 2 Lesson 11
The Conquest of Southern and Northern Canaan
 Passages: Joshua 9–11

Memory Verse

“Some trust in chariots, and some in horses; but we will remember the name of the LORD our God.”
 (Psalm 20:7)

Knowledge of God’s Will [God’s Word]	Knowledge of God [God’s Divine Nature]	Good Works [Behavior]
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. God fought for His people so that they could receive the land of promise. 2. The Israelites’ obedience was an important part of their victories. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. God is our sovereign Lord. 2. God’s sovereignty is shown in His power and in His judgment. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. When we confront obstacles to our faith with God’s help, He will give us victory. 2. To achieve this victory, we must train ourselves to rely on God instead of “chariots” and “horses.”

Overview

Events and Spiritual Teachings

- A. The Gibeonites’ Deception (Josh 9)
- B. God Fights for Israel (Josh 11–12)
- C. The Sovereignty of God

Life Application: Conquering Our Battles with Faith

Memory Verse

Conclusion: With God by their side, the Israelites were able to overcome their enemies and finally conquer the promised land. Through their battles, we can learn to trust God in the same way, and He will give us victory in our spiritual journey to heaven.

Introduction

After the battles of Jericho and Ai, there were still many areas to be conquered. News of the Israelites' victories had also spread to the people dwelling in the land. As a result, their enemies began to ally with one another to defend themselves. But no matter who their opponents were, God led the Israelites to victory. Today, we'll be examining how the Israelites were able to conquer the southern and northern territories of Canaan under God's guidance.

A. The Gibeonites' Deception (Josh 9)

Let's read Joshua 9:1–27. The Israelites were skeptical at first, but eventually fell for the Gibeonites' trickery and made a covenant not to kill them. How did the Israelites allow themselves to be deceived?

1. They were blinded by praise (v. 8)

It is natural for us to feel flattered when we are complimented, which makes it easy for us to fall into the trap of seeking man's approval rather than God's. There are many other examples in the Bible of those who were blinded by praise, or who desired to receive glory from man instead of give glory to God. But the Bible teaches us that "When pride comes, then comes shame; but with the humble is wisdom" (Prov 11:2; cf. Prov 16:18). By remaining humble, we avoid being blinded by our own prideful nature, or by flattery that disguises the truth. Our eyesight remains clear.

2. They were deceived by what they saw on the surface (vv. 12–13)

Paul warns, "Beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles of the world, and not according to Christ" (Col 2:8). Paul and other apostles often warned the believers about the deceptions of false prophets (2 Tim 3:13; 1 Jn 4:1), for humans are easily swayed by what we see and hear. God sees a man's innermost thoughts, but we are unable to look beyond the surface. We are limited as human beings and being unable to see everything makes it easy for us to be deceived. To avoid this, it is important that we learn to slow down, reign in our words or our actions, and avoid making reckless decisions. As King Solomon wrote, "Do not be rash with your mouth, and let not your heart utter anything hastily before God" (Eccl 5:2).

3. They failed to inquire of God (v. 14)

The biggest mistake the Israelites made, of course, was failing to consult God. We do not know why they chose not to consult God. It is possible that they had grown confident in their own abilities, so they believed it would be alright to make their own decision. However, God wants us to turn to Him for everything, big or small. And we should learn to do so, not only because He is omniscient and knows what we do not, but also because He is our Father in heaven, and it is important that we humbly put His will above our own.

From this incident, we can see the importance of always inquiring of the Lord before making any decisions. It is easy for us to forget God's omnipotence and instead rely on our own senses or desires. As a result, there may be times when we are deceived by what we are able to see or hear, or when we fail to make a sound judgment because we have been blinded by our own desires and fail to ask God first. For example, our friends may lead us into doing things that are against God's will, or we may find ourselves desiring material possessions because all our friends have them. But instead of focusing on

others' actions and the world around us, we should keep our eyesight clear by relying on God's omniscience.

B. God Fights for Israel (Josh 11–12)

1. The Battle Against the Amorite Kings

The Amorites were descended from Canaan, the son of Ham, who is the son of Noah (Gen 10:1, 6, 15–16). They had already clashed once with the Israelites, driving them from the land (Num 13:27–29). Let's read Numbers 14:40–45. The Israelites had refused to enter the land of Canaan because of their fear, so God punished them to wander in the wilderness until the current generation passed away. Hearing this, the Israelites begged for forgiveness and tried to enter Canaan on their own. However, as Moses warned them, "For the Amalekites and the Canaanites are there before you, and you shall fall by the sword; because you have turned away from the LORD, the LORD will not be with you" (v. 43). As a result, "the Amorites who dwelt in that mountain [...] drove [the Israelites] back from Seir to Hormah" (Deut 1:44).

After years of wandering in the wilderness, it was now time for them to face what the previous generation had feared. Let's read Joshua 10:1–14. This battle was different from their first fight against the Amorites. This time, they were following God's will. Joshua and the Israelites understood that God was on their side, fighting for them.

- a. He assured the Israelites of His presence (vv. 7–8):** Prior to the battle, God reassured the Israelites and proclaimed that He was fighting for them. Moses understood the true value of His presence, declaring to God, "If Your Presence does not go with us, do not bring us up from here. For how then will it be known that Your people and I have found grace in Your sight, except You go with us?" (Ex 33:15–16).
- b. He routed their enemies (vv. 10–11):** During the battle, it was God who routed the Israelites' enemies, to the point that more died by God's hand than by theirs. The Israelites learned, repeatedly, that God's power could overcome any of their enemies. Military strength, knowledge, or strategy didn't matter for either the Israelites or their enemies. All that mattered was whether God was fighting for His people.
- c. He listened to Joshua's prayer (vv. 11–14):** Joshua understood that God was not only able to help them in their time of need, but that He could also make the impossible, possible. Although Joshua was human as we are, God was willing to listen to his request because of his faith and trust. When fleeing from the Egyptians, Moses reassured the Israelites by proclaiming, "The LORD will fight for you; you need only to be still" (Ex 14:14 NIV). God is willing to fight for us, but we need to have faith in His power.

At the end of the battle, Joshua and the Israelites were able to completely destroy the armies of the Amorites and take the city of Makkedah. The execution of the five kings was evidence of what the Lord would do to all of their enemies (Josh 10:24–25; Ps 110:1). Their victory came not from their own military power, but from their trust and belief in the Lord.

2. Conquering Southern and Northern Canaan

After the battle against the five Amorite kings, Joshua led the Israelites south and conquered the cities there: Libnah, Lachish, Eglon, Hebron, and Debir (Josh 10:40–42). (*Teachers: See Figure 01: Map of Central and Southern Conquests.*) After destroying these cities, they returned to Gilgal (Josh 10:43) before traveling north. However, they faced an obstacle when they set their sight

on the northern cities. Let's read Joshua 11:1–9. The northern armies of Canaan banded together to defend themselves against the Israelites. But God reassured Joshua, commanding him not to be afraid, and to “hamstring their horses and burn their chariots with fire” (v. 6).

From a strategic standpoint, this is an unusual command—at the time, horses and chariots were the ultimate advantage on the battlefield. To hamstringing the horses and burn the chariots meant that God did not want His people to take them and thus rely on them. He wanted them to instead continue to trust in God's power. Ultimately, because they followed God's command, they were able to achieve victory and destroy their enemies despite the northern Canaanites' superior forces. (*Teachers: See Figure 02: Map of Northern Conquests.*)

3. Defeating the Anakim

Lastly, Joshua was able to eliminate all of the Anakim from the land of Canaan (Josh 11:21). The Anakim were known as “giants” and excelled in battle; they were the same people who had previously driven the Israelites out of Canaan (Num 14:40–45). This time, however, the Israelites had already witnessed God's almighty power. They were unafraid, knowing that no matter who their enemy was, as long as God was on their side, they would be victorious.

The Bible records that they conquered thirty-one kings (Josh 12:24). Although some Canaanites still dwelt in the land, most of them had been conquered. The process took many years, but they were eventually able to take the land, find rest from war and, in the course of time, experience God's deliverance.

C. The Sovereignty of God

Although they had to face many different enemies, the Bible's records of the Israelites' battles against the Canaanites all follow a similar pattern. The Israelites would battle against a city, which the Lord delivered into their hands. This generation of Israelites did not necessarily witness the parting of the Red Sea, or perhaps they were quite young when it occurred. But through these events, they witnessed with their own eyes God's sovereignty, which can be seen clearly in several characteristics.

1. God Is Holy

He also commanded His people to destroy all the inhabitants of the cities – none were to be left alive (Josh 10:28, 30, 32–33, 35, 37, 39–40; 11:11–12, 19–20). Why did God give them this instruction? It may seem cruel that God wanted them to eliminate their enemies, but there are reasons for this command.

a. God was using His people to enact His judgment upon the wicked

The Canaanites were evil and wicked in God's eyes (Deut 9:5). He had given them time to repent, but they continued in their ways (Gen 15:16). To this end, He used the Israelites to enact His will.

b. God wanted His people to remove any Canaanite influences

There were many ways in which the Canaanites influenced the Israelites, including their cultural and religious practices. If Gentiles remained in the land, the Israelites would adopt their practices (Deut 7:3–4), and if they intermarried, they would be influenced by the Canaanites to worship other gods (Ex 20:3). As His people, the Israelites needed to remain holy, because God is holy.

2. God's Power

While conquering Canaan, God's power was consistently revealed, again and again. The

Canaanites had great military strength, but this meant nothing in the face of God's will and power. Let's read Psalm 56:3–4. "Whenever I am afraid, I will trust in You. [...] In God I have put my trust; I will not fear. What can flesh do to me?" The Bible also says, "Say to those who are fearful-hearted, 'Be strong, do not fear! Behold, your God will come with vengeance, with the recompense of God; He will come and save you'" (Isa 35:4; cf. Jn 14:27).

3. God Protects the Faithful

God was the commander-in-chief for His people. He fought for His people and, as long as they followed His commands, He gave them success. The only time they were defeated was when they disobeyed God's orders. When we fully understand God's judgment and power, it is more natural for us to trust Him, and to choose His will over our own. This obedience should not only come out of fear of His judgment, but also from the knowledge that He has the power to grant us victory in any battle that we may face.

Do you have family members who persecute you for your faith? Or do you perhaps struggle with some sort of addiction? All of us face different types of obstacles, whether physical, emotional, or spiritual. Some of struggle with health issues or feel overwhelming anxiety. But when we respond to God's sovereignty and cooperate with His commands, He will help us to overcome any spiritual battles.

The conquest of the land of Canaan ended on a victorious note, and the Israelites were finally able to rest in the land that God had promised the patriarchs so long ago (Josh 21:43–45). This same rest is a foreshadowing of the perfect rest that we will experience in heaven (Heb 4:5–11). To enter into this rest, we must do as the Israelites did—remember God's sovereignty, follow His commands, and trust in His will. When we diligently cooperate with God, we will achieve the same victory that the Israelites experienced!

Check for Understanding

1. **Why did the Israelites fall for the Gibeonites' deception?** They believed what they saw on the surface; they were blinded by praise; they failed to inquire of God.
2. **How can we avoid falling into similar deceptions?** Instead of focusing on others' actions and the world around us, we should keep our eyesight clear by relying on God's omniscience.
3. **How did God battle for the Israelites?** He assured them of His presence; He routed their enemies; He listened to Joshua's prayer.
4. **Why did God command the Israelites to hamstring the horses and destroy the chariots?** God did not want His people to take them and thus rely on them. He wanted them to instead continue to trust in God's power.
5. **What were two reasons for God's command for the Israelites to destroy their enemies?** God was using His people to enact His judgment upon the wicked; He wanted His people to remove any worldly influences.

Life Application

Conquering Our Battles with Faith

Hear, O Israel: You are to cross over the Jordan today, and go in to dispossess nations greater and mightier than yourself, cities great and fortified up to heaven, a people great and tall, the descendants of the Anakim, whom you know, and of whom you heard it said, "Who can stand before the descendants of Anak?" Therefore understand today that the Lord your God is He who

goes over before you as a consuming fire. He will destroy them and bring them down before you; so you shall drive them out and destroy them quickly, as the LORD has said to you.

(Deut 9:1–3)

Before the Israelites could inhabit the promised land, they needed to face several challenges first. The challenges that we face may not be nine-foot-tall giants, but they can still leave us feeling restless or fearful. However, we do not need to face them alone. God has promised that He will be with us and will give us the strength to achieve victory over any challenges. Through the many battles that Joshua and the Israelites fought, the foundation of their victory was always their trust in God’s almighty power and obedience to His commands. What are some of the challenges or battles that we face?

- Take a few moments and write down what “battles” you are currently fighting in your spiritual life. Do you have any sins that you struggle to remove from your life? Or are you burdened with fears or anxieties that interfere with your faith? (*Teachers: This activity can be done as a group or individually. Examples may be: fear, worry, guilt, doubt, anger, procrastination.*)

Although there could be many things holding us back from leading a victorious life of faith, there is only one solution that allows us to overcome such challenges. Let’s read Psalm 20:7–8. “Some trust in chariots, and some in horses; but we will remember the name of the LORD our God. They have bowed down and fallen; but we have risen and stand upright.”

We learned earlier that chariots and horses offered an incredible advantage on the battlefield, yet God commanded His people to hamstring the horses and burn the chariots so that they wouldn’t be able to take and use them. In the same way, we shouldn’t rely on any worldly or human strength. Just as God fought for His people, He also fights for us. But to be victorious requires that we first obey His instructions and trust Him completely. There may be times when we say that we trust in God, but when faced with difficulties, instead of turning to Him, we rely instead on our own methods or on the advice of our peers.

- Consider the obstacles that you are trying to overcome. When facing these obstacles, what are the “chariots” or the “horses” that you tend to rely on? Are there things or people that you turn to first instead of following God’s will? (*Teachers: As before, this activity can be done as a group or individually.*)
- For example, if you are struggling with worry, perhaps the only way you have learned to manage your anxieties is through escapism using games or books without learning to trust in God’s care. If you are battling a sickness, perhaps you rely entirely on your medication without turning to prayer, or if you are struggling with a bad habit, you try to break it with your own strength, using methods suggested by the internet or by friends, without asking God for help.

Although it is certainly possible to solve some problems through worldly means, in the end, these “chariots” and “horses” are imperfect solutions. They cannot guarantee that you will overcome any obstacles in your life. The only way to do overcome these obstacles is to bring ourselves before the Lord, choose to obey His instructions, and trust in His almighty power. Only then are we able to experience how God can transform our lives.

Let’s now come up with a way to overcome our spiritual battles. Instead of relying on chariots or horses, how can we train ourselves to rely on God instead?

1. **Select one of the things in your life that you want to overcome, and come up with an action plan: How can you conquer this with God’s help?** For example, if you struggle with spending

too much time on the internet, perhaps you can set aside time for a weekly Bible study with a fellow student to help you limit your time on the internet and to train you to focus on God instead.

(Teachers: Question #6 in the homework assignment refers to this portion of the Life Application.)

2. **Select one to three verses in the Bible that can serve as an encouragement and reminder for you to overcome these challenges.** Using the same example, a few verses you can pick from may be: Mt 6:6, 24; Ps 119:11; 63:6–8; Jas 4:8. *(Teachers: If they are having trouble finding verses, you can use a topical concordance to help the students search.)*

Memory Verse

“Some trust in chariots, and some in horses; but we will remember the name of the LORD our God.”
(Psalm 20:7)

Meaning

1. This verse serves to encourage and remind us that our victory does not come from the things of this world, but from God. Chariots can represent technology or other man-made inventions, and horses can represent worldly strength. Both can fail us because they are limited; they cannot guarantee any success in our spiritual journey.
2. Instead of placing our trust in the things of this world, we should always remember to place our trust in God. He is able to help and comfort us better than anything in this world, and He has promised that when we go to Him, He will help us!

Conclusion

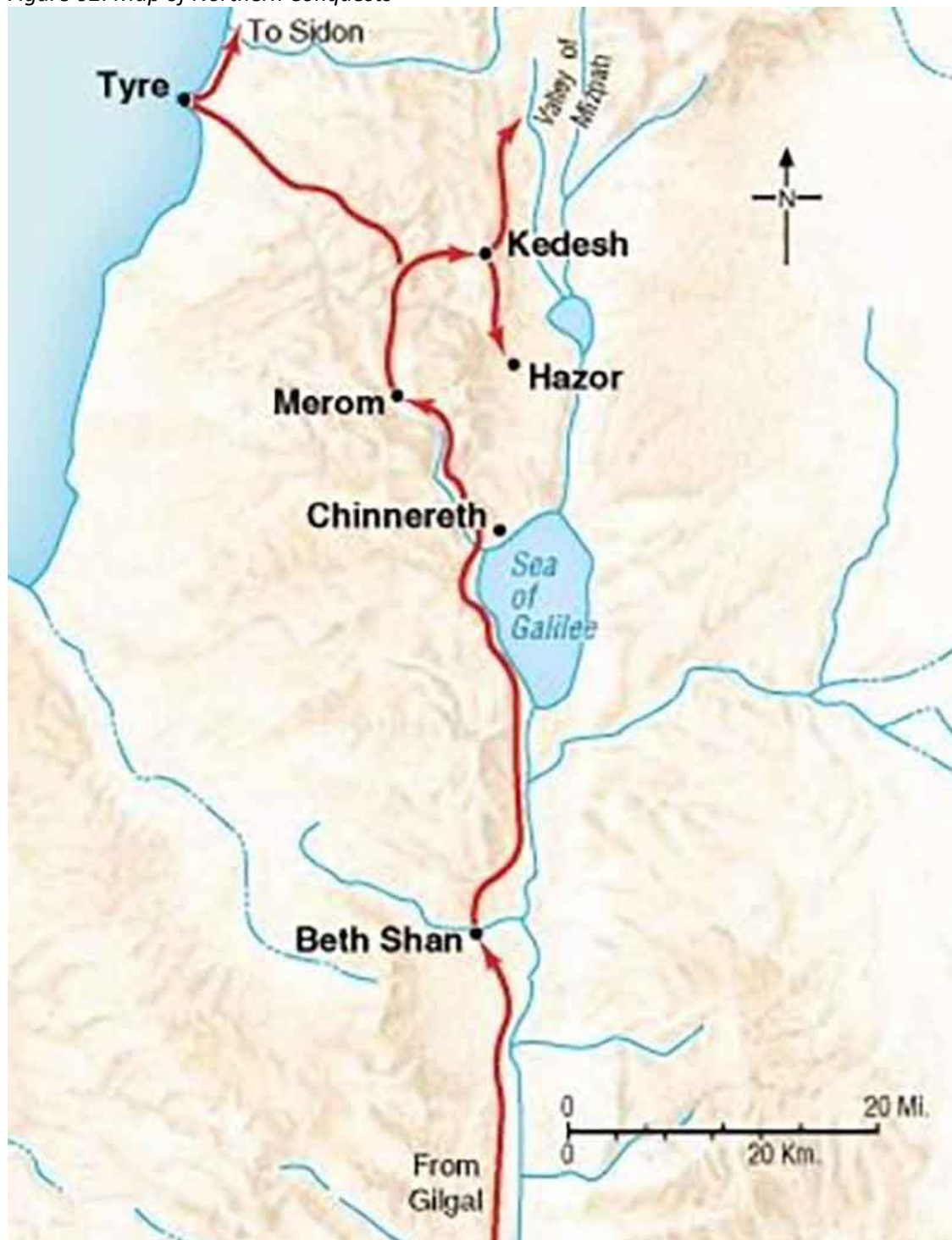
With God by their side, the Israelites were able to overcome their enemies and finally conquer the promised land. This process took many years, but they were faithful to the Lord’s commands and trusted in His power. As a result, God delivered their enemies into their hands. Through their battles, we can learn to trust God in the same way, and He will give us victory in our spiritual journey to heaven. It is inevitable that we will encounter many tribulations, but when we abide in God’s commands, we will find that He is also abiding with us (Acts 14:22). When we face difficulties, He is there to help us overcome.

Figure 01: Map of Central and Southern Conquests¹



¹ "Joshua, The Conquest of Canaan Central & Southern Campaigns," iBible Maps: 2021, accessed June 21st, 2021, <https://ibiblemaps.com/joshua-central/>.

Figure 02: Map of Northern Conquests²



² "Joshua, Conquest of Canaan, Northern Campaign," iBible Maps: 2021, accessed Jun 21st, 2021, <https://ibiblemaps.com/joshua-northern-campaign/>.

Lesson 11 Homework Assignment Answer Key

1. What do horses and chariots represent today? Why should we avoid relying on them?
Chariots can represent technology or man-made inventions, and horses can represent worldly strength. Both can fail us because they are limited, but God is able to help and comfort us better than anything in this world.
2. “And the LORD said to Joshua, “Do not _____ them, for I have _____ them into your _____; not a man of them shall _____ before you.” (Joshua 10:8)
fear, delivered, hand, stand
3. How did the Israelites allow themselves to be deceived? Give three reasons.
They believed what they saw on the surface; they were blinded by praise; they failed to inquire of God.
4. Why was the Israelites’ battle against the Amorite kings different from when they had previously fought?
The first time, the Israelites had tried to enter Canaan on their own, but as Moses warned them, the Lord was not with them. This time, however, they knew it was different—they were following God’s will, and He was on their side, fighting for them.
5. What must we do to experience rest in heaven, just as the Israelites were able to rest in the promised land?
We must do as the Israelites did—remember God’s sovereignty, follow His commands, and trust in His will. When we diligently cooperate with God, we will achieve the same victory that the Israelites experienced!
6. During class, we came up with an action plan to tackle something that we want to overcome. What was your action plan? Were you able to begin carrying it out this week? Why or why not?
Personal answers.

Memory Verse

“So the LORD gave to Israel all the land of which He had sworn to give to their fathers, and they took possession of it and dwelt in it.” (Joshua 21:43)

Knowledge of God’s Will [God’s Word]	Knowledge of God [God’s Divine Nature]	Good Works [Behavior]
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Learn the spiritual significance of the division of the Promised Land. 2. Understand how God Himself is our city of refuge. 3. Learn the key messages from Joshua’s farewell, especially regarding God’s presence, power, and promises. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. God is faithful. 2. God is just. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To receive our spiritual inheritance, we must conquer our spiritual enemies. 2. We must firm up our faith to avoid being influenced by the world.

Overview

Events and Spiritual Teachings

- A. Division of the Land
- B. The Cities of Levites
- C. Joshua’s Farewell and Death

Life Application

1. Conquering Our Spiritual Enemies
2. Firming Up Our Faith in God

Memory Verse

Conclusion: We must put in effort to receive our spiritual inheritance, just as God wanted the Israelites to go in and conquer the enemies in the promised land. God will be there fighting for us, so we must continue to have faith in Him and trust that He will help us to conquer any spiritual enemy.

Introduction

After many years of battling, Joshua and the Israelites were able to conquer a great portion of the land of Canaan. However, Joshua was getting old (Josh 13:1–7), so God commanded him to divide the land among the Israelites by drawing lots. It is important to remember that although they began to settle throughout it, enemies still dwelt in the land. After it was divided, each tribe was still expected to conquer the remaining enemies. Today, we'll be examining the division of the land in more detail to understand God's faithfulness, and to learn what we need to do to receive the inheritance promised to us.

A. Division of the Land

After they conquered much of the land, it was divided by drawing lots (Josh 14:2). The Hebrew word for "lot," *gôrāl*, comes from a root word that means, "rough (as stone)."¹ We don't know exactly what the process of drawing lots was like, but from the etymology of the word, historians have thought of it as throwing sticks or stones with markings on them. These markings would then be interpreted to determine the will of God. The process may sound like chance, but it was used frequently throughout the Old Testament to show God's decision or judgment, such as when they drew lots to discover Achan's sin. Let's go over the division of the land among the Israelites, and the significance of its division.

See Figure 01: Division of the Promised Land (Bible Journey). Note that Figure 02: Division of the Promised Land (Library of Congress) offers a more detailed view, although due to its size, you may want to access the image on the original site.

1. East of the Jordan River

There were two and a half tribes that were given land east of the Jordan River: Reuben, Gad, and half of Manasseh. Although this land was not a part of the land promised by God (Num 24:1–12), the tribes saw that the land was good, so they had asked Moses to give it to them as their inheritance. Moses granted their request (Josh 13:8, 15, 24, 29), under the condition that they help the other tribes conquer the land.

There are no shortcuts

Although the land was well-watered and spacious, the land to the east also lacked the defense of the Jordan River. As a result, the tribes who dwelt there were the first tribes to be taken by Assyria during the fall of the Northern Kingdom of Israel. Their choice to take the easy route only resulted in a quicker downfall. Although we often want to choose the easy route in our lives, such compromises often have negative consequences in our faith. Decisions that seem insignificant at first will, over time, make us spiritually vulnerable to sin.

2. West of the Jordan River

While the land east of the Jordan river had already been granted by request, the land west of the river was instead divided by lots. Through this, they were remarkably given land according to their size and need, showing God's hand in their drawing of lots.

Fight to receive our inheritance

Although the lands were assigned to each tribe, they still needed to conquer and drive out their

¹ *Blue Letter Bible*, s.v. "gôrāl," accessed October, 2021, <https://www.blueletterbible.org/lexicon/h1486/nkjv/wlc/0-1/>.

enemies still dwelling there. Not only were they to drive out anyone still dwelling in their assigned lands, but each tribe also had to work to receive any land beyond their allotment. The tribe of Dan expanded their territory in this way (Josh 19:47), and when the people of Ephraim and Manasseh requested more land, Joshua commanded them to take it for themselves. Let's read Joshua 17:14–18.

From the moment they crossed the Jordan River, we can see that God required His people to put forth their own effort. He did not simply give the Israelites the land, but instead promised to drive out their enemies with them (Josh 13:6). Although God has already promised us our spiritual inheritance, we must also do our part to receive it. We have received the true gospel and a place in His heavenly kingdom. But to receive this promise, we need to fight a spiritual battle. Like the Israelites, we must drive out any sin from our lives and stand firm against the negative influences of this world. This may seem an impossible task at times, but just as the Lord promised victory for the Israelites, He will also help us to attain victory, as long as we keep Him by our side.

3. The Cities of the Levites

The Levites did not receive an inheritance of land like the other tribes. The Bible states many times that “the tribe of Levi Moses had given no inheritance; the LORD God of Israel was their inheritance, as He had said to them” (Josh 13:33). Instead, they were given cities throughout the land of Canaan for them to dwell in, and they received a portion of the offerings that the other tribes gave to God. Although they did not receive land to work or call their own, their abundance would come from God, as long as they carried out their duties of pastoring the people. In all, they received forty-eight cities to dwell in throughout Israel. Among these cities were what God named “cities of refuge.”

God is our inheritance

The Bible states that we are the new priesthood (1 Pet 2:9; Rev 1:6; Tit 2:14), and like the Levites, our inheritance is in the Lord. Let's read Acts 20:32. “So now, brethren, I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified.”

B. Cities of Refuge

Let's read Joshua 20. Even before they entered the promised land, God had given Moses directions regarding the cities of refuge (Num 35:6). They were clearly an important aspect of Israel that God wanted to put into place. When they finally divided the land, Joshua and the Israelites followed God's instructions and, of the forty-eight cities given to the Levites, designated six as cities of refuge.

1. The Old Testament Cities of Refuge

a. Location

The cities of refuge were spread throughout the land of Canaan, with three located on the east of the Jordan River and three on the west.

City	Meaning	Teaching
Kedesh (in Galilee)	“Holy”	God is holy, and we also need to be holy.
Shechem	“Shoulders”	Jesus Christ carries our burdens and sins on His shoulders.
Hebron	“United”	Salvation allows us to be united to God once again.
Bezer	“Strength”	Jesus Christ is strong, and we can rely on Him.

Ramoth	“Raised up”	Jesus Christ is raised up, and He is the One on high.
Golan	“Joy”	In Jesus Christ, we are able to find true joy.

b. Purpose

The cities served as a refuge for those who had accidentally or unintentionally killed someone (Num 36:22–25; Josh 20:3–5; Deut 19:3–5). However, any who murdered another intentionally were not permitted to enter (Deut 19:11–13). They were not only for the Israelites, but also served as refuge for any aliens or foreigners residing among them (Num 35:14–15; Josh 20:9).

c. A path free of obstacles

The Lord commanded the Israelites to ensure that the paths to the cities of refuge were to be free of obstacles (Deut 19:3, 6), so that any who were trying to make their way there would not be hindered and possibly caught.

d. Death of the high priest

Any who took shelter in these cities had to remain within its walls until the death of the current high priest. Only then was he free to return home (Josh 20:6; Num 35:25, 28).

2. The New Testament City of Refuge²

The Old Testament laws were a shadow of the good things to come, and the cities of refuge were no different (Heb 10:1). In the Old Testament, they were for the purpose of protecting one’s physical life. But like other Mosaic laws, they were an incomplete and temporary version of what was to come, because they could not save what was most important: our spiritual lives. This is why Jesus Christ was necessary. All of us are born into sin (Rom 3:23), and “the wages of sin is death” (Rom 6:23). So, God sent Jesus Christ to save us from perishing (2 Pet 3:9). He made atonement for our sins, and through His blood, gave us true refuge (Heb 6:18).

a. The refuge of the true church

We need to find refuge in the body of Christ, which is the true church (Eph 1:23), which was purchased with the blood of Jesus (Acts 17:28) to save the ignorant from death (Eph 4:17–18). When we recognize Jesus as our Savior, we flee to the church, our refuge. After belief, “through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit” (Tit 3:5), our sins are washed away. Without this washing of regeneration, we will experience eternal death, so it is important that we enter into this refuge.

b. A path free of obstacles

The gates to the cities of refuge in the Old Testament were always open to provide refuge for anyone who killed his neighbor unintentionally. What does this mean for us today? The Bible tells us that the church is “called Sought Out, A City Not Forsaken” (Isa 62:11–12). It is important to teach unbelievers the power and consequence of sin, so that they can understand the need to come to church and receive redemption. The refuge of the true church is the only place where we can escape death and receive a heavenly inheritance (Gal 3:26–29).

c. Jesus Christ, our eternal High Priest

The Levitical priesthood was upheld by generations of successors who had to continually offer sacrifices. But our new High Priest, Jesus Christ, only had to make one sacrifice (Heb 3:1; 9:11–14). He offered Himself once for all, bore the sins of mankind, and shed His blood so that with His death, He could free us from sin (Heb 2:14–15). Unlike the Levites, however,

² If you would like additional details regarding these teachings, please see: <https://joy.org.tw/goodnews.asp?num=882> (Chinese only).

He is a “priest forever” (Heb 7:21) who never dies. Because of this, “He is also able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them” (Heb 7:25). As our great High Priest and intercessor, He is now our city of refuge, allowing us to “come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need” (Heb 4:16).

The cities of refuge established in the Old Testament are just a shadow of the refuge in the New Testament: the true church, which is the body of Christ. Through His saving grace, the Lord redeems anyone who enters the church with faith and saves them from death.

C. Joshua’s Farewell and Death

After dividing the land, the Lord gave them rest and none of their enemies were able to stand against them (Josh 21:43–45). All of the things that God had promised came to pass, and when Joshua advanced in age, he called all of the Israelites to him for a last farewell message. Let’s read Joshua 23:3–13. There are three key messages that Joshua conveyed in this passage:

1. Keep God’s laws and commandments

“Therefore be very courageous to keep and to do all that is written in the Book of the Law of Moses, lest you turn aside from it to the right hand or to the left[.]” (Josh 23:6)

Joshua wanted the Israelites to remember to keep God’s laws and commandments. This included the rejection of idol-worshipping and avoiding intermarriage with Canaanites still living among them. Joshua understood that if they were to intermarry, the Israelites would be influenced by Canaanite culture and religious practices.

2. Their success was from God

“For the LORD has driven out from before you great and strong nations; [...] for the LORD your God is He who fights for you, as He promised you.” (Josh 23:9–10)

Like his predecessor, Joshua had a thorough understanding of the reason they were able to receive the land. It was not their own abilities that had led them to this point. This success came under the condition that the Israelites study His law and obey His commands with strength and courage (Josh 1:7–9). God had led them to victory over their enemies and had fulfilled His promise to give them the promised land as their inheritance because they followed these requirements. It was not their own strength but God’s power that had given them success.

3. Do not cling to the remnants

“But [the Canaanites] shall be snares and traps to you, and scourges on your sides and thorns in your eyes [.]” (Josh 23:13)

Joshua was aware of the potential pitfalls that Canaanite culture presented to the Israelites. More importantly, he understood the consequences that they would face if they allowed themselves to be influenced. If they instead “served other gods, and bowed down to them,” (Josh 23:16) and “[clung] to the remnants of these nations” (Josh 23:12), God would no longer drive out their enemies. They would instead perish, and God’s promises would be taken from them. The matter was serious enough that Joshua’s very last words were a warning of what would happen if they were to transgress against the covenant of God (Josh 23:16; 24:20, 27).

After his final warning, Joshua died at the age of 110, and he was buried in the land that had been given to him, at Timnath Serah, among the mountains of Ephraim. During his lifetime, the Israelites continued to worship and serve God, a testament to the respect that they held towards him.

Check for Understanding

- 1. What key lessons can we learn from the division of the land?**
 - a. There are no shortcuts – Compromises often have negative consequences in our faith, and decisions that seem insignificant at first will, over time, make us spiritually vulnerable to sin.
 - b. Fight to receive our inheritance – God required His people to put forth their own effort, and we must also do our part to receive our inheritance.
 - c. God is our inheritance – We are the new high priests, and like the Levites, our inheritance is in the Lord.
- 2. What was the purpose of the cities of refuge, and who was permitted to take refuge?** They served as a refuge for those who had accidentally or unintentionally killed someone. They served as refuge not just for the Israelites, but also for any aliens or foreigners residing among them.
- 3. In what way is the True Jesus Church the New Testament “city of refuge”?** The body of Christ is the true church, purchased with the blood of Jesus to save the ignorant from death. When we recognize Jesus as our Savior, we flee to the church, our refuge. After belief, our sins are washed away, and we are saved from death.
- 4. Why was Joshua so concerned about the influence of the Canaanites upon the Israelites?** He understood the consequences that they would face if they allowed themselves to be influenced. If they failed to keep God’s commandments and instead “[clung] to the remnants of these nations,” God would no longer drive out their enemies, and they would instead perish.

Life Application

1. Conquering Our Spiritual Enemies

As children of God, we know that there is a spiritual inheritance waiting for us in heaven. This inheritance is eternal life and a portion in the kingdom of God. But to receive it, we must first conquer the spiritual enemies that we face in our life on this earth. Who or what are these spiritual enemies that we face? Look up the following verses and write down the enemy that the Bible warns us of.

- 1 Peter 5:8 – *The Devil*
- Colossians 1:21 – *Evil thoughts*
- 1 John 2:16 – *Physical desires (lust of the flesh, lust of the eyes, and the pride of life)*

From these verses, we can see that the spiritual enemies we battle reside within ourselves. Take a moment to think of two or three “enemies” that you face and share them with the class. For example, are you always looking at your cell phone? Do you prioritize social media to the point of neglecting your studies or family? Do you use crude language or dress provocatively in order to “fit in” or because it makes you feel good? (*Allow students to share and discuss. Examples may be: laziness, material wealth, anxiety, peer pressure, lustful thoughts, love of games, social media “likes,” popularity, etc.*)

There may be many things that we are currently battling, and many of them are challenging, especially because we often don’t feel a need to change any bad habits, or because we lack the strength to overcome them on our own. Read 1 John 5:4. “For whatever is born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith.” Jesus Christ has promised to help us in any challenges that we face, but we must be willing to change ourselves first.

Consider the spiritual battles that were shared before. What prevents us from changing these habits or thoughts? Why is it so difficult to pull ourselves away from these enemies? Try to discover the root cause, and then discuss ways to address these causes. How can we face these battles? What kind of steps can we take?

2. Firming Up Our Faith in God

Our faith in Jesus Christ enables us to overcome the world and any spiritual enemies that we may encounter in our lives. When we truly believe in Jesus Christ and rely on His power, then we have the key to be victorious over our spiritual enemies. Joshua knew that to keep their faith, the Israelites had to: (1) Keep God's commands; (2) Remember God's providence and power; and (3) Break away from sin by choosing not to "cling" to any remnants of sin.

From these, we can see that faith requires maintenance, upkeep, and active persistence. Joshua understood that the Israelites' faith would waver if they allowed themselves to be influenced by Canaanite culture, and they would eventually fall away. In the same way, when we are surrounded by worldly values, it is often difficult for us to identify negative influences on our spiritual lives.

What worldly values differ greatly from God's values? For example, dating even from a young age is such a common thing that no one thinks twice about it. Even many young members fall into the mentality that dating is okay as long as it doesn't go "too far." However, too often this compromise leads these young members to commit sexual immorality when they are caught up in the heat or impulse of the moment.

In groups or as a class, brainstorm topics or subjects that may influence the way you think, or that are contrary to the teachings of the Bible. Once you have collected a list, write them down in your notebook and rate or rank them according to how prone you are to each. *(Allow students to brainstorm. Examples may be: dating, sexual interactions, certain speech or behavior, manner of dress, family values, divorce, gender, orientation, etc. Try to draw out topics that you know are relevant to the individual students.)*

To counter these influences, it is important to take steps to defend ourselves. To do so, we must:

- a. Equip ourselves with the word of God by making sure we are reading the Bible daily and meditating on His word.
- b. Fill ourselves with the Holy Spirit by praying every day.
- c. Learn ways to calm our hearts when we are feeling negative emotions, such as memorizing verses or hymns.
- d. Attend weekly services and Bible studies to root ourselves further in the truth and deepen our understanding of and relationship with God.

Although we may do these things already, it is important for us to always remind ourselves of how important these actions are. Over time, they are bound to feel more like a routine than an intentional action, so it is important that we continue to find ways to renew ourselves in the Spirit and in God's word without falling into a lull in our faith. Instead of doing these simply out of habit, remember that these are ways to equip ourselves so that we can overcome our spiritual enemies.

Memory Verse

"So the LORD gave to Israel all the land of which He had sworn to give to their fathers, and they took possession of it and dwelt in it." (Joshua 21:43)

Meaning

1. From this verse, we can see that there are two parts in receiving the land. First, the Lord was the one who gave it to them to dwell in. He had promised this land, and He was faithful to fulfill this promise. Second, they had to go into the land and possess it by driving out their enemies.
2. Today, we have also been given an inheritance in heaven. This is God's promise, but we must strive to continue keeping His commandments so that we are able to receive it.

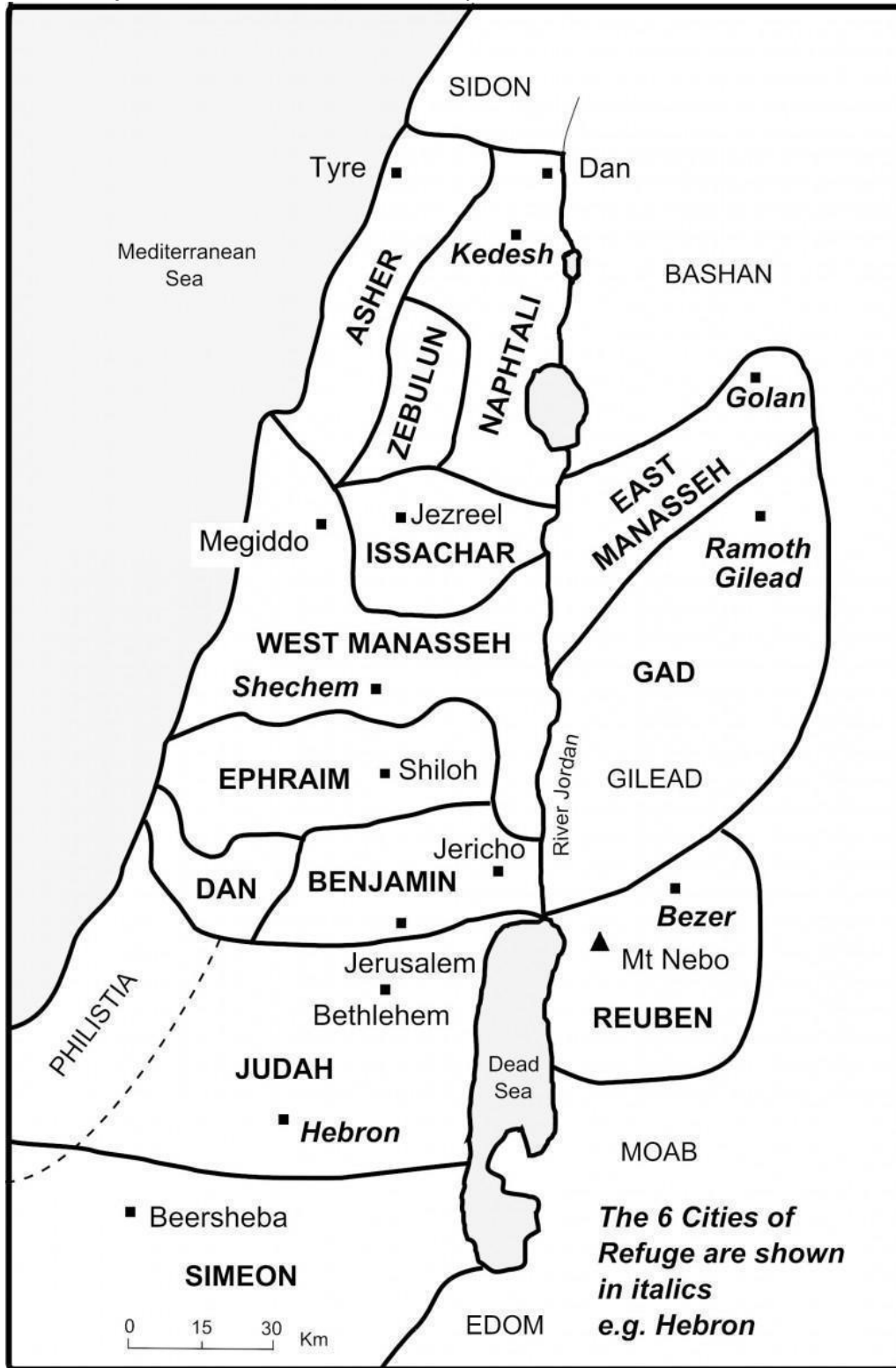
Conclusion

Though we are blessed because our spiritual inheritance was given to us freely by the mercy of God, it is important that we must put in effort to take it for ourselves, just as God wanted the Israelites to go in and conquer the enemies that were dwelling in the promised land. Lastly, it is important to remember that we are not alone in this fight. God will be there fighting for us, as long as we continue to have faith in Him and trust that He will help us to conquer any spiritual enemy.

Lesson 12 Homework Assignment Answer Key

1. What were the two parts to the Israelites' possession of the promised land?
First, the Lord was the one who gave it to them to dwell in. Second, to receive the land, they had to go into it and possess it by driving out their enemies.
2. "Therefore be very _____ to _____ and to _____ all that is _____ in the Book of the Law of Moses, lest you turn _____ from it to the right hand or to the left." (Joshua 23:6)
courageous, keep, do, written, aside
3. Name at least one key lesson that we can learn from the division of the land and briefly explain.
 - a. *There are no shortcuts – Compromises often have negative consequences in our faith, and decisions that seem insignificant at first will, over time, make us spiritually vulnerable to sin.*
 - b. *Fight to receive our inheritance – God required His people to put forth their own effort, and we must also do our part to receive our inheritance.*
 - c. *God is our inheritance – We are the new high priests, and like the Levites, our inheritance is in the Lord.*
4. How were the Old Testament cities of refuge a shadow of the New Testament city of refuge?
The true church, the body of Christ, is the New Testament city of refuge. Through His saving grace, the Lord redeems anyone who enters the church with faith and saves them from death.
5. What three messages did Joshua convey in his farewell to the Israelites?
 - a. *To keep God's laws and commandments.*
 - b. *To remember that it was God who had given them success.*
 - c. *To avoid clinging to the remnants of the Canaanites.*
6. After today's discussion, what are steps that you can take to overcome your spiritual enemies?
Answers will vary according to class discussion.

Figure 01: Division of the Promised Land (Bible Journey)³



³ Taylor, Chris & Jenifer. *Map 49: The Boundaries of the Twelve Tribes*. Accessed October, 2021, <https://www.thebiblejourney.org/biblejourney2/27-the-israelites-move-into-canaan/canaan-is-divided-among-the-twelve-tribes/>

Figure 02: Division of the Promised Land (Library of Congress)⁴



⁴ Bowles, John. A map of the Land of Canaan or Holy Land, as divided among the twelve tribes which God promised to Abraham and his seed. London: John Bowles, 1760. Map. <https://www.loc.gov/item/2016586537/>.

Junior 1 Year 2 Book 2 Review

Memory Verses

Instructions: Fill in the blanks correctly using the provided words.

hate	Father	God	commanded	holy
despised	kingdom	touch	wherever	name
journeyed	mammon	hand	captivity	fire
righteousness	blameless	believe	courage	present
Israel	Lord	shine	separate	voice
knowledge	disputing	masters	obedience	brings
trust	encamped	receive	charge	sworn
loyal	alive	complained	holy	crooked
mortal	remember	shaken	reverence	carnal
dismayed	children	possession	dwelt	sin

Psalm 106:24–25	Leviticus 11:45	Matthew 6:24	Romans 6:12–13
Numbers 9:23	Joshua 21:43	Joshua 1:9	2 Corinthians 10:4–5
Philippians 2:14–15	Psalm 20:7	2 Corinthians 6:17–18	Hebrews 12:28–29

- “At the command of the Lord they remained _____, and at the command of the Lord they _____; they kept the _____ of the Lord, at the command of the Lord by the _____ of Moses.” (_____)
- “Then they _____ the pleasant land; they did not _____ His word, but _____ in their tents, and did not heed the _____ of the LORD.” (_____)
- “Therefore ‘come out from among them and be _____, says the Lord. Do not _____ what is unclean, and I will _____ you.’ ‘I will be a _____ to you, and you shall be My sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty.’ ” (_____)
- “Do all things without complaining and _____, that you may become _____ and harmless, _____ of God without fault in the midst of a

crooked and perverse generation, among whom you _____ as lights in the world.”
(_____)

5. “Therefore, since we are receiving a _____ which cannot be _____, let us have grace, by which we may serve God acceptably with _____ and godly fear. For our God is a consuming _____.” (_____)

6. “No one can serve two _____; for either he will _____ the one and love the other, or else he will be _____ to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and _____.” (_____)

7. “For I am the Lord who _____ you up out of the land of Egypt, to be your _____ . You shall therefore be _____, for I am _____.”
(_____)

8. “Have I not _____ you? Be strong and of good _____; do not be afraid, nor be _____, for the Lord your God is with you _____ you go.”
(_____)

9. “For the weapons of our warfare are not _____ but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the _____ of God, bringing every thought into _____ to the _____ of Christ[.]” (_____)

10. “Therefore do not let _____ reign in your _____ body, that you should obey it in its lusts. And do not present your members as instruments of unrighteousness to sin, but _____ yourselves to God as being _____ from the dead, and your members as instruments of _____ to God.” (_____)

11. “Some _____ in chariots, and some in horses; but we will _____ the _____ of the _____ our God.” (_____)

12. “So the LORD gave to _____ all the land of which He had _____ to give to their fathers, and they took _____ of it and _____ in it.”
(_____)

Multiple Choice

1. ____ : What material did Moses and Aaron use to make the two trumpets used in the wilderness?
 - a. Copper
 - b. Silver
 - c. Brass
 - d. Iron

2. ____ : Which of these is one of the vows taken by a Nazirite?
 - a. A Nazirite shall have no contact with dead bodies
 - b. A Nazirite shall not steal
 - c. A Nazirite shall abstain from sexual immorality
 - d. All of these

3. ____ : Whom did God say would die in the wilderness before reaching the promised land?
 - a. The spies who went to spy out the land, except Caleb and Joshua
 - b. All of the men twenty and above, except Caleb and Joshua
 - c. All of the men thirty and above, except Caleb and Joshua
 - d. All of the men forty and above, except Caleb and Joshua

4. ____ : What was Korah's punishment for his complaint and uprising?
 - a. He did not receive any punishment.
 - b. He was first stoned and then set on fire.
 - c. He was stabbed to death with a spear.
 - d. He was swallowed up by the earth.

5. ____ : What does leprosy represent in the Bible?
 - a. Uncleanliness
 - b. Disease
 - c. Sin
 - d. None of the above

6. ____ : What did Rahab use as a sign to indicate which house was hers?
 - a. A red scarf
 - b. A burgundy flag
 - c. A scarlet cord
 - d. None of the above

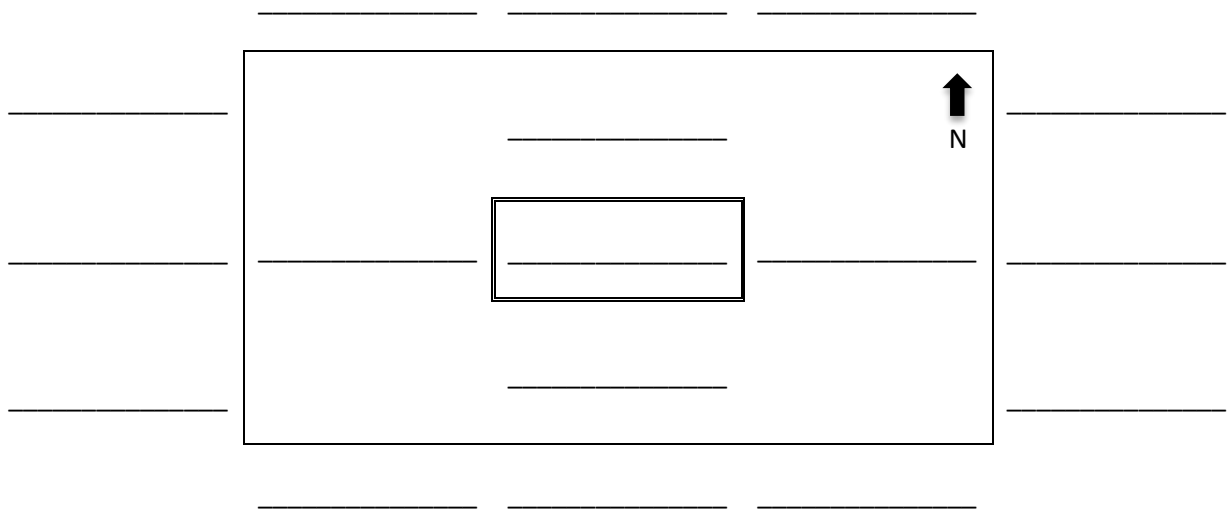
7. ____ : Which of the twelve tribes did not receive a land inheritance?
 - a. Levi
 - b. Manasseh
 - c. Ephraim
 - d. Benjamin

The Israelites Camp in the Wilderness

A. Instructions: Using the provided terms, fill in the chart below according to how the Israelites' camped in the wilderness.

Asher	Ephraim	Issachar	Manasseh	Naphtali	Tent of Meeting
Benjamin	Gad	Judah	Merarites	Reuben	Zebulun
Dan	Gershonites	Kohathites	Moses, Aaron, and Priests	Simeon	

The Israelites' Camping Arrangement



B. In what form did God guide the Israelites during their time in the wilderness?

C. What were the four main purposes of the two trumpets Moses and Aaron made?

- a. _____
- b. _____
- c. _____
- d. _____

Character Match

Instructions: Using the names provided, write each person's name next to the matching description.

Rahab	Korah	Caleb	Phinehas	Balaam
God	Gibeonites	Moses	Achan	Joshua

Person	Description
_____	a. The Commander of the army of the LORD
_____	b. A Levite who was discontent with Moses and Aaron
_____	c. A leader of the Israelites whom God told to be strong and of good courage
_____	d. A harlot who received the Israelite spies with peace
_____	e. A leader who interceded for the Israelites when God wanted to disinherit them
_____	f. An Israelite who stole treasures from the city of Jericho
_____	g. A spy sent to scout out the land of Canaan
_____	h. A priest and grandson of Aaron who was zealous for God
_____	i. Canaanites who pretended to be ambassadors from a faraway land
_____	j. A false prophet whom God used as a messenger

Short Answer

1. (Lessons 3) What are the vows a Nazirite must live by? What do these three vows teach us?

2. (Lesson 4) Why is complaining against God a serious sin? Why should we learn not to complain in our lives?

3. (Lesson 6) What do Balak and Balaam teach us about a heart that is set on its own desires? Why do pride and greed blind us spiritually?

4. (Lesson 8) What was the key difference between the reports of the spies sent by Moses and those sent by Joshua?

5. (Lesson 10) What did Achan's actions show us about his attitude towards God and sin? Why is it important that we avoid sin and follow God's commands?

6. (Lesson 11) How did the Israelites allow themselves to be deceived by the Gibeonites? What does this teach us?

7. (Lesson 12) In what way is the True Jesus Church the New Testament "city of refuge"?

Junior 1 Year 2 Book 2 Review Answer Key

Memory Verses

1. "At the command of the Lord they remained encamped, and at the command of the Lord they journeyed; they kept the charge of the Lord, at the command of the Lord by the hand of Moses." (Numbers 9:23)
2. "Then they despised the pleasant land; they did not believe His word, but complained in their tents, and did not heed the voice of the LORD." (Psalms 106:24-25)
3. "Therefore 'come out from among them and be separate, says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean, and I will receive you.' 'I will be a Father to you, and you shall be My sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty.'" (2 Corinthians 6:17-18)
4. "Do all things without complaining and disputing, that you may become blameless and harmless, children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world." (Philippians 2:14-15)
5. "Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us have grace, by which we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear. For our God is a consuming fire." (Hebrews 12:28-29)
6. "No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon." (Matthew 6:24)
7. "For I am the Lord who brings you up out of the land of Egypt, to be your God. You shall therefore be holy, for I am holy." (Leviticus 11:45)
8. "Have I not commanded you? Be strong and of good courage; do not be afraid, nor be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go." (Joshua 1:9)
9. "For the weapons of our warfare are not carneal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ[.]" (2 Corinthians 10:4-5)
10. "Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body, that you should obey it in its lusts. And do not present your members as instruments of unrighteousness to sin, but present yourselves to God as being alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God." (Romans 6:12-13)
11. "Some trust in chariots, and some in horses; but we will remember the name of the LORD our God." (Psalms 20:7)
12. "So the LORD gave to Israel all the land of which He had sworn to give to their fathers, and they took possession of it and dwelt in it." (Joshua 21:43)

Multiple Choice

1. ____ : What material did Moses and Aaron use to make the two trumpets used in the wilderness?
 - a. Copper
 - b. Silver
 - c. Brass
 - d. Iron
2. ____ : Which of these is one of the vows taken by a Nazirite?
 - a. A Nazirite shall have no contact with dead bodies
 - b. A Nazirite shall not steal
 - c. A Nazirite shall abstain from sexual immorality
 - d. All of these

3. ____ : Whom did God say would die in the wilderness before reaching the promised land?
 - a. The spies who went to spy out the land, except Caleb and Joshua
 - b. *All of the men twenty and above, except Caleb and Joshua*
 - c. All of the men thirty and above, except Caleb and Joshua
 - d. All of the men forty and above, except Caleb and Joshua

4. ____ : What was Korah's punishment for his complaint and uprising?
 - a. He did not receive any punishment.
 - b. He was first stoned and then set on fire.
 - c. He was stabbed to death with a spear.
 - d. *He was swallowed up by the earth.*

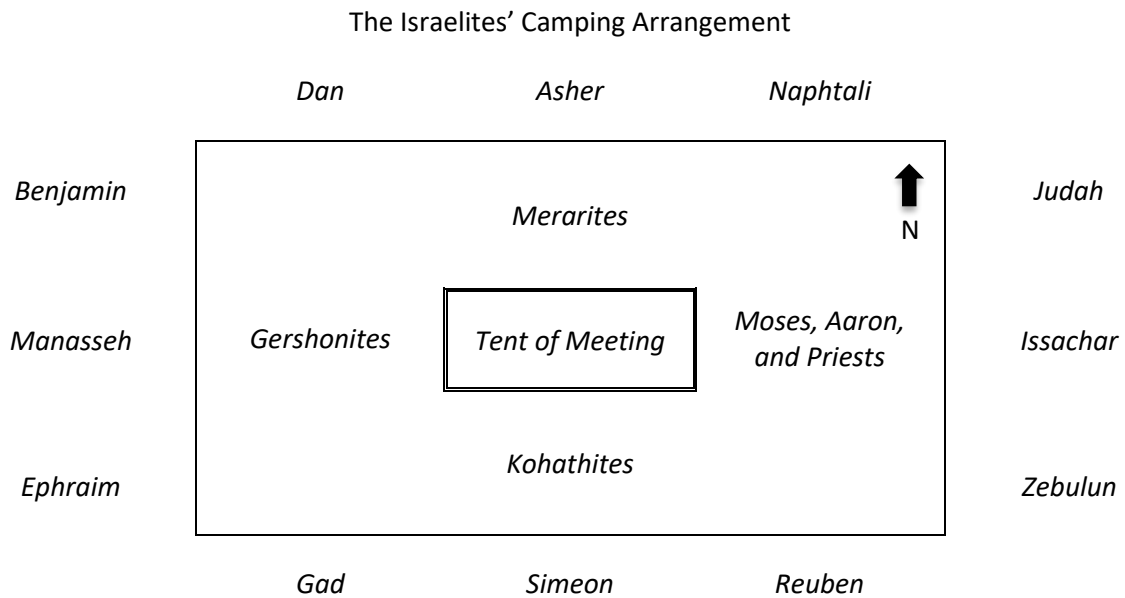
5. ____ : What does leprosy represent in the Bible?
 - a. Uncleanliness
 - b. Disease
 - c. *Sin*
 - d. None of the above

6. ____ : What did Rahab use as a sign to indicate which house was hers?
 - a. A red scarf
 - b. A burgundy flag
 - c. *A scarlet cord*
 - d. None of the above

7. ____ : Which of the twelve tribes did not receive a land inheritance?
 - a. *Levi*
 - b. Manasseh
 - c. Ephraim
 - d. Benjamin

The Israelites Camp in the Wilderness

A.



B. In what form did God guide the Israelites during their time in the wilderness?

God guided the Israelites in the form of a pillar of cloud by day and of fire by night.

C. What were the four main purposes of the two trumpets Moses and Aaron made?

- a. *To call the Israelites to gather, whether all or the leaders only*
- b. *To signal the Israelites to break camp and move onwards*
- c. *To sound the alarm during wartime*
- d. *To sound times of gladness, feasts, and celebrations*

Character Match

Person	Description
<i>God</i>	a. The Commander of the army of the LORD
<i>Korah</i>	b. A Levite who was discontent with Moses and Aaron
<i>Joshua</i>	c. A leader of the Israelites whom God told to be strong and of good courage
<i>Rahab</i>	d. A harlot who received the Israelite spies with peace
<i>Moses</i>	e. A leader who interceded for the Israelites when God wanted to disinherit them
<i>Achan</i>	f. An Israelite who stole treasures from the city of Jericho
<i>Caleb</i>	g. A spy sent to scout out the land of Canaan
<i>Phinehas</i>	h. A priest and grandson of Aaron who was zealous for God
<i>Gibeonites</i>	i. Canaanites who pretended to be ambassadors from a faraway land
<i>Balaam</i>	j. A false prophet whom God used as a messenger

Short Answer

- (Lessons 3) What are the vows a Nazirite must live by? What do these three vows teach us?**
A Nazirite must abstain from wine; no razor shall touch a Nazirite's head; and a Nazirite shall not have contact with dead bodies. Abstinance from wine represents giving up the pleasures of the world to lead a simple life that focuses on God. In biblical times, head coverings were a sign of respect, but for us today, not fussing over our hair or appearance reveals our desire to keep our focus on our inward, spiritual character rather than our outward, physical appearance. Keeping a distance from dead bodies would allow a Nazirite to remain holy; likewise, we should keep a distance from people or things that would defile our holy bodies.
- (Lesson 4) Why is complaining against God a serious sin? Why should we learn not to complain in our lives?**
When we complain against God, we show a lack of gratitude, as well despise God and reject His blessings. It is important not to complain because complaints can lead to arguments, resentment, envy, or even controversy in the church. Moreover, our complaints reflect our dissatisfaction with God and all that He has and is doing for us.
- (Lesson 6) What do Balak and Balaam teach us about a heart that is set on its own desires? Why do pride and greed blind us spiritually?**

Even though Balaam knew that he was not supposed to curse the Israelites, he was still willing to do it due to his desire for money. Likewise, when someone's heart is set on sin, they will ignore anything that runs contrary to their desires. Pride and greed blind us spiritually because when our hearts are full of our desires and our pride, we have no room for anyone or anything else, much less for God.

4. (Lesson 8) What was the key difference between the reports of the spies sent by Moses and those sent by Joshua?

The spies sent by Moses who doubted lacked trust in God and focused solely on the obstacles they witnessed during their scouting. They expressed fear over the "giants" in the land, rather than shared about the richness of the land. The spies sent by Joshua, however, focused not on the number or size of the people, but on God's promise of deliverance.

5. (Lesson 10) What did Achan's actions show us about his attitude towards God and sin? Why is it important that we avoid sin and follow God's commands?

Achan's actions reflected his lack of fear towards God, his lack of sensitivity towards sin, and his indifference to the idolatry and evil of the city of Ai. His disobedience to God's command showed how he valued the objects and the idols of the world more than he valued God. Sin is not a small matter; it is outright rebellion against God. Only after we remove sin from our lives will God offer us His blessings. When we follow God's command wholeheartedly, we will experience victory.

6. (Lesson 11) How did the Israelites allow themselves to be deceived by the Gibeonites? What does this teach us?

In their interactions with the Gibeonites, the Israelites were blinded by praise, deceived by what they saw with their eyes on the surface, and they failed to inquire of God. At times, it is easy to rely on our own senses and desires rather than remember God's omnipotence. However, from this incident, we can learn the importance of inquiring of God before making any decisions, as God wants us to turn to Him for everything, big or small.

7. (Lesson 12) In what way is the True Jesus Church the New Testament "city of refuge"?

The body of Christ is the true church, purchased with the blood of Jesus to save those with ignorance in their heart from death. When we recognize Jesus as our Savior, we flee to the church, our refuge. After belief, our sins are washed away, and we are saved from death.