

ISRAEL: AFTER THE PATRIARCHS

JUNIOR 1 YEAR 3 BOOK 3



Teacher's Guide and Student Handouts

Lot: Entangled in Sin

Passages: As listed in the lesson.

Memory Verse

“Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—is not of the Father but is of the world.” (1 John 2:15–16)

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 about Lot’s choices and the progression of loss that he experienced.2. Learn about the sins of Sodom and Gomorrah.3. Understand that God’s mercy comes to those who seek Him out.	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. God is righteous.2. God is merciful.	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Pitch our tents close to God.2. Avoid drifting into sin by focusing our vision on Christ and actively seeking God.

Overview

Events and Spiritual Teachings

- A. Understanding Lot’s Choice
- B. The Consequences of Lot’s Choices
- C. The Mercy of God

Life Application: Where Have You Pitched Your Tent?

Optional Activity: Drifting Out of Line

1. Focus Our Eyes
2. Take Action and Row

Memory Verse

Conclusion: We must not allow ourselves to drift into sin as Lot did, but instead keep our tents pitched close to God by keeping our eyes focused on Him and actively seeking Him out.

Events and Spiritual Teachings

A. Understanding Lot's Choice

What do you remember about Lot? From what you remember, how would you describe his character? Let's read Genesis 11:31. The Bible first mentions Lot when Abraham left Ur of the Chaldeans for Haran with his father Terah (Acts 7:4). It seems that like his uncle Abraham, Lot also grew up in Mesopotamia, which lay between the Euphrates and Tigris rivers. At the time, Ur itself was one of the most advanced settlements at the time, with the first discovered records of writing. Today, the region of Mesopotamia is situated in modern day Iraq, Kuwait, Turkey, and Syria.

Let's now read Genesis 12:4. When God called Abraham out of Haran, Lot also chose to follow his uncle once more. Although Lot was not directly addressed by God, it seems that he also chose to walk a path of faith. It can be inferred that Lot also learned about the true God through Abraham, so perhaps it was this learning that compelled him to follow. This was the first recorded change in Lot's life, and it can be seen as a positive one.

Let's continue by reading Genesis 13:1–12 to find out what happened to Lot after this. Because Abraham and Lot were very wealthy, they each had a great number of flocks and herds, resulting in strife between their herdsmen. Abraham wisely thought of a solution and gracefully offered his nephew first choice despite being the elder. As a result, the second big change in Lot's life occurred when he made the choice to settle near the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah. Unfortunately, this change was quite a negative one in comparison to the first.

Lot's Choice

Why did Lot choose this land in particular? What do you think of this choice? Do you think it was a wise one? Let's read Genesis 13:10–11 again. If we examine the passage, we will notice that Lot neither prayed nor sought direction from God when making his decision. Lot "lifted his eyes," "saw," and "chose." Lot's decision was a worldly decision because it was based on sight alone: he saw something that was pleasing to his eyes and decided that it would be best to settle there.

Moreover, Lot's decision was quite selfish. As the elder and authority figure in Lot's life, Abraham had every right to simply tell him what to do, but he still selflessly gave Lot the first choice. Even more importantly, the Bible teaches us not to lean on our own understanding, but in all our ways acknowledge him (Prov 3:5–6). Yet despite learning about Him through Abraham, Lot made a reckless and selfish decision without any regard for God or respect for his uncle. What was the result of this? Let's read 2 Peter 2:7–8.

Peter says that Lot was "righteous," and his soul was "tormented" by what he saw. This means that he knew Sodom was wicked. He didn't want to participate in that kind of culture, and their immorality truly bothered him deeply. Because of his selfish decision, he had surrounded himself with sin, and the lack of morality not only led to Lot feeling "tormented" but also deeply impacted his family.

B. The Consequences of Lot's Choices

With each unwise choice that Lot made, he ended up facing progressively worse consequences. Because he had allowed himself to remain surrounded by moral depravity, not only was Lot personally endangered but his family was also severely affected. He later lost everything.

1. Surrounded by sin

Genesis 13:13 says that the “men of Sodom were exceedingly wicked and sinful against the LORD.” Ezekiel also recorded that “this was the iniquity of your sister Sodom: She and her daughter had pride, fullness of food, and abundance of idleness; neither did she strengthen the hand of the poor and needy” (Ezek 16:49). Let’s read what happened in Genesis 14:1–17.

At the time, “kings” were those who ruled over their respective cities. Several leaders chose to rebel against the ruling kings, including the kings of Sodom and Gomorrah. However, their cities fell to the enemy, and Lot was kidnapped along with others, perhaps because of his wealth and status. Unfortunately, despite his harrowing experience, Lot chose to return to the city after his rescue, so he continued to be surrounded by sin. What followed was yet another serious consequence of his decision to remain in Sodom. Let’s read Genesis 19:1–5.

The wickedness of the city is seen incredibly clearly here. They sought to inflict their perversity even upon strangers who entered the city. Lot, who had promised the two guests their safety, was now hard-pressed to protect them from his very own neighbors.

2. Affected by sin

Let’s continue reading Genesis 19:6–11. Lot was a man who had been taught the ways of the Lord by Abraham. This is clear in his courageous offer to shelter the two strangers, knowing the dangers of the city. But the decision that he made when under intense pressure shows us something very clear: Lot had allowed his own judgment to be corrupted by the sin around him, to the point that he was willing to offer his own daughters to be sexually assaulted. How did Lot come up with such a terrible plan? What kind of parent would offer their own child to be sexually assaulted by a group of men?

Lot knew right from wrong, but the culture of Sodom and Gomorrah was extremely perverted. It was clear that living there for so many years had affected his judgment to the point that he decided on such a terrible compromise. Lot should have known that he had a better way out – he should have turned to God (1 Cor 10:13). But once again, he made a choice based on his own limited understanding and power. He made the grave error of believing that he had only two options and forgot that in times like these, he was supposed to rely on God’s power for help. In the end, it was solely because of God’s mercy that he did not have to commit to this terrible decision.

3. Attached to sin

Lot was clearly attached to life in Sodom. After being kidnapped by the five kings and rescued by his uncle, he immediately returned to the city. It was easy for him to slip back into his old lifestyle once things seemed safe again. But even when he was warned of grave danger, he hesitated to leave. Let’s continue reading Genesis 19:12–21. There are a few things here that show Lot’s visible reluctance to accept the danger of God’s judgment.

It was nighttime when the angels urged Lot to leave the city, but “morning dawned,” and he was still there. We do not know why he took so long, but regardless of the reason, the Bible records that “while he lingered, the men took hold of his hand, his wife’s hand, and the hands of his two daughters, the LORD being merciful to him, and they brought him out and set him outside the city” (Gen 19:16). Lot lingered and was slow to take heed of God’s warning. Perhaps he was still trying to convince his family to leave, or maybe he was trying to pack his possessions. Whatever

the case, he ended up being unable to act, and the angels had to physically pull them out.

However, despite accepting the danger to the city, Lot was still reluctant to flee entirely as he was told. He then begged the angels to allow them to stay in a small city, under the excuse that some evil might “overtake” him so that he would “die.” It is clear that Lot had forgotten whom the angels served – if God had chosen to save him and his family from the city, why would He not be equally able to save him from any danger that he faced in the mountains? Yet despite this, God had mercy on him and permitted him to stay in Zoar.

Unfortunately, although Lot heeded the angels’ instructions, his wife did not. Let’s read Genesis 19:22–26. Like Lot, his wife had clearly grown attached to the city and had forgotten the importance of obeying God’s commands. Because of this, she became a pillar of salt, and Lot tragically lost his wife in a moment.

4. Unguarded

After witnessing the complete destruction of the two cities and the death of his wife, the Bible records that “Lot went up out of Zoar and dwelt in the mountains, and his two daughters were with him; for he was afraid to dwell in Zoar” (Gen 19:30). All of the years that Lot had spent in the city had gone to complete waste, and he was now reduced to living in a cave after years of fortune and success. Let’s read Genesis 19:31–38.

Lot had been taught God’s will from Abraham, but his daughters had grown up in Sodom. Although Lot himself generally knew right from wrong, it is apparent that his daughters did not. After being reduced to living in a cave, they chose a path of complete immorality and turned to incest. The Bible records that his daughters had initiated this wicked abomination in the eyes of God. Clearly, Lot hadn’t trained them up properly. The Bible also tells us that Lot was drunk, a stark example of why Paul wrote that we should “not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but be filled with the Spirit” (Eph 5:18). Both he and his daughters’ actions were deeply influenced by Sodom and Gomorrah. In the end, the result was the births of Moab and Ammon, nations that both became enemies to Israel over time (Deut 23:3–6; Judg 3:13–14).

All of these events could have been avoided if Lot had made a wiser decision when Abraham asked him where he wanted to dwell. Lot’s relationship with God was not his top priority. As a father, Lot had the responsibility of shepherding his family and training his children in the way they should go, so that when they were old, they would not depart from it (Prov 22:6). However, he instead allowed both himself and his family to be influenced by the culture around them. It is clear that we need to be very careful while living in the world. We should not follow in the footsteps of Lot and commit such dreadful sins.

C. The Mercy of God

While Sodom and Gomorrah became an example of God’s judgment “to those who afterward would live ungodly” (2 Pet 2:6), Lot was an example of God’s deliverance and mercy. Let’s read his plea to the angels in Genesis 19:18–21. God could have just as easily left Lot to his fate or ignored his plea. But God listened to him and allowed Lot’s request. Lot was perhaps spared in part because of his relationship to Abraham, but we also read that Lot’s heart was “tormented” by the cruelty that he witnessed, and that he remained righteous in the eyes of God despite his decision to live within such a sinful city.

Despite his weaknesses, Lot showed a form of courageous hospitality (Gen 19:1–3). He knew the dangers, yet still invited the visitors to his home. Although they declined him at first, he did not give up, but insisted on inviting them to stay for their protection.

As humans, we are bound to make poor choices, but from the example of Lot, we can see God’s abounding mercy and grace. It is important for us to understand that we are not better or more righteous than Lot, nor have we done anything deserving of God’s mercy. We have received this same grace, but that doesn’t mean that we have a free pass to do anything that we want! What are some conditions for experiencing God’s mercy?

- 2 Peter 3:9 – “The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.”
- Proverbs 28:13 – “He who covers his sins will not prosper, but whoever confesses and forsakes them will have mercy.”
- Luke 1:50 – “And His mercy is on those who fear Him from generation to generation.”
- Psalm 103:17 – “But the mercy of the LORD is from everlasting to everlasting on those who fear Him, and His righteousness to children’s children.”

From these verses, we can see that experiencing God’s mercy first requires that we seek Him out and repent of our sins. While Lot chose to remain in Sodom, we ourselves must instead strive to live by God and His righteousness, and learn to make choices that are for our spiritual benefit rather than our physical. In this way, we will also experience God’s mercy and care. He will rescue us when we are facing tribulations, and He will hear our prayers.

Check for Understanding

- 1. What was the primary issue with Lot’s decision when choosing which land to dwell on?** He made it based on sight alone, without any regard for Abraham or for God.
- 2. What fundamental error did Lot make when making the terrible compromise of offering his two daughters in exchange for the safety of his guests?** He made the grave error of believing that he had only two options and forgot that in times like these, he was supposed to rely on God’s power for help.
- 3. How do we know that Lot was attached to life in Sodom?** After being kidnapped and rescued by his uncle, he immediately returned to the city. Later, when the angels came to save his family, he lingered in the city, was slow to heed God’s warning, and begged to flee to Zoar instead.
- 4. Instead of shepherding his family spiritually, what did Lot’s choices result in for himself and his family?** He allowed both himself and his family to be influenced by the culture around them.

Life Application

Where Have You Pitched Your Tent?

Part of the struggle in Christian living is our attraction to the world. Like Lot, we unintentionally make our homes as close to sin as possible. To make ourselves feel better, we may attempt to draw invisible lines – “that is sin, and this is not, so I will be safe here” – but these lines are malleable that shift with our moods. When we are stronger, the line moves further from sin, and when we are weaker, we end up moving into Sodom. Let’s read 1 John 2:15–16. “Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—is not of the Father but is of the world.”

Many find the Bible restrictive because it teaches us that you cannot love or serve both the world and God. We like to see gray areas where we can coexist between the two, but the fact of the matter is that our worldly desires will only pull us away from God. We cannot serve both God and mammon. Like a soldier serving a cause, we need to choose what we fight for, and know where to pitch our tents! Of course, we may choose to pitch our tent close to God, only to realize that we have somehow drifted closer and closer to sin. This is because sin is a progression – it is a series of choices that make us drift away from God without even realizing it. So how do we avoid drifting closer and closer to Sodom?

Optional Activity: Drifting Out of Line

*Teachers: As a simple activity to demonstrate this point, have your students try to walk without looking in the direction they are trying to go. **Please skip this if your classroom is very cluttered, as a lot of furniture may cause injury, as well as provide frames of reference that will lessen the effectiveness of the activity.** Also note that this activity will only work if space allows – if the tape is too short or your classroom is too small, there will be less time to “drift.”*

- *Prepare a length of tape or string on the ground – the longer the better. **Remove any potential obstacles so that students do not injure themselves.***
- *Prepare a target for the students to look at, directly out of line of the direction they are supposed to walk, such as a small piece of paper on a blank wall slightly behind them, a few feet above eye level. The further “back” they have to look, and the fewer objects within their frame of reference, the more likely they are to “drift.”*
- *Have students take turns trying to walk along the strip of tape while looking at the target that you prepared.*

1. Focus Our Eyes

“Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith.” (Heb 12:1–2 NIV)

When we go walking or biking and focus on something interesting to the side, we often unintentionally begin to turn towards the focus of our gaze. Our bodies are wired so that our eyes lead our heads, and our heads lead our bodies. This is also true mentally. When our brains are fixated on something, we tend to devote much of our waking thought to that object, whether it be a show, a celebrity, a hobby, or even a subject at school. Over time, this focus leads our brains to pick up accumulated knowledge, and we slowly become experts in the subject.

Of course, the same is true of our spirituality. Whatever our hearts are focused on becomes the target of our lives. When we focus on God, our minds accumulate knowledge in His word, and our bodies subsequently act according to God’s will. To avoid drifting, we must therefore refocus our spiritual sight. The easiest way is to start with our physical eyes! When we think about it, we may have spent hours of our lives staring straight at Sodom. Consider the following:

- a. How much time do you spend passively scrolling through social media?
- b. How much time do you spend on various social platforms chatting or playing games with your friends?
- c. How much time do you spend reading, researching, or shopping for materials related to a personal hobby that you love?

- d. How much time do you spend looking at your marks, reviewing possibilities for your future, or looking up places to live, study, or work?

Of course, that isn't to say any of the above are particularly bad on their own. God does not ask us to spend every waking hour staring at the Bible – He knows that we have to live in this world, too. But He has also told us that when we seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, He will take care of all our needs. This means that we need to spend time communicating with Him and fixing our eyes on Him to find His will (Heb 12:2). As Jesus Christ taught us, "For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also" (Mt 6:21).

2. Take Action and Row

"Seek the LORD while He may be found, call upon Him while He is near." (Isa 55:6)

What happens when you cut the engine or stop rowing a boat in open water? Your vessel begins to drift with the waves, so to move in a certain direction, you start up the engine, or pick up the paddle and start to row. Both are conscious choices that we make, followed by an action. Likewise, we need to actively find our way closer to God instead of letting ourselves drift into sin. Let's read Psalm 119:9–16. Circle or write down all the verbs.

Cleanse, taking heed, sought, (not) wander, hidden, declared, rejoiced, meditate, contemplate, delight, (not) forget.

Keeping our tents pitched in their proper place requires diligence and persistence. One of the biggest obstacles in our faith is often as simple as the failure to act. How many times have you failed to change something about yourself simply because you were too lazy to act upon that resolution? It is easy to make a determination during SSC, and even easier to discard that determination after returning home, simply because you have lost your motivation!

Let's take a second look at all of the actions that we circled in Psalm 119. Do you *cleanse* yourself daily in your prayers? Do you *heed* God's will and *meditate* upon it? Do you *seek* Him out, avoid *wandering* from His commandments, or *hide* His word in your heart? Take a moment to figure out which actions need the most work. Pick two. For each, write down why you need to take this action, and how you will implement it moving forward. Be as specific as you can. Share what you wrote with the class.

Teachers: Students may brainstorm ideas individually or as a group. See examples below.

Action	How will I take this action?
<i>Cleanse</i>	I need to change a particular habit that has been affecting my spiritual life negatively. To do so, I will use a calendar to track whenever I avoid or repeat this habit, and ask God to help me change myself in my daily prayers.
<i>Taking heed</i>	I know that God wants me to honor my parents, but I fail to do so. I would like to change this by learning something new about their past and the different troubles or joys that they have experienced.
<i>Sought</i>	I need to pay greater attention in sermons. To do so, I will aim to write at least one key lesson or verse from each sermon in my notebook and review it after church.

<i>Not wander</i>	I know that I do something in particular that God dislikes, so I will aim to avoid this in the future by asking a friend or family member to hold me accountable.
<i>Hidden</i>	I don't know enough of the Bible, so I would like to memorize the memory verse from each RE class. To do this, I will write it down in my notebook for daily review and recite it without looking at least once during the week.
<i>Declared</i>	I often stutter or mumble when I talk about church to my friends, so I will prepare myself for next time by writing down and orally practicing a few different responses to their questions.
<i>Rejoiced</i>	Church and religion in general feel like a chore. To try and rejoice in God, every Saturday, I will write down at least three blessings that He has given to me over the past week.
<i>Meditate</i>	I often read my assigned Bible passages without thinking deeply about them. To help myself meditate on them, I will buy myself a study Bible and write down my thoughts in a notebook while I read.
<i>Contemplate</i>	Although I often write notes from sermons and RE class, I rarely think about them again after writing them. To help myself contemplate further on God's word, I will read my notes again at least once in the middle of week.
<i>Delight</i>	Helping out in church often feels more like a chore than a delight. To generate more delight in His statutes, I will try serving in different ways to find something which I can find delight in while serving God.
<i>Not forget</i>	I often forget about God outside of church, so to counter this, I will post sticky notes around my room and place visual reminders in my school supplies to remind myself of God's word at home and at school.

By actively taking small, daily steps towards God, we can avoid becoming like Lot and drifting into sin, whether intentionally or unintentionally. It is easy to get sucked into the delights of the world, so it is our responsibility as God's children to remain vigilant and to keep ourselves from becoming too attached to anything that can distract us from God. Of course, changing our habits or preferences is not an easy thing, so it is always important to ask for help from church friends and family, and to always rely on the power of the Holy Spirit to change ourselves. In this manner, we can keep our tents pitched where they should be – right next to God!

Memory Verse

“Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—is not of the Father but is of the world.” (1 John 2:15–16)

Meaning

See *Life Application*.

Conclusion

Although Lot took the big step of following Abraham and God into Canaan, his subsequent choices led only from trouble to disaster. However, he remained righteous within a sinful city, and despite his mistakes, God had mercy on him and saved him from destruction. We must not allow ourselves to drift into sin as Lot did, but instead keep our tents pitched close to God by keeping our eyes focused on Him and actively seeking Him out.

Lesson 1 Homework Assignment Answer Key

1. Why is it impossible to love the Father while also loving the things of the world?
We like to see gray areas where we can coexist between the two, but the fact of the matter is that our worldly desires will only pull us away from God.
2. “But the _____ of the LORD is from _____ to _____ on those who _____ Him, and His righteousness to children’s children.” (Psalm 103:17)
mercy, everlasting, everlasting, fear
3. What was the primary issue with Lot’s decision when choosing which land to dwell on?
He made it based on sight alone, without any regard for Abraham or for God.
4. What were the four main consequences of Lot’s choices?
He was surrounded by sin, affected by sin, became attached to sin, and was unguarded against sin.
5. To experience God’s mercy, what must we first do?
We must seek Him out and repent of our sins. While Lot chose to remain in Sodom, we ourselves must instead strive to live by God and His righteousness instead. We must learn to make choices that are for our spiritual benefit rather than our physical.
6. Write down what actions you chose to take based on Psalm 119:9–16. At the end of the week, were you able to begin taking steps? If not, then try to add details to your plan to help you carry it out in the future.
Personal answers.

Deborah: Prophetess, Judge, and Mother in Israel

Passages: Judges 4–5

Memory Verse

“Then Deborah said to Barak, ‘Up! For this is the day in which the LORD has delivered Sisera into your hand. Has not the LORD gone out before you?’” (Judges 4:14a)

Knowledge of God’s Will [God’s Word]	Knowledge of God [God’s Divine Nature]	Good Works [Behavior]
1. God drove out the Canaanites before Israel. 2. Because of Barak’s hesitation, the honor of Sisera’s death went to Jael instead.	1. God is all-powerful. 2. God will give us strength and power.	1. Put God first in our lives. 2. Seek God’s power and strength. 3. Support each other and work together in unity.

Overview

Events and Spiritual Teachings

- A. Deborah: Prophetess and Judge
Life Application: Putting God First in Our Lives
- B. Barak: A Skeptical and Reluctant Warrior
Life Application: Be Filled with Power and Strength from God
Life Application: Encouraging and Supporting Our Brethren
- C. The Lord Goes Before Barak
Life Application: Working Effectively with Others
- D. Jael: The Unexpected Heroine

Life Application: One Body of Christ

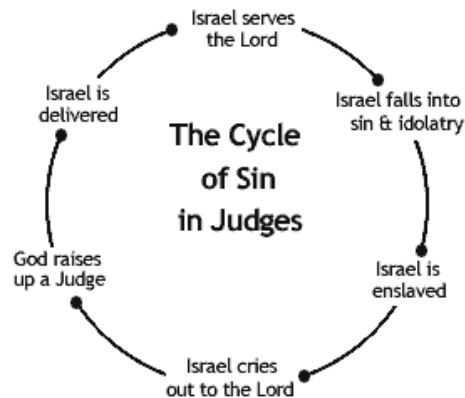
Memory Verse

Conclusion: We should always put God first in our lives and learn to commit ourselves to His service. It is also important to encourage our brethren through our actions, as well as to learn how to humbly work together with others in peace and unity.

Events and Spiritual Teachings

Introduction

After Joshua died, the Israelites began intermarrying with Gentiles, despite God's explicit command not to do so (Deut 7:3). Because the Israelites failed to completely remove the Canaanites, they were also led astray and began worshipping idols. The Israelites' idol-worshipping incurred God's wrath, and His punishment led the Israelites to repent and cry out for help. Out of mercy, God sent a judge to deliver them. However, after years of peace, the Israelites would repeat the same vicious cycle.



Deborah was one of many judges sent by God during this cycle of sin. The name "Deborah" means "bee." Her name doesn't have a particularly deep meaning, but bees have many admirable characteristics that we can learn from! They are hard-working insects who live in well-organized colonies that are led by a mighty queen bee. They become incredibly defensive when intruders are near. Coincidentally, Deborah can be likened to the queen bee in a time when the Israelites were being oppressed by their enemies. Perhaps this is because it was highly unusual for a woman to lead a nation at the time. Today, we'll be taking a closer look at this rare judge and what she did for Israel.

A. Deborah: Prophetess and Judge

The Israelites had once again begun to worship idols, so the Lord handed them over to Jabin, the king of Canaan (Judg 4:1–2). It was during this time that Deborah served as judge. The wife of Lapidoth, Deborah was the fourth judge to rule Israel, and aside from judge, she was also a prophetess.

When the Bible introduces Deborah, it says that "she would sit under the palm tree of Deborah between Ramah and Bethel in the mountains of Ephraim. And the children of Israel came up to her for judgment" (Judg 4:5). It is clear that she had gained the confidence and trust of the Israelites as a prophetess and a judge.

Life Application: Putting God First in Our Lives

Although this is quite a short introduction to Deborah, we can already glean a fairly important teaching regarding her character. Deborah was a wife, meaning she had a family and likely had all of the same obligations any spouse would have. It is not easy for a woman to take on as many roles as Deborah did, especially at the time. Despite this, she remained a prophet and judge to the people of Israel, as God had appointed her. This means that she put God first in her life above all else. In fact, she was so dedicated to the role God gave her that she described herself as a "mother" to Israel (Judg 5:7).

We all have many different roles in our lives. We aren't only students with all manner of schoolwork, but also sons and daughters with responsibilities at home, perhaps employees at part-time jobs, or members of a sports team or a club that requires our time and dedication. With so many roles to play, we often give ourselves the excuse that we are too busy, and that church work needs to take the back seat in our lives. If we haven't been given any responsibilities, we never actively step forward to take them on.

Why do we do this? It is easy to put God's work far down on our list of priorities because we feel no obligation to do it. Church work is voluntary. We don't get paid for it, we aren't under threat of failing to graduate if we don't do it well, and our parents don't nag us if we don't complete our church work. No one can force us to do it, or to take it seriously.

If we think these thoughts, it's because we don't see that God's work is the most important of all responsibilities that we have in our lives. We owe everything to God, so we must learn to give everything to Him. Jesus teaches us to "seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness" (Mt 6:33). Do we put God first in our lives? Do we offer our best sacrifice to Him? Others may not be watching us when we skim over God's work, but the Lord will one day evaluate the quality of our service to Him.

For Deborah, her service to God was a lifelong commitment, not just something that she did in her spare time. Her work as God's prophetess and judge was the most important thing in her life. We should also learn to adopt the same attitude. If we do, then as the Bible has promised, "all these things shall be added to [us]" (Mt 6:33).

B. Barak: A Skeptical and Reluctant Warrior

During Deborah's time, the Israelites had once again fallen into sin, and God allowed them to be harassed by the Canaanite king, Jabin, and his commander Sisera. The Bible says that "Jabin had nine hundred chariots of iron, and for twenty years he had harshly oppressed the children of Israel" (Judg 4:3). Jabin reigned in Hazor, north of Israel, while Sisera dwelled in a place called Harosheth Hagoyim, which was south-west of Hazor. (*Teachers: See Figure 1: Army movements in the Battle of Deborah.*) With the city of Hazor to give him military reinforcement from the north, Sisera could easily launch attacks on Israel from Harosheth Hagoyim.

Let's read Judges 4:6–10. The Lord was ready to make a counterattack against Jabin and Sisera, and He had chosen Barak, the son of Abinoam to lead the charge. But what was Barak's response to Deborah's call to action? "If you will go with me, then I will go; but if you will not go with me, I will not go!" (v. 8).

Barak had not been given an easy assignment, but it was a great one. With 10,000 Israelites at his back, he was to fight Sisera's army and his 900 iron chariots. The numbers may seem balanced, but the chariots were swift and agile weapons of war. They had been the tools of Jabin's oppression over Israel for the last twenty years, and Barak had been ordered to fight them head on. Barak hesitated, despite God's assurance of victory.

In the end, because of Barak's hesitation, Deborah agreed to accompany Barak to battle, a rather unconventional decision as a woman in that day and age. However, she also informed him that God would hand Sisera over to a woman. When first reading the story, we may automatically assume that woman would be Deborah. But if we continue reading, we will see that it actually wasn't! But before we move on in the story, let's first see what we can learn from Barak and his hesitation.

Life Application: Be Filled with Power and Strength from God

We don't know the exact reason Barak hesitated. Perhaps he thought that as God's prophet, Deborah would have more success than he. Perhaps he was simply scared, so he wanted a visual sign of God's presence. Or perhaps he simply expected Deborah to go along with him and was surprised when she was going to send him off alone. Whatever the case, it is clear that he thought he wasn't enough by himself.

Does Barak's reaction seem familiar to you? Do we sometimes only want to do certain work when someone else does it together with us? The root of this reaction often lies in uncertainty and a lack of confidence. Perhaps we're not sure if we'll do the job properly, or whether we'll embarrass ourselves. Perhaps we believe that we don't have enough skill or think that we are unsuited for the job despite never having tried it before. Regardless, our lack of confidence leads to fear, uncertainty, and doubt.

Let's read Isaiah 41:10. "Fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, yes, I will help you, I will uphold you with My righteous right hand." Whatever we're uncertain of, whether we are about to take a test at school or perform at a recital, as God's children we can rely entirely on His strength. It is, however, especially important that we rely on God's strength for any holy work.

Life Application: Encouraging and Supporting Our Brethren

From Deborah's response to Barak, we can see that she didn't let Barak's lack of trust affect her own faith, but simply went with him. Later, when it was time for the battle, she told Barak, "Up! For this is the day in which the LORD has delivered Sisera into your hand. Has not the LORD gone out before you?" (Judg 4:14). She didn't do the work for Barak, showing her faith in his ability to carry out his role, but encouraged him with God's words so that he had the strength to rally forth. She supported him when his own faith wasn't enough.

It is easy for us to brush someone off, to give excuses, or to try to help without actually putting forth any effort when we are asked to help. We should learn from Deborah how to be a supportive brother or sister in Christ. Sometimes, our friends around us may be weak in spirit, so we should be like Deborah and encourage them instead of ignoring their problems or pushing them down further. Deborah didn't only encourage Barak – she agreed to go to battle with him. We must do the same and join our brethren in their spiritual battles, not just in prayer, but also in person.

It is important for us to learn how to support our brethren when they are feeling weak in their faith. If we want to help them, we should not stop at prayer. Let our actions prove our intentions, and let us willingly help them through the task or the trial that they are facing.

In the end, with Deborah's support, Barak was able to serve the Lord; he was even mentioned centuries later in Hebrews 11:32–34. Let's read the passage together. Barak may have been hesitant at first, but this passage says that he, along with David and Samuel, "through faith subdued kingdoms." He "out of weakness [was] made strong, became valiant in battle, turned to flight the armies of aliens." Deborah's encouragement and support turned Barak into a faithful and valiant worker of God.

C. The Lord Goes Before Barak

Although we do not know who it was specifically, someone informed Sisera that the Israelite army was on the move. In response, Sisera gathered his iron chariots and his men, and they set out from Harosheth Hagoyim to the River Kishon. Let's read Judges 4:13–16. The description of the battle is very

brief, but Deborah told Barak, “Has not the LORD gone out before you?”, and the Bible also says that “the LORD routed Sisera and all his chariots and all his army with the edge of the sword before Barak” (vv. 14–15). Throughout the entire battle, the Lord had everything well in hand. But what exactly did He do?

Let’s turn to Judges 5:20–21. These verses give us a hint as to what happened. It seems that the River Kishon flooded over and swept away Sisera and his troops. Their chariots, once vaunted weapons of war, became incapacitated in the mud and water of the overflowing river. God’s power made their very strength their greatest weakness! This is how God went ahead of Barak and brought victory to the Israelites. From this, it is clear that God works in incredibly unexpected ways, so we should never try to anticipate what God will do to help us. All we need to do is place our trust in Him, just as Deborah encouraged Barak to do.

Life Application: Working Effectively with Others

Although God spoke through Deborah, she didn’t take on all of the responsibilities in going up against the Canaanites. As God instructed, she humbly handed the task over to Barak, and even when Barak asked her to come with him, she didn’t take over his work. She played her role, but also helped Barak perform his work for God without subverting his authority or taking command.

Have you ever gotten impatient watching others struggle with a seemingly simple task, or felt that you could do a better job than them? It is always a temptation to show off our skills and simply take over a job because we think we can do better, or because we don’t trust others to do it. But working effectively with others means learning to stay in our own lane! Deborah may have been a more effective commander than Barak, but she knew that Barak had his own role to play. Barak, for his part, accepted his responsibilities and didn’t attempt to make Deborah do all the work. They both understood their own roles, and neither of them struggled for power or tried to unload all their responsibilities on someone else.

Any divine work that we do is better accomplished with a group of fellow workers rather than by ourselves. We shouldn’t try to shoulder all of the responsibilities ourselves but divide the load so that we don’t become overburdened. God’s work isn’t a short 100-meter dash. It’s a marathon that we must learn to run with good and supportive teammates.

Let’s read 1 Corinthians 12:20–26. As Paul teaches, we all have our own purpose as different parts of the church’s body. We should accept the role given to us, while also accepting that others have different parts to play according to the gifts that God has given to them. This is what it means to work effectively with others as one body in Christ.

D. Jael: The Unexpected Heroine

Let’s continue with the chapter. Sisera’s army was defeated, but he managed to flee on foot. Let’s read what happened to him in Judges 4:17–24. Jael’s treatment of Sisera gave no indication of her intent. By covering him with a blanket and giving him milk instead of water to drink, she was showing him hospitality that was reserved for important guests. This made the unwitting man lower his defenses and fall asleep. As a result, an army general who had cruelly harassed the Israelites for twenty years died at the hands of a woman, while he was sleeping.

As we mentioned earlier, when Deborah told Barak that Sisera would die at the hands of a woman, we probably expected it to be Deborah, not a woman whose house was at peace with the Canaanite king!

We don't know the reason Jael chose to do this – perhaps she saw the plight of the Israelites and sympathized with them, or perhaps she had witnessed Sisera's cruelty. Whatever the case, Deborah praised her actions, and in her song, called Jael "[most] blessed among women" (Judg 5:24). After Sisera's death, from that point onwards, God gave the Israelites strength until they finally subdued Jabin.

Check for Understanding

- 1. Why did God allow the Israelites to be oppressed by their enemies?** They failed to completely remove the Canaanites, and they intermarried with Gentiles. As a result, they were led astray and began worshipping idols, incurring God's wrath and punishment.
- 2. What important teaching can we learn from the Bible's introduction of Deborah?** Despite her many roles and responsibilities, she continued to put God first in her life above all else. Her service to God was a lifelong commitment, not just something that she did in her spare time.
- 3. What is important about the way Deborah supported Barak?** She didn't brush off his concerns or attempt to assume his responsibilities. Instead, she went with him to battle and encouraged him with God's words so that he was able to fulfill the task that God gave him.
- 4. In what way had the Lord "gone out before" Barak?** He sent a great rain and flooded the River Kishon, immobilizing the 900 iron chariots of Sisera so that Barak and the 10,000 men of Israel could defeat them.
- 5. Why is it important that we learn to work effectively with others when serving the Lord?** Because any divine work is better accomplished with a group of fellow workers. God's work isn't a 100-meter dash. It's a marathon that we must learn to run with good and supportive teammates. Moreover, Paul teaches us that we all have our own purpose as different parts of the church's body. We should accept the role given to us, while also accepting that others also have their own parts to play.

Life Application

Activity: One Body of Christ

(Teachers: This is an optional activity, time permitting. Some preparation may be required on your part, including finding a large piece of poster paper, markers, and perhaps preparing a list of members and their responsibilities ahead of time. You may also use smaller, individual pieces of paper for each student instead of a large-sized piece, perhaps with a silhouette already drawn on it.)

We learned from Deborah and Barak the importance of sticking to our own responsibilities and of learning how to work with others effectively. Paul taught us that each member is one part of the whole body of Christ, and each of us have our own different roles to play. But what roles are needed for Christ's body that is the church? What kinds of different roles are needed, and what kinds of roles can we fulfill? Try to think about that as we go through this activity!

Instructions

1. As a class, brainstorm all the different roles that are required to run a church. To start, think of all the weekly duties that are assigned, such as cooking, hymn leading, or cleaning, then branch out from there. Think of board members and their duties if you're uncertain of where to continue. For example, someone needs to keep track of finances, issue checks, make the cleaning and service schedules, buy supplies for the church, water the plants, or run the A/V systems, if any. It might help to mentally go room by room throughout the church, and list any responsibilities related to each room.

2. Once you have a solid list, on a large piece of craft paper, draw a silhouette of a body. At the top, you may write: "The Body of Christ." *(Teachers: If it is large enough, perhaps you can have one student lie down so that others can roughly trace their silhouette. Make sure sisters do it if a sister is being outlined, and brothers for a brother.)*
3. Draw lines that point to different parts of the body, such as the legs, hands, or head, and assign different roles based on the list that you brainstormed together. For example, the hands might have roles such as cleaning or general affairs, while the feet might be different financial duties, and the head might be the RE teacher or minister. You may assign several roles to one part of the body.
4. **OPTIONAL:** Beside each role, using a different color, write down the name(s) of who does this in your church! Write as many as you can, including your own names. You may need to go out and interview different members for this part, to see what they do for the church! *(Teachers: This is a good optional step for your students to get to know who does what in the church, and to learn the names of different church members who they may or may not already know. It can also help them to gain a greater appreciation for the many different jobs that are required to run a church.)*

Memory Verse

"Then Deborah said to Barak, 'Up! For this is the day in which the LORD has delivered Sisera into your hand. Has not the LORD gone out before you?'" (Judges 4:14a)

Meanings

1. God fights for us

For Barak, the hardest part of the fight may very well have been plucking up the courage to go into the battle. This is because when he got there, the Lord had already done the hard work for him! Every day is a spiritual battle for us, but we can take comfort in the fact that God has already gone out before us. When we are weak, we can rely on His strength.

2. Encourage each other in Christ

Barak may have been hesitant at first, but Deborah's words encouraged him to take up his weapons and fight as the Lord commanded. We should also learn how to encourage our brethren when they are feeling weak or down in their faith, not just with our words, but also with our actions. Just as Deborah went into battle with Barak to support him, we also need to help our brothers and sisters by supporting them in their own spiritual battles.

Conclusion

Deborah has set an example for how we should treat our service to God. We should always put God first in our lives and learn to commit ourselves to His service. Deborah also teaches us some very good lessons about how we should treat our co-workers. To encourage them, we shouldn't just stop at our words, but show our care through our actions. In addition, when serving the Lord, we should learn how to humbly work together with others in peace and unity, without jostling for power or trying to give our responsibilities to someone else. With God's strength and power, the holy work we do will make both ourselves and the church grow in Christ.

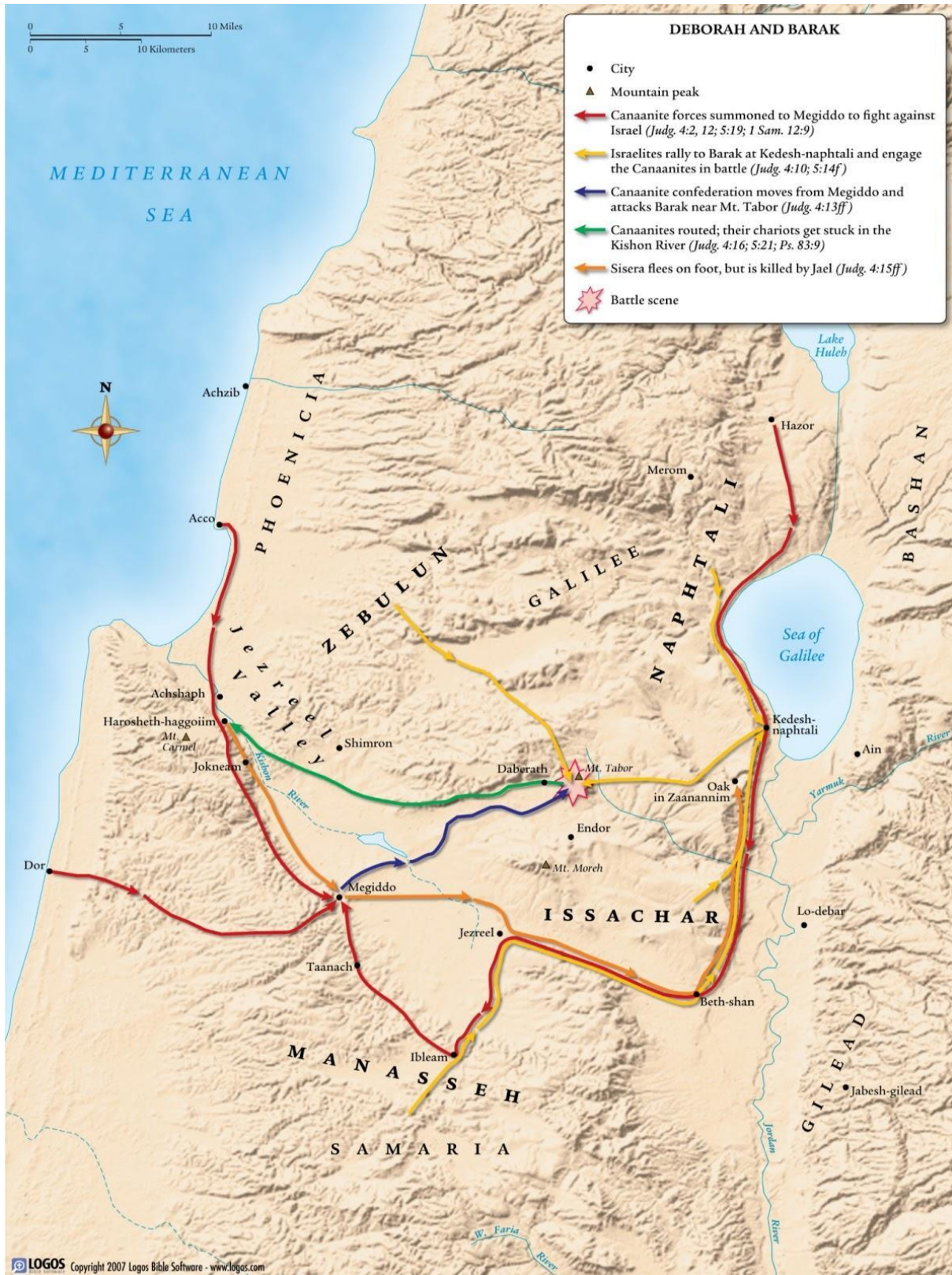


Figure 1: Army movements in the Battle of Deborah.¹

¹ Logos Bible Software, 2007

Lesson 2 Homework Assignment Answer Key

1. What does the memory verse teach us about our spiritual battles?
We can take comfort in God's strength and power. When we are weak, we can rely on Him.
2. " _____ not, for I am with you; be not _____, for I am your God. I will _____ you, yes, I will _____ you, I will _____ you with My righteous right hand." (Isaiah 41:10)
Fear, dismayed, strengthen, help, uphold.
3. "But now God has set the _____, each one of them, in the _____ just as He pleased. But now indeed there are _____, yet _____."
_____." (1 Corinthians 12:18, 20)
members, body, many members, one body
4. How should we encourage our brethren when they are weak in spirit or fighting a spiritual battle?
Like Deborah, we should join them in their spiritual battles, not just in our prayers or in words, but let our actions prove our intentions and willingly help them through the task or trial that they are facing.
5. Explain in your own words what Deborah and Barak teach us about working effectively with others.
See Life Application: Working Effectively with Others.
6. If you had a dispute with a co-worker in church, how would you resolve it?
Personal answers.

Gideon: A Mighty Man of Valor

Passages: Judges 6:11–7:25; 8:22–35

Memory Verse

“And He said to me, ‘My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness.’ Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.” (2 Corinthians 12:9)

Knowledge of God’s Will [God’s Word]	Knowledge of God [God’s Divine Nature]	Good Works [Behavior]
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Gideon doubted himself, but with the Lord’s power, he was able to become a mighty man of valor and defeat the Midianite army. Understand how Gideon failed to build a lasting faith and allowed himself to become ensnared in sin. 	<p>God is all-powerful. He will help us when we rely on Him.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Focus on the skills that God has given to us by seeing ourselves from God’s point of view. Learn the actions that we can take to build up our trust in the Lord.

Overview

Events and Spiritual Teachings

- A. Gideon Is Called by the Lord
 - Life Application**
 - “Tear down the altar of Baal that your father has”
 - From Doubt to Trust
- B. Three Hundred Men
 - Life Application**
 - Relying on God’s Power
 - “Go in this might of yours...Have I not sent you?”
- C. Gideon Is Ensnared
 - Life Application**
 - A Steadfast Faith
 - Remembering the Lord

Life Application

- Mighty Man of Valor
- Building Up Our Trust in God

Memory Verse

Conclusion: Like Gideon, we may feel insignificant, unremarkable, or powerless. But God uses everyone for His good purpose, and we should trust that if He has called us to serve Him, He will also help us do the job properly.

Events and Spiritual Teachings

Introduction

This week we'll be learning about Gideon, the next judge after Deborah. But first, do you remember the cycle of sin that we learned about last week? During the period of judges, the Israelites were stuck in a vicious cycle of sin. They would stray from God, who then allowed them to be oppressed by their enemies as punishment, after which the Israelites would repent. God would come to save them, only for them to stray again during times of peace.

The Midianites' Oppression of Israel

The time of Gideon was yet another period during which the Israelites strayed from God's teachings. But the oppression this time was quite severe. Each time the Israelites tried to sow the land for food, the Midianites and the Amalekites would destroy all their crops and animals, forcing them into poverty. The Israelites were so badly oppressed that they lived in caves and dens in the mountains. It was a desperate measure that they were forced to take in order to survive, turning them into a homeless people on the very land that God had promised to them.

A. Gideon Is Called by the Lord

An unconventional hero, timid Gideon was an unusual choice for a leader, as he displayed a lot of doubt when God called him. But despite these characteristics, God called him a "man of valor." Why did He use these words? Let's read about his calling in more detail. First, let's turn to Judges 6:11–27. When God called Gideon, the first thing He commanded him to do was to destroy the altar of Baal. Why do you think this is the first thing that God told Gideon to do? This was a test of Gideon's faith, commitment, and obedience. It is also a reminder that before we serve God, we must first remove idols from our hearts.

Let's continue with Gideon's calling. After this event, the Midianites and the Amalekites began to gather against Israel. In response, "the Spirit of the LORD came upon Gideon" (Judg 6:34), and he began to gather the Israelite army together to fight the Midianites. But before he did so, Gideon wanted a sign from God. Let's read Judges 6:36–40. Gideon was full of doubt, enough that he wanted a sign of God's presence. It is not wise to test God, but He was patient with Gideon. The Lord graciously acknowledged and confirmed His presence and power in order to develop Gideon's faith. This way, Gideon could learn to trust and rely on God, despite his own fears and worries.

Life Application

1. "Tear down the altar of Baal that your father has"

In order to serve Him, God first wants us to knock down our own Baals, the idols in our lives that pull us away from God. This means that we must be willing to deal with any sin within us, and obey His calling with full submission. If we do so, then God will honor us just as He honored Gideon. Therefore, the first step to serving God is not the work itself. It is tearing down the idols in our lives first. Then, we can fulfill the service that God requires of us. What "Baals" in your life need to be knocked down?

2. From Doubt to Trust

When the Angel of the Lord first approached Gideon, the very first thing he said was, "O my lord, if the LORD is with us, why then has all this happened to us? And where are all His miracles which our fathers told us about, saying, 'Did not the LORD bring us up from Egypt?' But now the LORD has forsaken us and delivered us into the hands of the Midianites" (Judg 6:13). He also

added, "O my Lord, how can I save Israel? Indeed my clan is the weakest in Manasseh, and I am the least in my father's house" (v. 15). Later, Gideon asked for still more signs from God, in the form of dew on the fleece, and then dew around the fleece. His heart was obviously full of doubt, both in the Lord's power, and in himself.

The Bible teaches us never to test God, except in tithing (Deut 6:16; Mal 3:10). This is because testing God is a sign of unfaithfulness. God wants us to trust Him, not test Him. When we are first called by God, we are normally full of doubt, fear, or even mistrust, making us hesitant to commit ourselves to His work. It is easy to doubt our own skills, or worry about the task that we have been given. This is because we haven't yet developed a relationship with God. Therefore, when the Lord calls us, after we have removed the idols from our hearts, the next step is to build up our faith, trust, and reliance on God.

B. Three Hundred Men

Let's read Judges 7:1–8. As if to enhance Gideon's doubts and fears, the Lord ordered him to reduce the number of his army by over 30,000, until he was only left with a mere 300 men. Meanwhile, the Bible describes the Midianite army "as numerous as locusts; and their camels were without number, as the sand by the seashore in multitude" (Judg 7:12). Can you imagine the difference in number? But the Lord wanted to make sure the Israelites didn't claim glory for a victory that belonged to God, and God alone. He wanted them to remember His power. This is especially apparent in the way He defeated the enemy army. Let's read on to verses 9–22.

When the Midianite army heard the blowing horns, the smashing of the jars, and saw the sudden flare of torches, they turned on each other before fleeing in defeat. Because of God's power, the Israelites didn't have to lift a finger to fight! All they had to do was obey Gideon's orders and stand firm with courage and faith. God did all of the rest for them.

Life Application

1. Relying on God's Power

Let's read 2 Corinthians 12:9–10. "And He said to me, 'My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness.' Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong." Why did Paul "take pleasure" when sick or in distress? When we are faced with problems beyond our control, we have no choice but to rely on God. In much the same way, the Lord forced Gideon to rely on Him by reducing his army to a mere 300 men.

When we are smart, talented, or rich, we tend to forget God and rely on ourselves. But when we try to use our own resources to solve our problems, we realize our limitations very quickly. We can only control certain elements of our lives, and there is only so much knowledge and wisdom that we can gain on our own. On the other hand, the Lord is all-powerful, and His wisdom and understanding are limitless. With this in mind, we need to learn to trust in God's power, not our own.

2. "Go in this might of yours...Have I not sent you?"

When God first called Gideon, Gideon's immediate response was to question God's presence and ask for signs (Judg 6:13, 15, 17). Gideon wasn't sure if God was truly with him, and he definitely thought that he wasn't able to do the job. On the other hand, let's look at God's

words. He told Gideon, “The LORD is with you, you mighty man of valor!” (v. 12). He continued, “Go in this might of yours [...]. Have I not sent you?” (v. 14). “Surely I will be with you, and you shall defeat the Midianites as one man” (v. 16). God knew Gideon could do the work, because God Himself had sent him; He would give Gideon the power to do what he needed to do.

When we feel that our skills are inadequate, it can be easy to put off serving the Lord. We don’t want to be put on the schedule for piano playing until we’ve practiced some more, for example, or we think we don’t have enough knowledge or confidence to help evangelize. Excuses are easy to come up with, and even easier to use when we’re reluctant to serve God. Perhaps we don’t want to help because “we don’t know how.” But the Lord told Gideon, “Go in this might of yours [...]. Have I not sent you?” This means that whatever strength Gideon had was enough. God would handle the rest. The same is true for us! If we are able to serve God, then all we need to do is the best that we can do with the strength that we already have. As long as we rely on Him, God will handle the rest.

C. Gideon Is Ensnared

Let’s read Judges 8:22–28. The Israelites wanted to honor Gideon as their king for delivering them from Midian. But Gideon, recognizing that it was God who gave them victory, declined the offer. He understood that the Lord was their rightful sovereign. However, even after saying this, Gideon allowed himself to be led astray when he asked for each man to give the earrings that they had plundered. Whatever his intentions for making an ephod from all this gold, it became a snare to him and his family.

Although Gideon’s refusal to become king seemed to show his obedience to God’s will, his actions speak otherwise. Aside from leading the Israelites into idolatry with the ephod, the Bible also records that he had seventy offspring by “many wives” (Judg 8:30). He even named one of his sons Abimelech, which means “My Father is King.” The Lord had patiently built up Gideon’s trust in Him, but it is apparent that Gideon did not have a true or lasting faith.

Life Application

1. A Steadfast Faith

Peter wrote, “Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour” (1 Pet 5:8). As we learned from Gideon, serving God or having a close experience with Him does not guarantee a lasting faith. When Gideon was first called, the Lord commanded him to destroy the altar to Baal. Gideon certainly did as he was commanded physically, but he hadn’t done so spiritually. As a result, he failed this particular test of his faith. To avoid this same mistake, we need to constantly build up our faith, so that it remains strong against any temptations we may face.

2. Remembering the Lord

Let’s read Deuteronomy 8:11–17. One of the dangers to our faith is simply forgetting what God has given us. In this passage, Moses warned the Israelites not to forget who freed them from slavery, fed them in the wilderness, and gave them all that they had. Our hearts are often full of pride, so it is easy for us to believe that we earned everything that we have on our own. But these kinds of thoughts are both untrue and dangerous for our faith. Gideon and the Israelites forgot that it was God who gave them victory over the Midianites, and as a result, fell back into idolatry (Judg 8:27, 34). We must learn from their mistakes, and spend time with God each and every day, to remember how He constantly blesses and protects us.

Check for Understanding

- 1. Why did God command Gideon to destroy the altar of Baal before anything else?** This was a test of Gideon's faith, commitment, and obedience. It is also a reminder that before we serve God, we must first remove idols from our hearts.
- 2. What sign did Gideon ask of God before going to battle? What does this show us about Gideon's heart?** He asked the Lord to first make the dew fall only upon the fleece the first night, then on the ground around the fleece the second night. This request shows us that Gideon's heart was full of doubt.
- 3. What is the first thing we need to do when called by God?** In order to serve Him, God first wants us to knock down our own Baals, the idols in our lives that pull us away from God.
- 4. Why is it important not to test God?** Because testing God is a sign of unfaithfulness. God wants us to trust Him, not test Him.
- 5. What did God mean by telling Gideon, "Go in this might of yours [...]. Have I not sent you"?** God was saying that the strength that Gideon had was enough. God would provide the rest.
- 6. According to Deuteronomy 8:11–17, what is one of the dangers to our faith? How can we avoid this danger?** One of the dangers is simply forgetting what God has given us. We can avoid this by spending time with God each and every day, to remember how He constantly blesses and protects us.

Life Application

1. Mighty Man of Valor

When God first called Gideon, He called him a "mighty man of valor." This is actually a very strange name to use. It was normal to thresh wheat outside, so that the wind could blow away the chaff. But the Bible notes how Gideon was threshing wheat in his cellar in order to try and hide from his enemies. This seems neither mighty nor valiant! From Gideon's responses, we can see that he also didn't consider himself a mighty warrior. Yet this was the title the Angel bestowed on him. Gideon later lived up to the title when he faced the Midianite army with a mere 300 men at his side. What kind of teaching can we learn from this?

Learn to see ourselves from God's point of view

When we lack confidence, it is easy to believe that we cannot do this or that job. But if the Lord calls us to serve Him in some way, we should learn to see ourselves from God's point of view. Let's read Ephesians 2:10 together. "For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them." We may always feel dissatisfied with things that we cannot change about ourselves – perhaps we wish we were a bit taller, a bit shorter, or maybe even born into a different family – but we should remember that the Lord made us the way we are for His purpose.

How do you see yourself? Do you look at yourself in the mirror and see only your different flaws? It is easy to have high expectations of ourselves, but too often these expectations are based entirely on human standards. We are supposed to be smarter, sociable, or richer in order to be elevated and accepted. But the Lord sees us otherwise. He wants us to focus on what He has given us, such as our kindness, our optimism, or our ability to be a good listener. Maybe we are good at seeing when others are struggling in their faith or are good at helping in particular areas in the church.

Whatever skills God has given us, it is easy to forget them or even overlook them entirely when we focus on our perceived flaws. It is also easy to compare ourselves to human standards instead of looking at

ourselves from God's point of view.

Activity: What God Sees in Me

Preparation

Prepare bookmark-sized pieces of paper for each student in your class. You may also choose to prepare supplies such as a hole punch, ribbon, and colored pencils or markers for them to decorate the bookmarks with. If you'd like stiffer bookmarks, you may want to use cardstock, or sandwich a piece of construction paper between two pieces of slightly smaller blank paper.

Instructions

1. *Give each student a bookmark and have them write their name near the top of one side. (If you'd like them to hole-punch the top for a ribbon, make sure they don't write too close to the edge.)*
2. *Have the students pass their bookmarks clockwise around the class. For each that they receive, have them write down one godly quality or characteristic that they admire or have seen in the student whose name is written on the bookmark. Are they good at listening? Patient with the little children? Maybe they are good at cleaning or at spreading joy. If they are unsure, have them think of the fruit of the Spirit for ideas.*
3. *If you only have a few students in the class, then you may want to pass the bookmarks around two or three times. Otherwise, once may be enough.*
4. *Once everyone has written at least once on each bookmark, have the students write down Ephesians 2:10 on the other side of their own bookmark.*
5. *After this, they may decorate their bookmarks as they wish.*

2. Building Up Our Trust in God

From Gideon's story, we can see that he repeatedly had doubts about God's presence and power. He questioned God's decision in choosing him, asked for signs of God's presence, and went to spy on the Midianites because he was afraid. He was unable to bring himself to trust in God. This is because he lacked a close relationship with Him.

Do you trust your family? Your friends? How about your RE classmates, or your brethren in church? The people you trust are those you've spent a lot of time with. They are the people you have learned about, gotten to know deeply, and eventually grown to rely on. But how do we develop this trust with God? It's hard to do when we can't see Him or talk directly to Him as we would our friends and family. Let's see what the Bible says about trusting the Lord.

For each of the following verses, underline or write down what action is necessary for us to trust in God. Then briefly explain each action in your own words.

6. Ps 9:10 – "And those who know Your name will put their trust in You; for You, LORD, have not forsaken those who seek You."
Know God's name by studying His word and understanding His character.
7. Ps 62:8 – "Trust in Him at all times, you people; pour out your heart before Him; God is a refuge for us. Selah."
Give our problems to God by telling Him everything in prayer.
8. Prov 3:5–6 – "Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths."

Follow God's commands and live out His word in our daily lives.

9. Jer 17:7 – “Blessed is the man who trusts in the LORD, and whose hope is the LORD.”
Have hope in God's salvation.
10. Rom 8:28 – “And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose.”
Grow in our love for God.
11. Rom 15:13 – “Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.”
Be filled with the Holy Spirit so that we can be empowered by God's help.

Memory Verse

“And He said to me, ‘My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness.’ Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.”
(2 Corinthians 12:9)

Meaning

While most wouldn't enjoy feeling weak, Paul rejoices in his weaknesses because during his time of weakness, he remembers and relies more on the Lord. Therefore, he can experience more of the Lord's grace. When we call on the Lord in our weakness, He will give us strength, and we can trust that He will help us. Only by trusting in God can we become strong because He is all-powerful. However, as humans, we tend to forget God in times of prosperity, so we should dedicate time daily to God so that we grow closer to Him and learn to rely on His grace and strength.

Conclusion

Like Gideon, we may feel insignificant, unremarkable, or powerless. But God uses everyone for His good purpose, and we should trust that if He has called us to serve Him, He will also help us do the job properly. All we need to do is serve to the best of our ability, and trust fully in His power and strength. We need to remember that God isn't looking for a perfect servant. All He wants is for us to knock down the Baals in our lives, trust His guidance, and maintain a steadfast faith. Then, we will be able to become mighty warriors of God, full of valor and able to defeat even the greatest armies through God's power!

Lesson 3 Homework Assignment Answer Key

1. Why would Paul rather “boast” of his infirmities?
Because when he is weak, he remembers and relies more on the Lord. In turn, he is able to experience more of God’s grace.
2. “For we are His _____, _____ in Christ Jesus for _____
_____, which God _____ beforehand that we should _____ in
them.” (Ephesians 2:10)
workmanship, created, good works, prepared, walk
3. What was the first thing God commanded Gideon to do? What does this teach us?
He commanded Gideon to tear down the altar of Baal. This teaches us that in order to serve Him, God first wants us to knock down our own Baals, the idols in our lives that pull us away from God.
4. Why did God reduce the Israelite army to only 300 men?
The Lord wanted to make sure the Israelites didn’t claim glory for a victory that belonged to God, and God alone.
5. What did Gideon’s request for the plunder tell us about his faith?
Although he gave the correct answer in refusing kingship, it is apparent that he did not have a true or lasting faith.
6. Have you ever questioned God’s presence or power in the past? Why?
Personal answers.

Samson: A Deteriorating Faith

Passages: Judges 13–16

Memory Verse

“For behold, you shall conceive and bear a son. And no razor shall come upon his head, for the child shall be a Nazirite to God from the womb; and he shall begin to deliver Israel out of the hand of the Philistines.” (Judges 13:5)

Knowledge of God’s Will [God’s Word]	Knowledge of God [God’s Divine Nature]	Good Works [Behavior]
1. Samson was dedicated to God from birth as a Nazirite, but he ignored his identity and his vows. 2. Despite his weaknesses, God still used Samson to enact His will.	1. God has His plan for our lives. 2. God is not limited by our weaknesses. 3. The Spirit of God will empower us to do His will.	Learn to protect our identities in Christ.

Overview

Events and Spiritual Teachings

- A. God’s Provision
- B. Samson’s Feats of Strength
- C. Samson’s Weaknesses

Life Application: Protecting Our Identity in Christ

Memory Verse

Conclusion: Samson’s choices did not deter God’s plan. However, we can learn from his mistakes and become better spiritual Nazirites, dedicated to God and driven by our faith in Him, rather than by our worldly desires. In this way, we can avoid letting our faith deteriorate and protect our identities in Christ.

Events and Spiritual Teachings

Introduction

After Gideon came several judges, including Tola, Jair, and Jephthah. Israel's ninth, tenth, and eleventh judges were named Ibzan, Elon, and Abdon. Samson was the twelfth, and last, judge recorded in the Book of Judges. Since the time of the previous judge, the Israelites had once again strayed and "did evil in the sight of the LORD" (Judg 13:1). As a result, God gave them over to the Philistines. By the time Samson was born, they had been oppressed for forty years.

A. God's Provision

1. God provides for Samson's parents

In Old Testament times, it was considered shameful if a woman were barren. Hannah, for example, was deeply miserable due to her inability to bear a child for her husband (1 Sam 1:6–9). Like Hannah, Samson's mother was also barren, but from the way the couple treated the Angel of the Lord, it is clear that they revered God, despite her condition and the decline in the Israelites' faith (Judg 13:1, 8, 18–23). Because of their reverence, they were blessed with a son who was set apart from his birth to serve as a judge over Israel. As with many times before, God had chosen unexpected people to serve His purpose, and He transformed her disgrace into joy.

2. God provides for the Israelites

God had given the Israelites into the hands of the Philistines, who were fierce warriors. They knew how to make weapons out of iron, giving them a huge advantage in battle (1 Sam 13:19–22). After forty years of oppression at the hands of the Philistines, God chose to "begin to deliver Israel out of the hand of the Philistines" (Judg 13:5). His plan began with Samson (14:4).

B. Samson's Feats of Strength

Samson's life was an unusual case, as 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 his mother had to observe the same restrictions until his birth (vv. 13–14). We don't know the exact purpose for such unusual circumstances, but we know that as God's chosen, the spirit of God empowered Samson and gave him extraordinary strength. Let's look at his feats of strength recorded in the Bible.

1. Kills a lion

Samson's first recorded feat of strength was when, "to his surprise, a young lion came roaring against him." The Bible says that "the Spirit of the LORD came mightily upon him, and he tore the lion apart" (Judg 14:5–6). We don't know if this is the first time he demonstrated his strength, but it is a very dramatic scene in which the Lord showed His power working within Samson.

2. Defeats the Philistines

Let's read Judges 14:2–4. Although Samson's actions were entirely self-centered, the Lord used Samson's desires for His own purpose. As mentioned earlier, God had plans to "deliver Israel out of the hands of the Philistines." This was the start of His plan. Following Samson's wedding, a cycle of vengeful retribution began, as recorded in Judges, chapter 15, when he discovered that his wife had been given to another. In response, Samson burned down the Philistine's fields. The Philistines answered by burning his wife and father-in-law. Once again, Samson dove headlong into vengeful action, killing 1,000 Philistines with a jawbone from a donkey.

3. Dies with the Philistines

The Philistines tried to capture Samson repeatedly, once when he was with a harlot in Gaza, and three times while he was with Delilah. Each time, Samson used his strength to overcome their forces. However, he finally revealed his secret to Delilah and was captured. After a period of suffering, he was eventually brought out to be mocked by the Philistines. Let's read Judges 16:21–30. In his last act of defiant strength, Samson called upon the Lord once more and killed thousands of Philistines, including their rulers, in one crippling blow to the nation.

Samson's life as a Nazirite is out of the ordinary in the unfortunate fact that he eventually broke all three of the Nazirite vows. However, God still granted him amazing strength and allowed Samson to kill the Philistine leaders.

C. Samson's Weaknesses

While he was physically strong, spiritually, Samson was tragically weak. When we read about him, it is clear that this is because his life was not oriented around God, but around himself. This became the main cause of his downfall. Let's look at his weaknesses and how they affected his life.

1. Self-centered

Let's read Judges 14:1–10. Our introduction to Samson finds him insisting on marrying a Philistine woman against his parents' wishes and in spite of his status as Israel's judge and a Nazirite. Later, he breaks two of his Nazirite vows within a few days of each other, first by taking honey from a lion's corpse, and second by holding a banquet for his wedding feast, where he likely drank wine.

You may have noticed that Samson didn't seem very reverent or respectful towards God! All of his life events recorded in the Bible were driven entirely by his own self-centered decisions and desires. He also showed a complete disregard for God's laws when he involved himself with three different Gentile women. He was a man who persisted in his own desires and ignored his Nazirite vows.

Although Samson judged Israel for twenty years, the Bible only records two prayers from him: the first time came when he was thirsty (Judg 15:18), and the second time came when he begged for the strength to take vengeance for his two lost eyes (16:28). God answered both prayers, but we can see that they both capture the self-centered life that he lived.

2. Lacked resolve

When pressed enough, Samson relented and gave up his secrets. The first time may have seemed harmless as it was simply an answer to a riddle, but it led to an opening and escalation in violence between him and the Philistines. It can also be seen as a foreshadowing of his eventual downfall when Delilah pressed him in precisely the same manner as his wife.

It is clear that in his heart, Samson knew that Delilah could not be trusted, because he did not reveal the truth to her at first. However, knowing that she would betray him was not enough to deter him from staying. Because of his desire to be with her, and perhaps because he thought that he could not be harmed, he willingly kept himself in a vulnerable situation. This gave Delilah plenty of time to whittle at his willpower and eventually completely break down his resolve.

3. Lacked a relationship with God

Although the Bible says that Samson served as judge over Israel for twenty years, it is clear from his actions that Samson did not esteem his identity as God's chosen. It is also clear that he took God for granted. Whenever he attacked or defended himself from the Philistines, he simply did so without a second thought. He took God's presence and power for granted.

Let's read Judges 16:20. When he tried to shake himself free a fourth time, the Bible notes that Samson did not know that the Lord had departed him. This reveals to us the underlying issue in his faith: he did not have a personal relationship with God. His lack of regard for God manifested itself in his foolish actions, in both refusing to leave a woman who had betrayed him three times and failing to keep the secret of his God-given gift.

Despite everything, the Bible still calls Samson a faithful worker (Heb 11:32–34). However, it is difficult for us to say whether the life Samson led was a successful or spiritually victorious one. He may have ultimately enacted God's will, but he had many weaknesses. At the very end, Samson still knew to call on God, but his primary drive was for vengeance. From this, we know that we can never hinder God's will, but we also do not want to become like Samson! Let us learn from his mistakes and become better spiritual Nazirites, dedicated to God and driven by our faith in Him rather than by our worldly desires.

Check for Understanding

1. **What is unusual about Samson's vow as a Nazirite?** 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. Even his mother had to observe the same restrictions until his birth.
2. **What are Samson's recorded feats of strength? How did each one occur?** See *Events and Spiritual Teachings, Section B*.
3. **What were Samson's three main weaknesses?** He was self-centered, lacked resolve, and lacked a relationship with God.
4. **In what way did Samson lack resolve?** When pressed enough, Samson relented and gave up his secrets. Also, because of his desire to be with Delilah, and perhaps because he thought that he could not be harmed, he willingly kept himself in a vulnerable situation.
5. **Why do we know that Samson lacked a relationship with God?** He did not realize that the Lord had departed from him when he tried to shake himself free a fourth time.

Life Application

Protecting Our Identity in Christ

From today's lesson, we learned that Samson did not treasure his identity as God's chosen, but instead allowed himself to be distracted by the world around him. As a result, his desires led him through a cycle of vengeance that ended in his imprisonment and death alongside the Philistine lords.

1. Do not be controlled by our desires

Unfortunately, we all have our own "Delilahs" in our lives, distracting us from God's purpose. Like Delilah, the world today often pesters us daily to turn away from God. Distractions such as social media, entertainment, or material wealth can make us forget that we are a child of God, a royal priesthood, and a living sacrifice. We are constantly bombarded by all kinds of worldly desires in movies, billboards, television, magazines, books, or social media. With so many different desires that distract us from our faith, unless we surrender our eyes, minds, and hearts to God, we are in danger of becoming captive to sin. We become of the world rather than above the world.

Desire shows itself in many forms. Food, fame, power, deception, or laziness are among the few types of desires that can control our lives. Sexual desire in particular is a common and powerful tool that Satan can use to deteriorate our faith. We need to be aware that following our desires erodes our control and, rather than fulfilling us, makes us thirst for more. They are powerful temptations that we need to deal with until we leave this world. So what is the best way to face them? The Bible teaches us a few ways to avoid being controlled by our desires.

- *“Call upon Me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you shall glorify Me.” (Ps 50:15)*
It takes humility to admit it, but as humans, we are simply too weak to face temptations on our own. Therefore, the first thing that we must do is call on the Lord for help. He can give us the strength to walk away from our desires.
- *“Flee also youthful lusts; but pursue righteousness, faith, love, peace with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart.” (2 Tim 2:22)*
To protect our identities in Christ, we must “flee” from our desires! On top of this, when we gather with like-minded people who also worship God, we can share our troubles, strengthen each other, and pursue God out of a pure heart together. When we help and encourage each other, we have a much better chance of overcoming temptation.
- *“I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh.” (Gal 5:16)*
When we fill our hearts with God’s Spirit, there is no room for worldly lusts. By filling ourselves with the Holy Spirit, we are also receiving strength from God to walk in the Spirit instead of obeying our sinful desires.

2. Be aware when our faith is deteriorating and take steps to return to God

It is clear that Samson had no awareness of the state of his own spiritual life. Our spiritual life is in the greatest danger when we don’t even realize that our faith has deteriorated! To protect our identity in Christ, it is important that we constantly evaluate our faith and seek to draw closer to God. It took the loss of his eyes, imprisonment, and his desire for vengeance to drive Samson back to God. But we do not want to take that long to return to Him – by that point, it is already too late.

To evaluate our faith, we must take a look at ourselves every now and then and ask what our priorities are. Do we always try to spend a little extra time with God in our prayers or Bible studies, or have we decreased the time that we spend with Him? Do we put effort into our prayers, or allow our minds to drift? Do you feel the movement of the Spirit in your life, warning you when you are straying or helping you to make choices that are correct in God’s eyes? Or do you barely even remember the Spirit’s presence? If we find that we have begun to stray and are following our desires more than our faith, then we need to take immediate steps to return to God before it is too late:

- *“Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God.” (Phil 4:6)*
If we are in trouble, ask God for help. If we are in need, make our requests known to Him. God knows our needs, so when we find that our faith is deteriorating because of our anxieties, our worries, or because of our physical needs, simply seek out God and tell Him.
- *“Has the LORD as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed than the fat of rams.” (1 Sam*

15:22)

God loves those who are faithful to Him, and who follow His word. He will “delight” in us when we walk in obedience to God. So, if our faith is deteriorating, to turn back to Him, we must go back to the basics in our faith: how have I disobeyed God, and how do I return to Him in obedience?

- *“Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded.” (Jas 4:7–8)*

When we submit to God and resist temptations, we can experience relief. When we avoid our desires and draw near to God, we will find that we are no longer attracted to our worldly desires. We will find that we treasure our identity in Christ.

Even small sins can affect our salvation, so we must learn from Samson and make wise choices that protect our identity in Christ. If we are struggling with our desires, remember that God is faithful. If we find that our faith is deteriorating, as the Bible says, “Fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, yes, I will help you, I will uphold you with My righteous right hand” (Isa 41:10). All we need to do is draw near to Him and call on Him for help.

Discussion

- What kinds of steps can you take to protect your identity in Christ?
- Is there something in your life that you know is bad for you, yet you still struggle to let it go?
- What are some steps you need to take in order to combat a specific desire in your life?
- Share a time when you were low in faith. How did you get yourself back up?

Memory Verse

“For behold, you shall conceive and bear a son. And no razor shall come upon his head, for the child shall be a Nazirite to God from the womb; and he shall begin to deliver Israel out of the hand of the Philistines.” (Judges 13:5)

Meaning

1. A Nazirite is someone who has decided to set themselves apart for God for a set period of time. For that period of time, they have chosen to devote themselves to God and remain separated from sin.
2. Samson had a noble, ordained purpose before he was even born—to deliver Israel out of the hand of the Philistines. Although he broke his Nazirite vows and his life choices were steeped in sin, God still used Samson for His plan. However, Samson himself died alongside his enemies.

Conclusion

Samson centered his choices around himself rather than around God. He did not treasure the gift that he had been given as God’s chosen, but instead used his strength to follow his desires. As a result, he broke all of his Nazirite vows, lacked the resolve to keep his strength a secret, and ended up dying alongside his enemies. His choices did not deter God’s plan. However, we can learn from his mistakes and become better spiritual Nazirites, dedicated to God and driven by our faith in Him, rather than by our worldly desires. In this way, we can avoid letting our faith deteriorate, and protect our identities in Christ.

Lesson 4 Homework Assignment Answer Key

1. What is a Nazirite?
A Nazirite is someone who has decided to set themselves apart for God for a set period of time. For that period of time, they have chosen to devote themselves to God and to remain separated from sin.
2. "I say then: _____ in the _____, and you shall not _____ the _____ of the _____." (Galatians 5:16)
Walk, Spirit, fulfill, lust, flesh
3. What made Samson's Nazirite vows out of the ordinary?
The vow of a Nazirite was normally voluntary and temporary, but Samson's vow lasted his entire life. Also, despite being set aside by God to be a Nazirite for life, Samson ended up breaking all three of his vows.
4. What was Samson's biggest weakness?
His life was oriented not around God, but around himself. This became the main cause of his downfall.
5. How do we know that Samson lacked a relationship with God?
He took God's power for granted, and he did not realize when God had left him.
6. What kind of threat do worldly desires pose to our faith?
Such desires encourage us to turn away from God, and we are in danger of becoming captive to our lusts. We become of the world rather than above the world. Following our desires erodes our control and, rather than fulfilling us, makes us thirst for more. This results in a deterioration of our faith.
7. Take a moment to evaluate your faith and spiritual life. Do you think you have a good relationship with God? Or do you follow your desires more than your faith? Briefly explain why you think so.
Personal answers.

Ruth: A Heart of Faith

Passages: Ruth 1–4

Memory Verse

“The LORD repay your work, and a full reward be given you by the LORD God of Israel, under whose wings you have come for refuge.” (Ruth 2:12)

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 how Ruth’s faith was evident in her actions.2. Learn about Boaz’s godliness, generosity, and moral integrity.3. Understand how Ruth and Boaz’s faith was connected to God’s blessings.	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. God is compassionate.2. God is loving.	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Have faith even in difficult times, and also diligently maintain our faith.2. Understand the extent of God’s loving nature, and learn how this should affect our daily lives.

Overview

Events and Spiritual Teachings

- A. Ruth’s Characteristics
- B. Boaz’s Characteristics
- C. God’s Redemptive Power

Life Application: God Uses the Faithful

Memory Verse

Conclusion: When life brings us devastation, it is often very difficult to have faith. But it is during those times that we need the most hope and faith. Like Naomi, we need to start with hope and return to Christ.

Events and Spiritual Teachings

Introduction

The story of Ruth takes place during the time of judges when “there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in his own eyes” (Judg 17:6; 21:25). It was a period full of darkness and suffering, brought by violence, immorality, idolatry, and disobedience to God. Naomi and her family left Bethlehem during a time of famine, and after experiencing severe hardships, she returned to Bethlehem a widow. However, she did not return alone: her daughter-in-law, a Moabitess, refused to leave her side and returned with her to Israel. Naomi’s return and Ruth’s faith for a God not originally her own trigger a series of events that show God’s care for the faithful, and the hope that He offers even in times of despair.

Teachers: If any of your students are unfamiliar with Ruth’s story, you may want to spend a few minutes briefly summarizing the book, as the lesson is not entirely chronological.

A. Ruth’s Characteristics

1. Her faithfulness

From the very beginning of the book, Ruth’s characteristics are clear. Let’s read Ruth 1:11–17. Naomi’s prospects were clear: she had no future to offer her daughters-in-law, and with the death of her sons, they were under no obligation to follow her. But Ruth “clung” to Naomi and told Naomi to entreat her not to leave Naomi. Ruth had no blood relation to Naomi, nor was she an Israelite, yet she declared that Naomi’s God would be her God, and Naomi’s people her people. Her words are not only moving to us because of her passionate appeal – they are moving to us because she backs her bold declaration with her actions.

As we read the book, we can see that Ruth not only leaves behind her home and family, but also goes the extra mile in caring for her mother-in-law and in following her instructions (Ruth 2:22–23; 3:5). Her actions clearly indicate that she had truly chosen to make Naomi’s people her people, and Naomi’s God her own as well. Her loyalty to Naomi and her obedience to God’s commands were demonstrations of her faithfulness in action.

2. Her compassion and kindness

Let’s read Ruth 2:5–7. Ruth worked hard to glean enough for both Naomi and herself, and in addition, she even set aside food for her mother-in-law when treated generously (Ruth 2:14, 18). When Boaz speaks to her for the first time, he says, “It has been fully reported to me, all that you have done for your mother-in-law since the death of your husband, and how you have left your father and your mother and the land of your birth, and have come to a people whom you did not know before” (2:11).

It may be easy to move to different cities, or even countries, today. But back then, Ruth had no job or living prospects since she had chosen to move, and she also had to leave her family behind. Boaz’s words remind us of how difficult a decision this must have been, especially as Naomi herself admitted that she had nothing to offer her daughter-in-law. But Ruth insisted on following her so that Naomi would not have to suffer alone, but would have the support of a younger family member.

3. Her obedience

Let’s read Ruth 2:2, 21–23. The book’s title and content focus on Ruth, but at the time, Ruth’s

focus was on supporting her mother-in-law. Furthermore, aside from leaving her homeland, her every action was done under the advice of Naomi and Boaz. Ruth was also exceptionally obedient to Naomi's advice. She did not take any matters into her own hands, but humbly did as Naomi instructed, word for word, even in the choice of her marriage.

Let's read Ruth 3:1–10. Boaz comments on Ruth's kindness in that she "did not go after young men, whether poor or rich" indicates that there was a distinct age difference between the two (v. 10). Ruth did not turn away her mother-in-law's instructions, and even humbly submitted herself as a "maidservant" before Boaz. Because of her obedience to Naomi's wisdom, she not only received God's blessings in the form of a stable and peaceful life, but she was also included in the genealogy of King David and the Messiah Himself.

Teachers: The following is an optional teaching about Ruth 3:1–4, if your students are curious about the meaning of Naomi's instruction and Ruth's actions, time permitting.

Naomi's Wisdom

This passage may seem baffling to us, so it is important to understand the context and intent behind Naomi's directions for her daughter-in-law.

- **"My daughter, shall I not seek security for you [...]?" (v. 1)**
Naomi's words may seem to encourage selfishness on Ruth's part, but in truth, what she desired was a peaceful life for her daughter-in-law. As a Moabitess and a widower, Ruth was unlikely to find a husband or a household within which she could safely dwell in. She would have struggled to survive, so Naomi sought a future with stability and rest for Ruth.
- **"Now Boaz, [...] is he not our relative?" (v. 2)**
Boaz being their relative may seem confusing and inappropriate for us. However, the word that Naomi uses is *goel*, sometimes translated as "kinsman-redeemer" in the Bible. This means that Boaz had a specific role towards Naomi's family under Mosaic law. That role included several responsibilities, including marrying Ruth and buying the land of her deceased husband.
(Teachers: See Section C for more details on redemption.)
- **"[Go] in, uncover his feet, and lie down [...]." (vv. 3–4)**
This part is perhaps the most perplexing part of Naomi's instructions. Some might interpret this as a provocative action, but it was actually a standard gesture of submission at the time, done by a master's servant. Servants would lie at their master's feet so that they would be ready to act upon any needs that the master might have. Naomi was telling Ruth to approach Boaz not as someone demanding his help, but as a humble and submissive servant.

The directions that Naomi gave to Ruth were specific. Although Boaz had the responsibility to accept Ruth's proposal, the method that Naomi recommended ensured that Boaz would not be placed under pressure. By following Naomi's instructions and proposing in this secretive manner, both Ruth and Boaz were able to keep their integrity in the eyes of both man and God.

B. Boaz's Characteristics

1. His godliness

Let's read the following verses: Ruth 2:4, 12, 14–16; 3:10–13. What do we immediately see about Boaz's character from these verses? From his simple greeting to his workers (2:4) to his

dealings with Ruth (2:12), we can see that Boaz lived a God-centered life in his speech and actions. He truly acknowledged God in all his ways (Prov 3:5–6).

According to Leviticus 19:9–10, Mosaic law demands that farmers refrain from completely harvesting their fields, but instead leave some behind for the poor. The fact that this law was being preserved so faithfully in Boaz’s field tells us much of his character: not only is Boaz himself one who abides by God’s laws, but he also surrounds himself with faithful workers who followed his instructions (Ruth 2:4, 16–17).

2. His generosity

Let’s read Ruth 2:8–9. Boaz offers three things that Ruth would have been sorely lacking as a foreign widow: friendship, protection, and refreshment. We also know that Boaz had absolutely nothing to gain by offering these things to her – he extended a helping hand, and he expected nothing in return. Let’s continue reading Ruth 2:15–16. After hearing of Ruth’s circumstances, he made sure to take care of her even without her knowledge, in a way that would not shame or humiliate her.

Let’s read Malachi 1:6–7. Generations later, although the Israelites followed the laws, they “despised” God’s name. They offered according to the law, but they did not follow the spirit of love that God desired (Mt 22:36–40). Their hearts were focused only on themselves. Boaz not only upheld God’s laws in deed, but also in the spirit of their purpose by showing kindness to the unfortunate and loving his neighbor as himself.

3. His moral integrity

When Naomi instructs Ruth on how to propose to Boaz, she concludes by saying, “[He] will tell you what you should do” (Ruth 3:4). When Ruth later returns and reports what happened, Naomi reassures her, saying that Boaz “will not rest until he has concluded the matter this day” (v. 18). After observing Boaz for a while, Naomi clearly had a good grasp of Boaz’s diligence and integrity. She knew that Boaz would not take advantage of Ruth, and that he would seek to quickly settle any responsibilities that he had.

As we read in the introduction, in the time of judges, “everyone did what was right in his own eyes.” In contrast to a lawless time where everyone did what was right in their own eyes, Boaz was honest and upright, and he abided by God’s laws in both deed and in spirit. Like Ruth’s compassion and faith, Boaz’s moral integrity was very clear.

C. God’s Redemptive Power

Although the book does not state God’s actions directly, we can clearly see His redemptive power at work in the events that occur. Boaz’s redemption of Ruth is a foreshadowing and analogy of our own redemption through the death of Jesus Christ. To understand this teaching, we need to learn more about the rules of redemption in the Mosaic law.

1. Redemption from slavery

Let’s read Leviticus 25:47–48. One of the redeemer’s responsibilities was to buy back a family member who was forced to sell themselves to a foreigner as a slave. This redemption was important in cases where the foreigner may not have followed God’s laws, such as the release of slaves in the Year of Jubilee.

2. Redemption of property

The second form of redemption was to buy back land that a kinsman was forced to sell (Lev 25:25). Boaz stated this rule of redemption clearly when he met with Naomi's kinsman-redeemer (Ruth 4:3–6). Upon buying back the land, the redeemer had the responsibility to keep and take care of it, then eventually return it to the family to whom it originally belonged. In Naomi's case, it would be returned to her family when Ruth bore a son.

3. Kinsman-Redeemer

Let's turn to Deuteronomy 25:5–6. At the time, preservation of the family name was of utmost importance. It was considered a tragedy if a family's name was no longer continued, so to safeguard against this, there were rules in place to help prevent this tragedy. If a man died before the birth of any sons, his brother was to marry his wife, and the firstborn son that they have together would instead take the name of the deceased. In the case of Ruth, the nearer relative, or "kinsman-redeemer," was willing to redeem the property, but did not want to deal with potential conflicts of inheritance when it came to his children (Ruth 4:6–8), so he willingly passed the responsibility on to Boaz.

From these laws, we can see that God cares about His people's freedom and prosperity. Although they may experience poverty or difficulties, His laws offer them a way out through the grace of their kinsmen-redeemers. However, the redemption shown in this book goes beyond the physical redemption that Boaz offers. Let's read Ruth 4:14–17.

It is not by mere chance that Naomi received so many blessings once she chose to return to God. But if she had not chosen to return, she would not have received such joy. In addition, Ruth, a Moabitess, is unusually compared to Rachel and Leah, the mothers of the Israelite nation (Ruth 4:11). Her status as a foreigner did not deter Boaz from agreeing to redeem the house of Elimelech, and our status as Gentiles did not stop God from choosing to redeem us from sin. Before we came to Christ, we were "dead in trespasses and sins," "having no hope and without God in the world" (Eph 2:1, 12). But through His death, He has redeemed us of our sins so that we can now receive salvation when we return to Him as Naomi did (Gal 3:13–14; Eph 1:7–8).

Check for Understanding

1. What were Ruth's characteristics? Briefly explain how we can see each in her actions.

- Faithfulness: She "clung" to Naomi and chose to follow the Mosaic law.
- Compassion and kindness: Everything she did was to support her mother-in-law. Boaz's words also remind us how difficult it must have been for her to live in a foreign land.
- Obedience: Aside from leaving her home country, all that she did was under the advice of Naomi and Boaz.

2. What were Boaz's characteristics? Briefly explain how we can see each in his actions.

- Godliness: From his greetings to his dealings with Ruth, we can see that he lived a God-centered life.
- Generosity: Boaz offered a helping hand to Ruth and expected nothing in return.
- Moral integrity: Naomi tells us clearly that he was a diligent man of integrity, and that he would seek to quickly settle any responsibilities that he had.

3. What do we learn about God from His laws regarding redemption? God cares about His people's freedom and prosperity. Although they may experience poverty or difficulties, His laws offer them a way out through the grace of their kinsman-redeemers.

- 4. What can we see about our own redemption in the Book of Ruth?** Like Ruth, our status as Gentiles did not stop God from choosing to redeem us from sin. Before we came to Christ, we were “dead in trespasses and sins,” “having no hope and without God in the world.” But through His death, He has redeemed us of our sins so that we can now receive salvation when we return to Him as Naomi did.

Life Application

God Uses the Faithful

We may believe that we have no skills or talents that God can use. Sometimes, we may even use this as an excuse to decline any work that we have been offered, no matter how minor. It is easy to feel that we are incapable of serving God in certain capacities or feel that we are ineligible even if we want to do something for Him.

Ruth was a poor and foreign widow, childless and struggling with poverty. She had to glean the fields behind harvesters just to survive. With this kind of insecure and lowly position, no one would have guessed that not only would Naomi’s line be revived through her, but that God would even choose her for the line of the promised redeemer! What was it about her that made God choose her for such an important role?

When Boaz spoke with her, he praised her for her faith towards Naomi, and added, “The LORD repay your work, and a full reward be given you by the LORD God of Israel, under whose wings you have come for refuge” (Ruth 2:12). Ruth was a foreigner with nothing to her name, but God accepted her because she had faith. Let’s read Hebrews 11:6. “But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.”

a. Faith in difficult times

One of the clearest markers of our faith is when we face difficult times or trials in life. Naomi had no prospects for either her own or Ruth’s future, and Ruth herself was a foreigner who was not originally from Israel. But Ruth did not let any fears of the future stop her from doing what she was determined to do: to remain faithful to her mother-in-law and, in turn, remain faithful to her mother-in-law’s people and her God.

God wants His workers to remain faithful to Him, but this is often difficult to do when we are struggling with different physical or spiritual trials in our lives. Let’s read Hebrews 12:1–3. In order to keep our faith in difficult times, we need to lay aside every weight and remember what Jesus endured before us and for us.

b. Faith in her diligence

The Bible records that Ruth gleaned the fields from morning until evening and continued working until the end of the wheat and barley harvest. Boaz also took note of her faith towards her mother-in-law, as well as her hard work and sacrifice. These qualities were clear not only to Boaz, but also to many others (Ruth 2:11; 3:11). From Boaz’s words, we know that everyone saw that Ruth went above and beyond in honoring and respecting her mother-in-law. Ruth’s faith was seen not only in her loyalty to Naomi, but also in her diligence.

Let’s read Matthew 6:5–6. We need to show our character even when we think that no one else is watching. When we do this, we are showing a heart that is concerned with our integrity and

love for God, rather than with showing off towards others or gaining public appreciation for our deeds.

From the Book of Ruth, we can see that it doesn't matter what kinds of skills we have or do not have. No matter what our circumstances are, even in our obscurity, God can use us, and often in ways that we could never have imagined. Perhaps He will use us to help keep a brother or sister in church, or perhaps He is planning to call us to serve as a minister or teacher for Him. All that we need is faith! We can be the most skilled person in the history of mankind, but if we do not have faith, then we will be of no use for God's work. On the other hand, we may be like Ruth, with no money, future, or particular skillset. But if we hold on to our faith in difficult times and act diligently with faith, then God will use us for His work.

Let's read a couple of testimonies to see these aspects of faith in action, and reflect on how we can do the same in our lives. *(Note: These testimonies have been summarized and shortened for the sake of this lesson. Names have been changed for anonymity.)*

Testimony #1:

Brother Aaron was the General Affairs officer in his local church, and the main source of financial support in his family. However, one year he lost his job due to the COVID-19 pandemic. With the added stresses of the pandemic, such as inflation, it was a difficult time for him, and he struggled with the loss of his job during a time when he really needed to keep it. However, during this time, his local church also had to continue running various events throughout the year, many of which became very difficult to manage due to the pandemic. Because of his job loss, Brother Aaron found that he was able to focus more on what was needed in his church as the General Affairs member. He was faithful in doing God's work without any complaints. In fact, despite the difficult time he experienced with the loss of his job, he went above and beyond, ensuring the church remained in mint condition and virus-free! Two years later, God gave him another job that offered a higher pay than his previous one. Reflecting back, he realized that God truly knew and understood his needs.

Testimony #2:

Sister Livia and her husband lived in the same home as her husband's parents. However, her in-laws were not True Jesus Church members, and they were quite demanding of Sister Livia. After she gave birth, her mother-in-law became more difficult, demanding that Sister Livia do double the amount of housework and chores despite having a child to care for. For ten years, she experienced intense hardship because of her mother-in-law's treatment. However, Sister Livia endured all of this adversity. Even when she was sick, she got up to fulfill her mother-in-law's requests, and when her father-in-law fell ill, she visited the hospital two or three times a day to check on him. Because of this diligence, Sister Livia's mother-in-law saw how amazing she was in enduring this hardship. She saw God in her actions and came to believe in Christ.

- What do you think of Brother Aaron and Sister Livia's faith? Do you think you would be able to endure in your faith and diligence if you encountered similar situations?

Memory Verse

"The LORD repay your work, and a full reward be given you by the LORD God of Israel, under whose wings you have come for refuge." (Ruth 2:12)

Meaning

Ruth worked diligently to support her mother-in-law and followed up with her promise to make Naomi's people and faith her own. Her compassion and loyalty towards Naomi were shown in her actions. As a result, God blessed her for her diligence and faith in the greatest way imaginable: not only was her and Naomi's futures secured through the grace of redemption, but she herself became a mother in the genealogy of the Messiah, God Himself. It is clear that those who work diligently and seek out God in faith will receive an abundance of blessings in return.

Conclusion

When life brings us devastation, it is often very difficult to have faith. But it is during those times that we need the most hope and faith. Like Naomi, we need to start with hope and return to Christ. When we act in faith towards God, He will also guide us to experience blessings while acting out His good works, in much the same way He silently guided Ruth, Naomi, and Boaz.

Lesson 5 Homework Assignment Answer Key

1. How do we receive the same abundance of blessings that Ruth received?
We must work diligently and seek out God in faith.
2. Why was it so unusual for Ruth to insist on following Naomi?
Naomi had no future to offer her daughters-in-law, and with the death of her sons, they were under no obligation to follow her. Ruth had no blood relation to Naomi, nor was she an Israelite, yet she declared that Naomi's God would be her God, and Naomi's people her people.
3. In which of his actions can we see that Boaz's life was centered around God?
We see this in his simple greeting to his workers, as well as in his dealings with Ruth. In addition, the fact that he followed the law so faithfully in his field tells us that he was not only one who abided by God's laws, but also one who surrounded himself with faithful workers who followed his instructions.
4. Briefly explain what a kinsman-redeemer is, and why the law regarding redeeming land was such an important law.
A kinsman-redeemer is the closest relative of a deceased man who would "redeem" his land and marry his wife. The firstborn son they have would then take the name of his deceased father and the redeemed land would become his. It was considered a tragedy if a family's name was no longer continued, so this law allowed the deceased man's family name to continue.
5. How do we show our faith through our diligence?
We need to have a heart that is concerned with our integrity and love for God, rather than with showing off towards others or gaining public appreciation for our deeds.
6. Can you recall a time when difficulties that you faced made you waver in your faith? Do you think you would waver again if faced with the same circumstances?
Personal answers.

Eli: Failures as a Priest and a Parent

Passages: As listed in the lesson.

Memory Verse

“Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it.” (Proverbs 22:6)

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. Eli failed in his duties as both priest and parent by honoring his sons more than God.2. As a result, the Lord condemned his family and the Israelites’ faith went into decline.	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. God is omniscient.2. God is just.	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Accept discipline with a humble heart.2. Avoid despising God in our daily lives.

Overview

Events and Spiritual Teachings

- A. Understanding Eli
- B. Eli’s Failures as a Priest
- C. Eli’s Failures as a Parent
- D. The Consequences of Eli’s Failures

Life Application

1. Do Not Despise Correction
2. Do Not Despise God

Memory Verse

Conclusion: We should learn from Eli’s mistakes, and keep our spiritual eyesight clear by maintaining our faith and seeking God’s will each day.

Events and Spiritual Teachings

Introduction

How do you deal with problems? Do you deal with them immediately, or do you procrastinate until the last minute? Do you ignore them completely, or try to make them someone else's problem instead? What do you think would be the consequences for each response? Try thinking back to a problem that you encountered. Share with the class what it was, how you dealt with it, and the consequences of the way you dealt with it.

We all deal with problems differently. Even in the Bible, there are a variety of different responses, especially to problems that people encountered in their faith. Today, we're going to be studying Eli, who is introduced to us at the beginning of 1 Samuel. Eli was a judge and a priest over the Israelites. However, he failed to address certain problems in his life, leading to terrible consequences.

A. Understanding Eli

During this period of Israel's history, "the word of the LORD was rare in those days; there was no widespread revelation" (1 Sam 3:1). Without God's word, the Israelites cast off their restraints and the society became corrupt. Amidst this darkness was the high priest Eli, who served as mediator between God and man. However, he was a poor spiritual leader whose weaknesses led to the decline of the nation's overall faith.

Eli belonged to the tribe of Levi, and for years, he acted as a judge and high priest in Israel. But despite his position, his life ended in dishonor. Instead of receiving a reward for his many years of service, Eli was cursed. His weaknesses in character and his tragic end serve as a warning for us today. Let's examine Eli's weaknesses as a high priest.

1. His spiritual eyesight was dim

1 Samuel 3:2 says that Eli's eyes had "begun to grow so dim that he could not see." The concern here isn't about Eli's physical decline, but his spiritual decline. A person with poor spiritual eyesight is someone who lacks spiritual discernment. We have evidence of this in his reaction to Hannah's earnest prayers of distress. Let's read 1 Samuel 1:12–14. Although he was a priest and a judge, he was unable to recognize that she was praying. This made Eli similar to a blind man leading the blind (Mt 15:14)!

2. His heart was far from God

Although Eli was the high priest, God did not reveal Himself to him, as his heart had drifted far from God. We can see this in the number of times it took for him to realize that it was God speaking to Samuel (1 Sam 3:8). Samuel, on the other hand, grew in the presence of God while serving Him, despite his young age. Consequently, God revealed Himself to Samuel and established him as a prophet of the Lord (vv. 19–21).

B. Eli's Failures as a Priest

Because of his lack of faith and spiritual discernment, Eli failed to serve both the Lord and the people as high priest. He may have performed his physical duties, but he failed to act as a mediator for the Israelites. In fact, as their spiritual leader, he actually led the Israelites even further astray from the Lord. Let's examine the various ways he failed his duties as a priest.

1. He allowed the priesthood to fall into disrepute

Eli was responsible for teaching the laws to the people, executing judgments, and offering sacrifices on their behalf. Unfortunately, he did not live up to his role in teaching the laws or maintaining the sanctity of the priesthood. Let's read 1 Samuel 2:12–17. Because of his sons' sins and Eli's lack of action, we can only imagine that those who came to commune with the Lord were no longer able to do so. Perhaps they were even blocked from God by the very people who were supposed to act as mediators, making worship at the temple a time of stress rather than a time of joy. Moreover, people tend to follow their leaders - seeing the priests of God sin would have given the Israelites an excuse to do the same themselves. Even so, Eli honored his sons more than God (v. 29), and allowed them to continue in their evil ways.

2. He did not correct his heart before God

Eli himself understood that what his sons were doing was wrong (1 Sam 2:24–25), yet he still didn't take any significant action to fix the priesthood. He continued allowing his sons to act sinfully in the temple and did not repent of his actions. The Lord gave Eli two separate warnings, one from "a man of God" (v. 27), and one from Samuel. Despite this, the Bible does not record any repentance on Eli's part, nor any attempt to fix the situation. When Jonah went to warn Nineveh of its destruction, the city didn't resign itself to its fate. Instead, the Ninevites deeply repented, and as a result, their city was spared. Eli, on the other hand, simply accepted his fate (3:18). This may seem like obedience, but the fact that he made no attempts to repair his relationship with God shows that he lacked both faith and the desire to repent.

3. He did not train a good successor

Eli's two sons were clearly unfit for priesthood. In order for the work of God to continue to prosper, it is important to cultivate successors and future pillars for His service. In the Bible, there are many great leaders who trained successors to continue their work. Moses trained Joshua, Elijah trained Elisha, the Lord Jesus trained His twelve disciples, and Paul trained young Timothy. Since Eli failed to train his sons, the Lord stepped in and personally appointed the young Samuel as His prophet instead.

C. Eli's Failures as a Parent

Eli had the responsibility of overseeing all worship in Israel. But his neglect of his own home shows that he was not up to the task. The Bible teaches us, "[For] if a man does not know how to rule his own house, how will he take care of the church of God?" (1 Tim 3:5). Likewise, "[he] who is faithful in what is least is faithful also in much; and he who is unjust in what is least is unjust also in much" (Lk 16:10). The state of Eli's household teaches us what kind of a person he was, and more importantly, tells us that his spirituality was severely lacking. Let's examine the results of Eli's negligence regarding Hophni and Phinehas' actions.

1. They did not know the Lord

Let's read 1 Samuel 2:12. "Now the sons of Eli were corrupt; they did not know the LORD." This is the very first description of Hophni and Phinehas in the Bible. A literal translation of the words "were corrupt" might also be read as "were sons of Belial." They did evil, and their actions were worse than those of the Gentiles, especially because they were supposed to be the spiritual leaders of the nation. They were God's priests, but they did not know God.

2. They treated the Lord's offerings with contempt

According to the law, if the people made certain offerings, specific parts were given to the

priests, such as the shoulder, cheeks, and stomach of an ox or sheep. Eli's two sons, however, took the best parts of an offering before it was offered to God, including the fat of the animal, which was considered the best part of the sacrifice. In short, they didn't care about God, so they robbed God of what belonged to Him.

3. They seduced the women at the tabernacle

Aside from stealing, the two also committed sexual immorality with women who gathered at the tabernacle to serve the Lord. Let's read 1 Samuel 2:22–25. Eli's words seem rather weak in the face of their sins, and they clearly had no effect on them. They were so steeped in sin that they were no longer sensitive to sin, or to his warning.

It is clear that his sons were wicked people, but all Eli did was speak ineffective words of rebuke. Despite raising them, he was unaware enough of their spirituality that he thought this would be enough to stop them. And when it didn't stop them, he didn't care enough to take further steps to punish them or to stop them from serving God. This is why God told Eli that he honored his sons above Him (1 Sam 2:29). Eli was unwilling to stand up for the truth or be firmer towards his sons, and as a result, he became an ineffective parent as well as a priest.

The Bible teaches us that sometimes severe punishment is necessary to purge sin (Prov 13:24; 23:14). Punishment may bring temporary pain and suffering, but "nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it" (Heb 12:11). By sparing his sons from punishment, Eli was condemning their souls.

D. The Consequences of Eli's Failures

Sometimes our failures only affect ourselves, and sometimes they affect other people, too. Forgetting to study for that test may affect only your grades, but if you forget to do something that you promised for someone else, then you've affected the lives of others with your actions. Eli's failures affected both his sons' lives and those of the Israelites. He wasn't solely responsible for their actions – his sons chose to act as they did, and as in Hannah's example, his failures didn't lead all of the Israelites into wickedness. But his failures certainly had an impact on his family, the Israelites, and the glory of God's nation.

1. Eli's family

Because of their sins, the Lord sent a prophet to announce judgment on Eli and his house. The prophet outlined a series of tragic events that would occur:

- a. God would cut off the arm of his father's house, so that there would not be an old man in his household, and all the descendants of his house would die early (1 Sam 2:31–33).
- b. Both his sons would die on the same day and lose their priesthood (1 Sam 2:34).
- c. The Lord would replace his family's position in the priesthood with a new, faithful priest (1 Sam 2:35; cf. 1 Kgs 2:27, 35)

Because of their disregard for God, God would completely wipe them out, and instead raise up a faithful priest to take their place. This new priest would act in accordance with God's heart and mind. This prophecy was fulfilled in King Solomon's time when Solomon expelled Abiathar – the last priest from Eli's household – from his status as high priest (1 Kgs 2:26–27).

2. The Israelites

His sons' wicked deeds and Eli's failure to punish them for it contributed to the decline in the Israelites' faith. Their conduct caused the people to despise the priesthood and lose faith and

hope in God. The devout who came to offer sacrifices were instead confronted with unscrupulous priests, while the wicked and lawless had an excuse to commit greater sins.

3. The Glory of God's Nation

Because the sins of the people increased, God did not abide with them. Consequently, when they went out to fight against the Philistines, they were defeated. Their army was destroyed, and the ark of the covenant was even captured, disgracing the kingdom of Israel (1 Sam 4:1–11, 21–22). The conduct of the priests and the Israelites as a whole affected the glory of the nation.

From Eli, we can see that although our actions may seem only to affect ourselves, what we do can in fact influence others. For example, voicing complaints can lead to negativity in others, which may lead to conflicts in the church. Consistently waking up late on Saturday mornings makes your whole family late to service, which teaches your younger siblings that it's okay to be late to church. On the other hand, godly behavior demonstrates to truth-seekers that God dwells in our church! Our actions, both positive and negative, can affect others far more than we might think, so we should constantly strive to live out Jesus Christ in our speech and conduct.

Check for Understanding

1. **What does it mean when a person has poor spiritual eyesight?** It means that they lack spiritual discernment.
2. **How did Eli fail as a priest?** He allowed the priesthood to fall into disrepute; he didn't correct his heart before God nor make attempts to repair his relationship with God; and he failed to choose a good successor to continue the work of God.
3. **Why was Eli's rebuke towards his sons ineffective?** Hophni and Phinehas were so steeped in sin that they were no longer sensitive to sin, or to Eli's warning.
4. **In what way did Eli honor his sons above God?** He was unwilling to stand up for the truth or be firmer towards his sons. As a result, he became an ineffective parent and priest.
5. **How did Eli's failures affect the Israelites? What can we learn from this?** His sons' wicked deeds and Eli's failure to punish them for it contributed to the decline in the Israelites' faith. Their conduct caused the people to despise the priesthood and lose faith and hope in God. We can learn that our actions, both positive and negative, can affect others more than we might think, so we should constantly strive to live out Jesus Christ in our speech and conduct.

Life Application

1. Do Not Despise Correction

Eli failed to discipline his sons, and his sons did not heed the words that he spoke to them – to avoid making the same mistake, we should understand the reasons we experience discipline, and why we should accept it even when we feel that it is unfair or undeserved. Our earthly parents and our father in heaven discipline us for various reasons. Although we may feel hurt or upset when we experience it, there are many reasons we experience discipline from our parents and from God.

a. To express love (Prov 13:24)

Proverbs 13:24 says, "He who spares the rod hates his son, but he who loves him disciplines him promptly." As their child, your parents love you deeply and don't want to see you go off track while living in a perverse generation (Phil 2:15). Let's read Hebrews 12:6–7. The process of their discipline can be painful, but it is evidence of their deep love – and of God's deep love – for you.

b. To teach godly submission (Heb 12:9–10)

To be “in subjection” to our Father in heaven means to learn godly submission when He disciplines us. When we submit to our parents’ discipline, we are submitting to God, and when we learn to submit to Him, He will always bless us. He knows the plan that He has for each of us, but it is only through discipline that we can learn to follow His plan. This learning process starts with the discipline that we receive from our parents.

c. To share in His holiness and yield righteousness (Heb 12:11)

When you’re disciplined, the Bible teaches us that we share in His holiness. How does this happen? Outwardly, your parents discipline you on how to make good choices, resist impulses or temptations, manage your anger, and other such things. Inwardly, when we accept their correction and repent, we are constantly refining and purifying our inward, spiritual selves, and are developing submission, holiness, and righteousness. Through constant correction, we become blameless children of God.

God doesn’t want us to remain infants. He wants us to grow in holiness and bear the fruit of righteousness. But to do so requires discipline from our parents and from God, because we are born immature and unwise. Ultimately, we always end up repeating the same mistakes, so we need to learn to accept the discomfort that comes with discipline, and humbly instill it into our hearts whenever we receive it.

2. Do Not Despise God

In the Lord’s prophecy against Eli’s house, He asked him, “‘Why do you kick at My sacrifice and My offering which I have commanded in My dwelling place, and honor your sons more than Me [...]?’ [...] ‘[For] those who honor Me I will honor, and those who despise Me shall be lightly esteemed’” (1 Sam 2:29–30). By failing to reprimand his sons, Eli had despised the Lord. We must learn to avoid this in our own lives. But what does it actually mean to “despise” God? Let’s first look at a few examples in the Bible.

- “And Jacob gave Esau bread and stew of lentils; then he ate and drank, arose, and went his way. Thus Esau despised his birthright.” (Gen 25:34)
- “Now therefore, the sword shall never depart from your house, because you have despised Me, and have taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be your wife.” (2 Sam 12:10)
- “But they mocked the messengers of God, despised His words, and scoffed at His prophets, until the wrath of the LORD arose against His people, till there was no remedy.” (2 Chr 36:16)

From these examples, we can see that to “despise” means to treat someone with disrespect, regard something as worthless, or to scorn something and treat it with contempt. We may not hate the Lord, but if He values something and we brush it off as worthless, we have despised God.

Let’s read Matthew 6:24. “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.” Every time you choose to skip prayer because you want to spend more time on social media, spend Sabbath service daydreaming about the new game you bought, or deliberately disobey the Bible, you have shown that you do not value or cherish God. You are despising Him.

(Teachers: The following activity has been included in the Student Handout.)

Below is a list of possible ways that we have despised God. For each item, check off whether you have done this before, then on a scale of one to ten, circle which number best matches how frequently or infrequently you have done this – one being not very often, and ten being very often.

<input type="checkbox"/>	I do not bother to listen to the sermon speaker, or even to refer to Bible verses during sermons.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
<input type="checkbox"/>	I deliberately disobey my parents when they ask me to do something.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
<input type="checkbox"/>	I forget God’s omnipresence and lie about things that I have done.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
<input type="checkbox"/>	I stay up late on Friday nights and fall asleep during sermons on Saturdays.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
<input type="checkbox"/>	During group cleaning, I do the bare minimum so that I can spend more time with my friends.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
<input type="checkbox"/>	I run in last minute when I am assigned for hymn leading and pick my hymns in a hurry, without any thought or prayer beforehand.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
<input type="checkbox"/>	I frequently complain about things, such as the food I am given or things I do not have.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
<input type="checkbox"/>	I am always spending money on things that I desperately want but do not need.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
<input type="checkbox"/>	I cheat on tests.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
<input type="checkbox"/>	I always question why there are so many rules in the Bible.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
<input type="checkbox"/>	I am always making excuses as to why it is okay to date.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

From your answers, do you think you have “despised” God in any way?

What should we do when we recognize our sins?

God does not want to punish us, and He doesn’t want us to perish. At the same time, God is holy, and He cannot abide sin or iniquity. But being human, it is impossible for us to avoid sin entirely. So, the Bible also teaches us how to repent according to God’s will: genuine repentance is always followed by good deeds. Moreover, we should not waste time when we recognize our sins, but immediately correct ourselves by changing our attitude and our actions. When we do that, God will blot out our sins (Isa 43:25), and He will help us live a new life with the power of the Holy Spirit.

On the other hand, if we continue to despise God and live in sin, God's wrath and anger will pour out on us. Paul wrote, "Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience" (Eph 5:6). Therefore, we shouldn't take God's grace for granted, but do our best to keep our spiritual eyesight clear, recognize our sins, acknowledge them, and truly repent from the heart.

Memory Verse

"Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it." (Proverbs 22:6)

Meaning

Parents must understand the responsibility that they have in teaching their children to live godly lives. But this verse isn't just for parents. Even as children, we can spiritually train ourselves by spending time studying God's word, and by slowly adjusting our thoughts, hearts, and actions to align with God's will. In doing so, we are not only building up a solid foundation for our spiritual future, but we are also setting an example for those even younger than us.

Conclusion

Like Eli, we also have our strengths and weaknesses. Unfortunately, Eli did nothing to change his own weaknesses, and those of his sons. Because he valued his sons more than God, the Lord rebuked him severely. We should learn from Eli's mistakes, and keep our spiritual eyesight clear by maintaining our faith and seeking God's will each day.

Lesson 6 Homework Assignment Answer Key

1. How do we spiritually train ourselves so that we do not depart from God in the future?
By spending time studying God's word, and by slowly adjusting our thoughts, hearts, and actions to align with God's will.
2. "And the _____ of the _____ was _____ in those days; there was no _____." (1 Samuel 3:1b)
word, Lord, rare, widespread revelation
3. "He who is _____ in what is _____ is _____ also in _____; and he who is _____ in what is _____ is _____ also in _____."
(Luke 16:10)
faithful, least, faithful, much, unjust, least, unjust, much
4. In what way did Eli honor his sons above God?
He failed to punish them and allowed them to continue in their evil ways.
5. What kinds of sins did Eli's sons commit?
They robbed God of the best part of the offerings, took the meat before it was even sacrificed, and committed sexual immorality with women at the tabernacle.
6. What are three reasons we experience discipline from our parents and from God?
As an expression of their love; to teach us godly submission; and so that we can share in God's holiness and yield righteousness.
7. Share a time when your actions negatively affected others. What did you learn from this experience?
Personal answers.

Saul: When Humility Turns to Pride

Passages: 1 Samuel 9–15

Memory Verse

“For if anyone thinks himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceives himself.” (Galatians 6:3)

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 appointed Saul as Israel’s first king.2. The trials he faced revealed Saul to be self-seeking and full of pride.	God is sovereign. He should be feared and obeyed.	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Obey God by humbling our hearts.2. Depend on God, and He will protect us.

Overview

Events and Spiritual Teachings

- A. Saul’s Early Reign
- B. Saul’s Deteriorating Faith
- C. The Results of Pride and Jealousy

Life Application

1. To Obey Is Better than Sacrifice
2. Depending on God

Memory Verse

Conclusion: We must put in the effort to humble our hearts, to seek after God, and to obey Him so that He can help us overcome the challenges in our lives.

Events and Spiritual Teachings

Introduction

Over the past few weeks, we've learned about some of the judges of Israel. But during Samuel's time, the Israelites wanted a king, so that they could be more like other nations. Samuel was displeased with their demand, but God allowed it and told Samuel to anoint a king as the people desired. However, He also told Samuel to "solemnly forewarn them, and show them the behavior of the king who will reign over them" (1 Sam 8:9).

Even with this warning, the Israelites still insisted on having a king, so Samuel anointed Saul the son of Kish, from the tribe of Benjamin. He was the first king of all the tribes of Israel (1 Sam 10:1), and although Samuel had anointed him previously, Saul was later publicly chosen by lot as evidence of God's will (vv. 17–24). Acts 13:21 says that Saul reigned over Israel for forty years.

A. Saul's Early Reign

When first describing Saul, the Bible records, "There was not a more handsome person than he among the children of Israel. From his shoulders upward he was taller than any of the people" (1 Sam 9:2). But what was his character like? What kind of a person was he? Let's go over a few passages that tell us what Saul was like at the beginning of his reign.

1. A humble character (1 Sam 9:20–21; 10:15–16, 22)

Saul's first reaction to Samuel was that of disbelief. He believed his tribe was the smallest, and his family the least of the tribe of Benjamin, so he had no idea why Samuel called his family "the desire of Israel." Later, when Samuel and the Israelites cast lots to determine God's will, the Bible records that Saul was hiding among the equipment when he was finally chosen! We do not know the exact reason Saul was hiding – perhaps he was scared of the responsibility, had doubt in his abilities, or simply did not want to stand out – but in any case, his actions show a man who initially did not want to step forward.

2. A peaceful character (1 Sam 10:27; 11:12–13)

When Saul was first chosen to be king, there were several rebellious people who "despised him, and brought him no presents" (1 Sam 10:27). However, Saul's reaction was neither anger nor vengeance. He didn't abuse his new authority as king, but "held his peace." This attitude persisted even when he later proved himself by successfully defeating the Ammonites. His more zealous followers wanted to put these rebellious men to death, but Saul refused to listen to their suggestion. He instead said, "Not a man shall be put to death this day, for today the LORD has accomplished salvation in Israel" (11:13).

3. A successful military leader (1 Sam 11:5–11; 14:47–48)

Although Saul was given an unexpected and heavy responsibility as king, he stepped up to fulfill his duty when Israel needed him. Let's read 1 Samuel 11:7–11. When Jabesh required help, Saul gathered men from all over Israel and defeated the Ammonites who threatened the city. This was only one of many victories for Saul, as his entire rule was dominated by war (1 Sam 14:52). The Bible records that Saul harassed his enemies and "delivered Israel from the hands of those who plundered them." But what made Saul a successful commander? Let's read 1 Samuel 14:37.

From here, we can see that Saul asked council of God before going into battle. He also corrected the people when they sinned against the Lord and worshipped God by building an altar (vv. 34–

35). Although he may have made a few mistakes, Saul still did his best to seek the Lord and serve Him as best he could, at least during the early years of his reign.

From these verses, we can see that Saul was far more successful as a leader when he sought God and tried to obey Him. However, during his later years, he gradually strayed from the Lord and began to act on his own.

B. Saul's Deteriorating Faith

Saul started his reign as a faithful king, but his relationship with God began to decline, to the point that he began to hunt down David out of jealousy. But this lack of faith was actually a gradual decline over time. What events signified Saul's deteriorating faith? Let's look over a few of them.

1. Saul sacrifices unlawfully (1 Sam 13:8–14)

His first major act of disobedience came when he overstepped his boundaries as king. Saul understood the importance of having God's presence with the Israelites in battle. However, at a time when his army was scattered, outnumbered, and fearful, Saul became impatient. His true character was revealed when under pressure. Let's read 1 Samuel 13:8–13. Although he may have been king, Saul was not a priest, so he broke God's laws in making this offering. Unfortunately, when Samuel confronted him, Saul tried to justify his actions and did not repent.

2. Saul makes a foolish oath (1 Sam 14:24–46)

Let's read 1 Samuel 14:24. This oath may seem heroic, but it was actually an impulsive and poorly thought-out oath with no regard for the consequences. Jonathan, who ate honey without knowing of this oath, criticized his father, saying, "My father has troubled the land. [...] How much better if the people had eaten freely today of the spoil of their enemies which they found! For now would there not have been a much greater slaughter among the Philistines?" (vv. 29–30). As Jonathan aptly pointed out, to make an army march and fight on an empty stomach was foolish.

Besides almost killing his own son, Saul's impulsive oath had the additional consequence of leading his army to sin against God. Let's read 1 Samuel 14:31–33. It is clear that Saul spoke without thinking about the consequences, indicating a lack of spiritual wisdom. Moreover, the content of his oath shows that he was not focusing on God during this battle, but on his own vengeance.

3. Saul disobeys God (1 Sam 15:1–3, 9–31)

God had commanded Saul to destroy Amalek completely, including their livestock and their king. Unfortunately, Saul did not obey God's instructions, but spared the best of the livestock along with King Agag. The Bible says, "Saul and the people [...] were unwilling to utterly destroy them" (1 Sam 15:9). They were unwilling to obey God's command. More importantly, Saul failed to guide the people on the correct spiritual path, as he feared their criticism more than he feared God (v. 24).

When Samuel saw what had happened, Saul claimed his own innocence instead of repenting (1 Sam 15:15). As a result, Samuel announced that Saul's kingdom would be torn from him because he no longer heeded God's word. Only when Samuel declared his kingdom torn from him did Saul take back his words and repent (vv. 24, 30). This was Saul's second major act of

disobedience, and it caused God to withdraw His Spirit from Saul (1 Sam 16:14).

4. Saul consults a witch (1 Sam 28:3–20)

Let's read 1 Samuel 28:3–8. In what is perhaps the ultimate act of disobedience, Saul turned to the occult in his desperate need for guidance. The Bible repeatedly warns against witchcraft and mediums, teaching us that God regards these Canaanite customs as abominations. Saul himself had banned such practices in Israel, yet he still pursued this course of action despite knowing it was wrong. He was desperate for help, regardless of what form it took. The spirit's appearance was, of course, a false sign as proven by its inaccurate prediction (Ishbosheth survived the battle), but Saul believed it nonetheless, a sure sign of his distance from God.

From these events, we can see that Saul's major weakness was his tendency to overstep his bounds. He may have begun as a humble man, but he soon became proud as Israel's first king. Instead of relying on God for help, he relied on himself and the strength of his armies. Instead of letting God strengthen his weaknesses, he grew to rely on his own decisions, and rather than keep his faith in God, he neglected God's sovereignty.

Unfortunately, his pride later affected his relationship with David as well. He became jealous of David's popularity and sought to kill him instead of accepting him as God's chosen successor. As a result, instead of building up the kingdom, he spent most of his time hunting down David. His pride and jealousy had serious consequences, including alienation from his own son and daughter, and from God.

C. The Results of Pride and Jealousy

If we look back at Saul's life, God gave him a new heart when he was first anointed, and he acted as both a courageous leader and a faithful commander for God's people. He was quick to give glory to God and to fix his mistakes. But as time passed, he became more impetuous, rash, quick to anger, and jealous for approval. He feared criticism and was even willing to put his son's life at risk for foolish reasons. Let's examine the consequences of his change in heart in closer detail.

1. His heart no longer had room for God

Let's read 1 Samuel 16:14. God's Spirit had once changed him so dramatically when he was anointed (1 Sam 10:9), but now Saul's pride and disobedience left no room for God in his heart. He had strayed so far from the Lord that a distressing spirit now troubled Saul, and he was unable to have peace. God's Spirit no longer dwelled with him.

2. Jealousy transformed his love to hatred

One of the most stunning and drastic consequences of Saul's changed heart was his attempted murder of David, whom he once loved (1 Sam 16:21). His pride and desire for approval led to jealousy (18:8–9). This jealousy later turned to hatred, and then to attempted murder, not once, but several times (18:11; 19:10, 15; 23:25; 26:2).

3. God no longer answered him

Let's read 1 Samuel 28:6. Saul had done the correct thing by inquiring of the Lord for instructions, but tragically, it was too late. He had already strayed too far, so the Lord no longer answered him. This incident serves as a warning for us never to stray so far from God that He rejects us.

Because of his pride, disobedience, and jealousy, Saul was ultimately rejected by God. In 1 Samuel 15:11, the Lord told Samuel, “I greatly regret that I have set up Saul as king, for he has turned back from following Me, and has not performed My commandments.” Saul had turned away from God, and he didn’t follow God’s commands. As a result, the Lord departed from him and didn’t answer even when he went to inquire of Him. In the end, upon being wounded in battle and seeing that his three sons had died, Saul fell on his sword and killed himself.

Check for Understanding

- 1. How did Saul react to being anointed as king?** He kept the news to himself, and when it was proclaimed, he hid himself.
- 2. How did Saul prove that he was able to deliver Israel from their enemies?** When the city of Jabesh called for help, Saul gathered the men of Israel and was victorious in battle against the Ammonites.
- 3. What were the two key events in which Saul disobeyed God?** He sacrificed unlawfully, and he disobeyed God by sparing the best of the livestock and King Agag.
- 4. Although Saul at first relied on God, how did this attitude change?** He began to rely on himself and the strength of his armies. Instead of letting God strengthen his weaknesses, he grew to rely on his own decisions, and rather than keep his faith in God, he neglected God’s sovereignty.
- 5. What fundamental flaws caused God to reject Saul?** He turned away from God, and he didn’t follow God’s commands.

Life Application

1. To Obey Is Better than Sacrifice Understanding Disobedience

Saul came up with plenty of excuses for his disobedience, but Samuel told him bluntly, “You have not kept the commandment of the LORD your God, which He commanded you” (1 Sam 13:13). No matter how we may try to justify ourselves, disobeying God is still a sin and a sign of rebellion against Him.

Let’s read 1 Samuel 15:22–23. Samuel’s words to Saul teach us something very important: that disobedience is as serious a sin as turning to witchcraft, and that the refusal to listen to God’s words is the same as idolatry. But why is this the case?

Disobedience is a serious sin, because it means that we do not value God or His place in our hearts. Instead of giving thanks, we have taken pride in what we think we have accomplished, and have decided that our way is better than God’s way. Therefore, disobedience is a sign of disrespect, for it shows that we don’t care what our Creator thinks of us. We no longer see Him as our sovereign God, as we have placed greater value on the ways of the world, which is a form of idolatry.

God has given us so much – He has given us food, clothing, a family who cares for us, and a place to sleep in safety. He has given us skills, abilities, and healthy bodies. But most important of all, He has given us a chance to obtain eternal life. If we truly understood this in our hearts, would we still disobey God? What are some reasons we disobey God in our lives today? Take a moment to reflect on the last time you disobeyed God, then complete the following sentences:

- “I once disobeyed God by...”
- “The reason I disobeyed God was because...”
- “To avoid making the same mistake in the future, I should...”

Example answer:

I once disobeyed God by... *refusing to listen to my parents and not cleaning up my room.*

The reason I disobeyed was because... *I was feeling selfish and lazy. I wanted to play games instead, and I believed that my parents made me clean up all the time just because they wanted me to suffer.*

To avoid making the same mistake in the future, I should... *remind myself that my parents are always trying to help me even if I disagree with what they say. To help remind myself, I should write down Ephesians 6:1–3 on a sticky note in my room and read it the next time I feel like rebelling against them.*

(Teachers: You may want to spend some time discussing how to avoid making the same mistakes in the future. It will help if you go to the root cause of their disobedience, such as selfishness, laziness, greed, lack of empathy, etc.)

Understanding Obedience

God often uses delays to test our obedience, patience, and dedication to His will. When Saul was under pressure, his true character was revealed when he took matters into his own hands and disobeyed God. We should learn from this and remember that obedience means waiting patiently for God. If we wait for God’s plan, we will discover entirely new purposes and directions in our lives – directions which we would never have expected to take had we acted on our own. Waiting for God is truly a trial that tests whether we trust Him to act on our behalf.

Of course, it’s easy to tell ourselves to wait, but much harder to actually do! Obeying God is not easy, which is why He has made so many promises to us if we do obey Him. But what stops us from being obedient? Can you think of reasons you have disobeyed God or your parents? *(Allow students to brainstorm. Examples: We think we know better; we’re lazy; we get impatient; etc.)* One of the main reasons we disobey is pride: we think that we know better than God, or that we are better than others.

Survey: Diagnosing the Pride in Our Hearts	Y	N
1. Are you extremely confident in your own abilities?		
2. Do you often think that your opinions are better?		
3. Do you often try to garner praise from others?		
4. Do you frequently seek attention?		
5. Do you often judge others?		
6. Do you often find fault in others?		
7. Do you justify your poor decisions and try to talk God out of the picture?		
8. Do you think other peoples’ opinions are more important than God’s?		
9. Do you tell yourself that you are praiseworthy?		
10. Do you avoid people who are better than you?		

Tally each “yes” and “no” that you filled in. Based on your total for each, do you have a prideful or a humble heart? If many of your answers are “yes,” then it is an important first step to recognize the problem. Pride often blinds us to our own sins and hardens our hearts towards God. But if we can see and admit that we are prideful, we can begin to take steps towards humbling our hearts. Remember, “God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble” (1 Pet 5:5). So, if we have a prideful heart, how do we humble ourselves?

- Confess to God that you struggle with pride, and ask God for forgiveness
- Ask for the fullness of the Holy Spirit, so that the Spirit can transform your heart
- Practice putting the interests of others before your own; go out of your way to help others (Rom 12:15; Phil 2:3–4)

2. Depending on God

We learned today that one of the things that made Saul a good king at first was his reliance on God. He asked for guidance before battle, and he also tried to follow God's will as best he could. Instead of relying on our own understanding, God wants us to go to Him for wisdom, strength, and guidance. When we fully rely on Him in this manner, it becomes easier to obey Him and surrender our lives to Him. As a result, the Lord has promised to guide, protect, and provide for us. Let's read a testimony about a member who at first struggled to depend on God, but over time, learned how to rely on His power.

Testimony

Today I would like to testify of how obedience is greater than sacrifice. When I was seventeen, I entered a school to take a major national examination. I thought that I had a bright future ahead. All I needed was to do well in my national exams. As I did well in the one before, I never thought that this one was going to be difficult. I was wrong.

To my surprise, I did very badly in school, and my teachers informed my parents that I was not going to do well. During this time, I became miserable. Many negative thoughts began running through my head; things like, "If I do not do well in this exam, I have no other options in my future," "I'm going to be a burden to my family," and other similar thoughts.

It got to the point where I would cry every day. I would also get so anxious that I became incapable of doing anything at all. I couldn't study, eat, or speak. Sometimes, I began to hyperventilate just thinking about how hopeless the situation was. My family often witnessed something small triggering my frustrations, to the point that I would experience a mental breakdown. I began having dark thoughts of dying, and thought that I was going crazy. I couldn't handle myself emotionally. I often asked myself, "Where is God?"

These events affected my faith completely. I was at a loss. I began to question if God was real, and why I was going through all of this. I wanted to stop going to church because I had so many doubts in my heart as a result of this situation. I also felt that church was very time-consuming, leaving me with little time to study. However, from all of my RE lessons, I knew in my mind that God is real, and that I should obey Him and continue going to church. However, I thought to myself that I cannot continue going to church if I no longer believe in Him. Out of this seemingly dark situation, I gave God a chance. I decided to believe in His promises and see what would happen. A verse stuck out to me at the time:

"For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the LORD, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope."

Jer 29:11

Since God wanted to give me a future and a hope, I decided to trust Him for the rest of the year before deciding whether or not to leave church. So how did I decide to show my trust in Him? I decided not to touch my studies on Sabbath Day. Sabbath Day is a day of rest, so I chose to obey this command completely.

Before I made this decision, I always felt guilty for not studying, even on Sabbath Day. All my classmates were way ahead of me, putting in the hours during the weekends, while I couldn't even enjoy my time in church. However, after making this decision, Sabbath became my favorite day. God had assigned me this time of rest so that I could be free of worry; later, I would be able to do what I needed to do for the week.

Slowly, I learned to trust and obey God. Through His word on the Sabbath, He gave me strength to carry me through the week. Each time I got anxious, I would put away my books and read the Bible to find more of God's promises to me. He would comfort me with His words. Some days were better than others. Some days were still very bad. But I always stuck to my decision to trust God no matter what.

I was finally liberated from the hopelessness I felt, and I knew that whether I did well or not, God would take care of me because He loves me. I've heard of people trying to find God by not going to church, or people trying to "survive at school" by not going to church and using that time to study. However, no one is able to experience the love and power of God by doing that. Because I didn't attempt to find God my own way and instead decided to obey God, I was able to understand this.

– Anonymous

Discussion

- What was the turning point in this student's life and faith?
- How did this student learn to trust in God?

From this testimony, we can see that there are a few key methods to relying on God, even when we are feeling distant from Him. They are:

- a. Seek out the Lord in prayer, and have an ongoing conversation with Him.
- b. Pour ourselves out to the Lord and tell Him all of our problems.
- c. Trust that when we draw closer to God, He will draw closer to us. He answers our prayers.

When we finally learn to depend on God, our lives will transform. We will become less anxious. We will feel greater peace and joy in our hearts, even when faced with trouble or conflict at home or at school. Our prayers will become more fruitful, and we will worry less. Most importantly, we will begin to see God's provision in every aspect of our lives, as well as His salvation for us.

Memory Verse

"For if anyone thinks himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceives himself." (Galatians 6:3)

Meaning

Proud people want to be noticed. They crave attention, praise, or approval. However, this is a form of self-deception. God hates pride and arrogance because it makes us forget about God, and He reminds us often that we have not accomplished anything on our own. Everything that we have, have done, or will do, is because of His grace and mercy. On the other hand, the Bible teaches us that "[pride] goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall. Better to be of a humble spirit with the lowly, than to divide the spoil with the proud" (Prov 16:18–19).

Conclusion

Saul began as a humble man and an effective commander of Israel. However, as he started to face more troubling situations, his true heart was uncovered, and he was revealed to be self-seeking and prideful. Saul did not have a heart for God, nor did he cultivate his relationship with God, leading to a life of disobedience. Today, we must put in the effort to humble our hearts, to seek after God, and to obey Him so that He can help us overcome the challenges in our lives.

Lesson 7 Homework Assignment Answer Key

1. What is the memory verse teaching us about pride?
Pride is a form of self-deception. Everything that we have, have done, or will do, is because of the Lord's grace and mercy. Also, the Lord hates pride and arrogance because it makes us forget about Him.
2. "Behold, to _____ is better than _____, and to _____ than the _____ of _____." (1 Samuel 15:22b)
obey, sacrifice, heed, fat, rams
3. What are three characteristics of Saul during his early reign?
He was peaceful, humble, and a successful military leader.
4. What two major events were a sign of Saul's changed heart?
When he sacrificed unlawfully, and when he directly disobeyed God by sparing King Agag and preserving the best of the livestock plundered from the Ammonites.
5. What were the results of the pride and jealousy in Saul's heart?
His heart no longer had room for God. Jealousy transformed his love to hatred. God no longer answered him.
6. Why is disobeying God such a serious sin?
When we disobey God, it means that we do not value God or His place in our hearts. We no longer see Him as our sovereign God, as we have placed greater value on the ways of the world, which is a form of idolatry.
7. Considering today's lesson, do you consider yourself fully dependent on God? Why or why not?
Personal answers.

David (I): A Heart Dedicated to God

Passages: 1 Samuel 16–20

Memory Verse

“For the LORD does not see as man sees; for man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart.” (1 Samuel 16:7b)

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 chose David to serve Him.2. David served God’s purpose.	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. God is all-knowing.2. God is all-powerful.3. God knows our thoughts.	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Learn to examine our hearts and motives.2. Strive for a heart that is courageous, diligent, and dedicated to God’s purpose.

Overview

Events and Spiritual Teachings

- A. David’s Character
- B. David’s Anointing
- C. David and Goliath
- D. David and Jonathan

Life Application: The Lord Looks at the Heart

Memory Verse

Conclusion: We should learn from David’s character and strive for a heart that is motivated for God, faithful in all things, and dedicated for His purpose.

Events and Spiritual Teachings

Introduction

Activity:

1. *Before class, write down various types of church work on small pieces of paper. Fold them, and place them into an opaque jar, container, or bag. Examples of some work may be: Cleaning the restrooms; cooking; vacuuming; throwing out the garbage; preaching to others; teaching; leading hymns; interpreting sermons; etc.*
2. *Ask each student to pull out a random piece of paper from the jar, without looking. Once they each have one, tell them to read the paper they picked. Then ask whether they would be willing to do it, and whether they would excel in it or not, explaining why or why not.*

Sometimes, God calls us to do things for him, and although we may not excel in it, God has a purpose for all things. We should pray to understand God's will and ask for guidance and assistance. Today, we'll be examining the life of David and learning about his attitude towards serving God. But before we go into the lesson, what do we know or remember about David? *(Give the students time to come up with as many facts about David as they can remember. The following are some examples.)*

- *A descendant of Ruth, a Moabitess (Ruth 4)*
- *Skillful in playing the harp, a mighty man of valor, a man of war, prudent in speech, handsome, and the Lord was with him (1 Sam 16:18)*
- *A shepherd; defended his sheep from lions and bears (1 Sam 17:34)*
- *Killed the giant Goliath with a slingshot and a single stone (1 Sam 17)*
- *Anointed by Samuel to be king over Israel*
- *A man after God's own heart (1 Sam 13:13–14)*
- *Was forced to flee from King Saul as a fugitive (1 Sam 20–31)*
- *Despite the many opportunities he had, refused to harm Saul (1 Sam 24:6; 26:11)*
- *Made king in place of Saul (2 Sam 5)*
- *Thirty years old when he began to reign; reigned for forty years—over Judah for seven years and six months from Hebron and thirty-three years over all Israel and Judah from Jerusalem (2 Sam 5:3–5)*
- *Committed adultery with Bathsheba and murdered her husband Uriah; their first child was taken by God as punishment*

A. David's Character

When the Bible first introduces David, he was named “the youngest” in Jesse's family and considered lowly enough that he wasn't even summoned for Samuel's visit. He was charged with keeping his father's sheep (1 Sam 16:11), and he also ran errands for his father and older brothers (17:17). However, the Bible also describes him as a man after God's own heart (13:14), who, despite his sins, maintained a close relationship with God throughout his entire life.

1. A diligent shepherd

Tending sheep was not an easy or glamorous job. It required hard work, diligence, wisdom, and courage. A shepherd had to lead their sheep out to pasture every morning, water them every day, keep them healthy, guide them away from poisonous plants, search for them if they wandered off, and protect them from robbers and wild beasts. David, for example, recalled having to defend his sheep from lions and bears (1 Sam 17:34–36)! This shows not only his bravery, but also his love for his flock, and his faithful dedication towards the job entrusted to him (vv. 15, 20)

2. A man after God's own heart

Acts 13:22 says, "And when He had removed [Saul], He raised up for them David as king, to whom also He gave testimony and said, 'I have found David the son of Jesse, a man after My own heart, who will do all My will.'" Saul's servant described David as "a mighty man of valor, a man of war, prudent in speech, and a handsome person; and the LORD is with him" (1 Sam 16:18). David was close enough to the Lord that even strangers could see that God was with him!

3. Behaved wisely in all his ways

Another characteristic that the Bible notes is his wisdom. The Lord trained David through his time as a shepherd, and later arranged for David to enter Saul's inner circle. Let's read 1 Samuel 16:14–23. As Saul's armorbearer, David would have been able to gain firsthand knowledge about how to lead a nation. The Lord had begun to train David up as king.

During this time, the Bible states that David "behaved wisely" wherever Saul sent him (1 Sam 18:5), and when Saul made him captain over a thousand, David "behaved wisely in all his ways, and the LORD was with him" (v. 14). His wisdom was not simply based on his knowledge or leadership, but it was also spiritual wisdom from God, the result of his close relationship with the Lord.

B. David's Anointing

Eliab was Jesse's firstborn (1 Sam 17:13), so it probably seemed natural to Samuel that he would be God's pick. But God reminded Samuel that "the LORD does not see as man sees; for man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart" (16:7). When David, the youngest and the smallest of the family, was finally called in from tending the sheep, the Lord triumphantly announced to Samuel, "Arise, anoint him; for this is the one!" (v. 12).

David was anointed two more times after this incident. Once over the house of Judah (2 Sam 2:4), and a second time over both Israel and Judah (5:3), this time by all the elders of Israel. The most important time, however, was the first time, when "the Spirit of the LORD came upon David from that day forward" (1 Sam 16:13). Without the Spirit of God, David wouldn't have been able to serve God properly, or to act as a wise or intelligent ruler over God's people. The Spirit's presence allowed David to serve God's purpose (Acts 13:36).

The Importance of Being Anointed

To be anointed with oil was a significant and symbolic action. In the Old Testament, the act was performed on someone who would be set apart for God's work (Lev 8:12). Every high priest, prophet, and king in Israel was anointed with oil. Even Jesus Christ was "anointed" in a way before He went out to preach (Lk 4:18–19). Today, we are anointed in the same way, through the Holy Spirit (1 Jn 2:20).

The Holy Spirit helps to support us and empower us in the Lord, and is therefore a necessary presence when serving God. For example, Saul's rule over his kingdom deteriorated when the Spirit left him, while David grew in wisdom and strength. Moreover, just like those anointed with oil in the Old Testament, the Holy Spirit is a sign and a reminder that we have been separated for God's work. He has chosen us especially for His purpose, so we must always remember to follow through and do our best to dedicate ourselves to Him, just as David did.

C. David and Goliath

Goliath was a giant over nine feet tall. He wore armor weighing 125 pounds and carried a fifteen-pound spear. The Bible records that for forty days he challenged the Israelites and blasphemed God’s name before David arrived. Let’s read 1 Samuel 17:4–51. What are the differences between David’s reaction and that of the rest of the Israelites? Let’s take a moment to compare the two.

Saul and His Army	David
Were greatly afraid (v. 11)	Indignant on the Lord’s behalf (v. 26)
Fled from Goliath (v. 24)	Quick to volunteer to challenge Goliath (v. 32)
Saw only physical danger (v. 33)	Saw only an uncircumcised Philistine (v. 36)
Relied on physical protection (v. 38)	Relied on God’s protection (vv. 37, 39, 45–47)

David’s perspective of the battle was entirely different. While everyone else was terrified by Goliath’s size and appearance, David saw a Gentile who dared to mock the Lord. He didn’t see a giant with a fifteen-pound spear. He didn’t even see a challenger or foresee a difficult fight. Instead, he saw a Philistine who was powerless before the might of the living God. This is especially clear in his weapon choice and his distinct lack of armor.

Saul tried to dress David in his own armor because he expected David to have to hold his own in one-on-one combat. His reasoning was flawed, because he only saw the physical threat and forgot about God’s power and presence. David had a better understanding: he may have been the one on the field, but God was the one fighting the battle. Therefore, he didn’t need any special armor or weapons. His faith was all that God needed.

David’s actions remind us that God can work powerfully through us with whatever talents we have. All we need to do is step forward courageously, no matter what insult or threat we face, and trust that God will fight for us. If we don’t advance, then our giants will advance on us. David understood this, and didn’t hesitate to face Goliath, because he also understood that his abilities weren’t what mattered – it was God who would give him victory. Zechariah 4:6 says, “‘Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit,’ says the LORD of hosts.” No matter what impossible situations we face, no matter how skilled or unskilled we may be feeling, we must trust that God can overcome all things.

D. David and Jonathan

Although they were technically rivals for the throne, David and Jonathan had a truly beautiful friendship. The Bible records that Jonathan “took off the robe that was on him and gave it to David, with his armor, even to his sword and his bow and his belt” (1 Sam 18:4). These would have been the most precious items that Jonathan owned, and he freely gave them to David as a sign of their close friendship.

The Bible also records that “the soul of Jonathan was knit to the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul” (1 Sam 18:1) The two of them were so close that they made a covenant together (18:3; 20:42). They had a true friendship, one which we can learn a lot from. Let’s examine some characteristics of a genuine friendship, based on the example of Jonathan and David. From the two, we can see that genuine friends:

1. Protect each other

Jonathan may not have known when they met that David was anointed to be the next king, but

his love for David didn't waver even when it became clear that he was God's choice for the throne. Jonathan was never resentful towards his friend, nor did he bother making any moves to secure his own succession. Actually, he was quite concerned with David's survival. Let's read 1 Samuel 19:1–7. Jonathan interceded on David's behalf with his father, and when that didn't work, he helped David to escape. The two arranged a signal, indicating whether it would be safe or not for him to remain in the city after Jonathan confronted his father. Let's read 1 Samuel 20:32–42.

2. Love each other unconditionally

Although Jonathan was Saul's son, David never held Saul's actions against him. Their friendship was so strong that the two wept when they were forced to part! It's clear that David never once thought poorly of his friend, and he mourned bitterly when he was told of Jonathan's death. Devastated and overwhelmed with grief, he wrote a lament and said of Jonathan, "How the mighty have fallen in the midst of the battle! Jonathan was slain in your high places. I am distressed for you, my brother Jonathan; you have been very pleasant to me; your love to me was wonderful, surpassing the love of women" (2 Sam 1:25–26). The two truly had an unconditional love for each other, despite their complicated circumstances.

3. Strengthen each other spiritually

One of the remarkable things about Jonathan was his complete willingness to give up the throne for his friend, and to follow God's will for David to be king. Let's read 1 Samuel 23:15–18. It would have been quite risky for Jonathan to visit David. But he did so anyway, and when he met him, he helped David by spiritually strengthening him in the Lord. Jonathan understood God's will and followed it without question by helping David however he could. Their friendship was based on God's truth, and it grew upon God's will.

4. Remain loyal to each other

When David was king over all Israel, he said, "Is there still anyone who is left of the house of Saul, that I may show him kindness for Jonathan's sake?" (2 Sam 9:1). This is actually quite an unusual request, as it was standard practice for newly-crowned kings to put to death the entire family of the previous king, in order to eliminate any possible rebellion or uprising. But David treated Jonathan's son, Mephibosheth, with great kindness, not only returning his lands to him, but also granting him a place at his table. David remembered his covenant and love for Jonathan, and he was faithful to his promise long after Jonathan's death.

Check for Understanding

- 1. What characteristics did David show as a shepherd?** He showed not only bravery in defending his flock from lions and bears, but also love for his sheep and faithful dedication towards the job entrusted to him.
- 2. What is the importance of being anointed by the Holy Spirit?** It is a sign that we have been set apart for God's work that allows us to be empowered by God for His service.
- 3. How was David's reaction to Goliath different from the Israelites'?** The Israelites feared Goliath's size and strength, but David was indignant on the Lord's behalf. He didn't see the physical threat, but the spiritual challenge to God.
- 4. Why did David refuse Saul's armor? What can we learn from this?** He knew that God was the one fighting the battle. Therefore, he didn't need any special armor or weapons. His own skills and

abilities were all God needed. This reminds us that God can work powerfully through us with whatever talents that we have. All we need to do is to step forward courageously.

- 5. What four teachings do David and Jonathan teach us about true friendship?** Genuine friends protect each other, love each other unconditionally, strengthen each other spiritually, and remain faithful to each other.

Life Application

The Lord Looks at the Heart

God told Samuel that “man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart” (1 Sam 16:7). He is more concerned about the motivations within our hearts, rather than our looks. Proverbs 16:2 says, “All the ways of a man are pure in his own eyes, but the LORD weighs the spirits.” If we have any impure motives, we may be able to fool others, but we can never fool God. Whatever we may think of ourselves, or whatever other people may think of us, we should be constantly examining our own motives. This is because our hearts can be very deceitful, even to ourselves.

So what kind of a heart should we strive to have? When David approached Samuel, the Lord said, “[This] this is the one!” What did the Lord see in David’s heart? What characteristics were hidden from his family, but seen and valued by the Lord?

1. A heart that is motivated by God

When David heard Goliath’s challenge, he was indignant not on the Israelites’ behalf, but on God’s. He demanded to know, “[Who] is this uncircumcised Philistine, that he should defy the armies of the living God?” (1 Sam 17:26). And when he went to defeat Goliath, he didn’t do it for glory or to be admired. He did it “in the name of the LORD of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied” (v. 45).

Have you ever performed a task or job just to “look good” in front of others? Perhaps dressed up a little bit better on Saturdays not out of respect for the Lord, but to be admired? Maybe you’ve been careful to make sure others see how particular you are with cleaning, so that you can be praised. These are signs of a heart that is motivated by selfishness, not by God. Let’s read Colossians 3:23. “And whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men.”

Everything that we do should be motivated by our love for God, not by our desire for respect from people around us.

2. A heart that is faithful in the little things

The Lord Jesus said, “He who is faithful in what is least is faithful also in much; and he who is unjust in what is least is unjust also in much” (Lk 16:10). People tend to put effort only into a task when there are great rewards. On the other hand, someone who is diligent in the small tasks given to them, no matter how great or small the reward, is a person who is faithful in their character. David was one such person, and we can see this reflected in his faithful diligence first towards his sheep, and then towards God’s people when he ruled over them.

Have you ever tried to do just a “good enough” job, or perhaps tried to skim over your duties without putting any effort into them? Perhaps just penned the minimum required answers for your homework, or crammed in your memory verse minutes before RE class? When we brush over small tasks, we are telling God that we don’t care enough to do a good job. On the other hand, if we are attentive towards the small tasks that He gives us, no matter how meaningless or thankless they may seem, then we are showing a heart that is diligent in serving God, and

therefore faithful towards God Himself.

3. A heart dedicated for God's purpose

In one of his sermons, Paul mentioned that David “had served his own generation by the will of God” (Acts 13:36). David understood that he served God's purpose, not his own, and he followed through by faithfully serving the Lord until the day he died. What do you think of when thinking about your future? Are your thoughts of God, and of dedicating your time and energy to serving Him? Or do you think only of your own dreams and ambitions, without placing God in the picture at all? No matter how big or small, we can all do something to serve our generation and accomplish God's will.

4. A courageous heart that faces down giants

All of the Israelites were terrified at the sight of Goliath, but David dared to face him head on. He wasn't intimidated by Goliath's size, armor, weapons, or threats, despite the fact that David himself had only a staff, a sling, and five smooth stones in his pouch. Compared to Goliath, David was tiny! But nothing stopped David from accepting the challenge. He may have still felt fearful, but he trusted entirely in God's deliverance.

For us, a “giant” can be anything that stops us from drawing close to God. Do you have any “giants” that you have been unwilling to face? Perhaps you are scared to face them, or are unwilling to. A courageous heart is never devoid of fear, but it does trust God completely. Do you trust the Lord? Are you willing to rely on His deliverance in the face of your “giants”? You can win any spiritual battle with God on your side, as long as you are willing to face the battle with a courageous heart.

Below are several scenarios. For each, identify what kind of “heart” each person has, or what kind of heart they need to acquire.

Scenario 1: *Ben is always very concerned about his looks every time he leads hymns in front of the congregation. He likes to see if people are looking at him, and even fishes for compliments under the pretense of asking for advice. He's so concerned about receiving praise that he has lost sight of the purpose of serving, and he cares more about his performance than about worshipping God.*

- What kind of “heart” does Ben need to learn? What advice would you give him?

Scenario 2: *Anne is always quiet in serving the Lord. When there are many pots and pans that she needs to wash after lunch, she never complains about it. On top of that, even though she has already spent so much time cleaning up after lunch, she always goes to the bathrooms to make sure they are clean after Sabbath service is over.*

- What heart does Anne have? What qualities can you learn from her?

Scenario 3: *Caleb earned about \$200 a week from his part-time job after school, but he always placed \$20 in the offering box at church every Sabbath without fail. For about a year, he continued to faithfully give to God. After entering his second year in college, God blessed him with a promotion, and he started to earn \$400 each week. However, he still faithfully tithed, giving \$40 to church every week.*

What heart does Caleb have? What can you learn from him? Would you be willing to give to God every penny you have, knowing that He is the provider of all your blessings?

Scenario 4: *Danielle has been interested in graphic design and illustration since elementary school, and she has spent a lot of time learning and practicing her skills in both. Every day, she would take time to sketch something in her notebook with the intent of serving God with her skills. After entering high school, one day, she hears the church mention a need for artists to help illustrate certain pamphlets. Without any hesitation, she volunteers her time and energy for the project. Even if the drawings need to be redone due to certain specifications, she redraws them with gladness, knowing that she is serving the Lord's purpose.*

- What heart does Danielle have? What can you learn from her?

Scenario 5: *Ever since his friends invited him to play with them, Fred has slowly grown more and more addicted to video games. He plays for hours, day and night, to the point where his grades have begun to suffer, and he feels tired all the time. Deep inside, he knows that he needs to change himself and face this "giant" that is controlling him, but he's too timid to refuse his friends.*

- What kind of heart does Fred need? What advice would you give him?

Memory Verse

"For the LORD does not see as man sees; for man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart." (1 Samuel 16:7b)

Meaning

Many people act for the sake of appearances, or for their own profit. But the Lord sees our hearts, and He knows what motivates our actions. With this in mind, it is important for us to examine our hearts, and to strive for a heart that is like David's – one that is diligent, faithful to God, and dedicated to His purpose.

Conclusion

We can see from David's actions towards God and towards his friend Jonathan that David was a diligent and faithful person. He also had a very courageous heart because he fully trusted in God. His time first as a shepherd, and then as Saul's armorbearer, helped to train him for God's purpose, and he eventually became a diligent and faithful shepherd over God's people. We should learn from David's character and strive for a heart that is motivated for God, faithful in all things, and dedicated for His purpose.

Lesson 8 Homework Assignment Answer Key

1. What does the memory verse teach us about our own hearts?
It is important for us to examine our heart and strive for a heart that is like David's – one that is diligent, faithful to God, and dedicated to His purpose.
2. "Then David said to the Philistine, 'You come to me with a sword, with a spear, and with a javelin. But I come to you in the _____ of the _____ of _____, the _____ of the _____ of Israel, whom you have _____.'" (1 Samuel 17:45)
name, Lord, hosts, God, armies, defied
3. What characteristics did David show as a shepherd?
David showed bravery in defending his flock, love for his sheep, and faithful dedication towards the job entrusted to him.
4. Why is it important that we are anointed by the Holy Spirit?
The Holy Spirit is a sign that we have been set apart for God's work, which allows us to be empowered by God for His service.
5. What was different about David's perspective of Goliath?
The Israelites saw a physical threat. David only saw a Philistine who was powerless before the might of the living God.
6. Are there any "Goliaths" in your life that stop you from drawing closer to God? Briefly explain.
Personal answers.
7. Of the four types of "hearts" that we learned from David, which do you need to work on the most? Why?
Personal answers.

David (II): A Heart that Waits for God

Passages: 1 Samuel 24, 26

Memory Verse

“Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath; for it is written, ‘Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,’ says the Lord.” (Romans 12:19)

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. David avoided sin by refusing to lift a hand against Saul.2. David overcame evil with good.	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. God is sovereign.2. God is in control of all things.	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Respect those to whom God has given authority.2. Remember that vengeance is the Lord’s.3. Wait on the Lord.

Overview

Events and Spiritual Teachings

- A. David Spares Saul’s Life at En Gedi
- B. David Spares Saul a Second Time

Life Application

1. Respecting God’s Anointed
2. Vengeance Belongs to the Lord
3. Waiting on the Lord

Memory Verse

Conclusion: Instead of letting his emotions dictate his actions, David acted out of fear of the Lord. When we wait on the Lord in this manner, we can avoid sin and live in holiness.

Events and Spiritual Teachings

Introduction

Last week, we learned a little about David's character as a young man. We learned about his dedication to the small tasks that were given to him while a shepherd, his unwavering trust in God when facing Goliath, and his faith that he expressed through his love and loyalty to Jonathan. Today, we'll be continuing our study of David in his adult life.

Although David was not a perfect person, he is still one of the greatest examples of faith in the Bible, for he truly loved God's law and put it first in his life. As a result, his kingdom later prospered under God's blessing. But before he became king, he faced a difficult obstacle in the form of Saul. Today, we'll be learning about how he handled this problem while still keeping God first in his life.

A. David Spares Saul's Life at En Gedi

Let's read 1 Samuel 24:1–7. In the past, Saul had tried to spear David twice in person, and when David escaped with Jonathan's help, Saul chased him down with his army in an attempt to kill him. David, once Saul's beloved armorbearer, had to flee from his own king and become a fugitive. He was forced to live far from his homeland and in constant fear for his life. On top of this, David knew that God had chosen him to be the next king of Israel. This makes his actions in the cave even more remarkable! David refused to let his fears and expectations impair his judgment of the situation. Whatever he felt about the situation, he knew that Saul was God's anointed.

Let's continue reading 1 Samuel 24:8–15. Did you notice how David greeted Saul? David not only called Saul his "lord the king," but also his "father," and "the king of Israel." David spent years as Saul's armorbearer, so perhaps he was reminding Saul of their past relationship with the first title. Saul was also David's father-in-law, as David was married to Michal, Saul's daughter. As for "the king of Israel," this was a clear sign of deference to Saul's position. David had no intention of forcibly claiming his position as king of Israel, and he showed this in the title he accorded Saul.

Everything about his situation was entirely unjust, but if we examine David's speech, we can see that there is no hint of accusation or hatred in his words. David humbly provides evidence of his refusal to raise a hand against Saul, and he respectfully lets his actions speak of his intentions. He stated his case before Saul and used wise words to defuse the situation and avoid conflict.

David's actions in this chapter show us that he not only had great fear of the Lord, but also possessed wisdom and grace even during an emotionally charged and dangerous situation.

1. David feared the Lord

It is normal human behavior to return hatred with hatred. This is normally because we act out of an instinctual sense of self-preservation and fear. But throughout this chapter, we can see that David didn't act out of fear for himself – he acted only out of fear of the Lord. Hebrews 12:28–29 teaches us that fearing God means showing Him respect and reverence. David respected the Lord, so he respected Saul because Saul was God's anointed.

Proverbs 9:10 teaches us that "the fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom." This means that the benefit of fearing the Lord is that we will receive wisdom! This is important to have, because if we have wisdom, we are less likely to fall into sinful desires. Joseph, for example, greatly feared the Lord, which gave him the strength to refuse sinning with his master's wife (Gen

39:12). The Lord Jesus refused to sin when tempted by Satan, because His fear of the Lord was greater than His physical desires (Mt 4:4, 7, 10). Although his very life was in danger, David's fear of the Lord was stronger than his desire to save his own life from Saul, or to elevate himself as king.

2. David shows grace to Saul

By refusing to lift a hand against Saul, David was also showing him great mercy, as he had the right to protect himself in this unjust situation. Yet, he held back his natural desire to get even or to protect himself and showed grace to Saul.

Romans 3:24 says that we have been "justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus." Our salvation came at a price, paid for us by the blood of Jesus Christ. Nothing we did or could have done would have saved us, which is why Paul repeatedly reminds us that we have been redeemed by grace alone. The apostles understood this, and their actions teach us that since we have so freely received God's grace, we should also show this same grace to others (Acts 4:33–35; 11:15–17). Although he lived long before Jesus' time, David understood the mercies of the Lord, so he showed the same mercy to Saul.

B. David Spares Saul a Second Time

Despite his vow to leave David alone, Saul once again pursued David, this time into the Wilderness of Ziph, where he and his army camped in the hill of Hachilah. Let's read 1 Samuel 26:1–12. David's actions are once again contrary to the common sense of mankind. The first time, Saul had coincidentally entered the very cave in which David was hiding. This time, David managed to sneak into a camp of 3,000 men, right up to Saul himself! Saul had broken his vow to David, but David still refused to lift a hand against him, saying, "The LORD forbid that I should stretch out my hand against the LORD's anointed" (v. 11). Abishai saw Saul as an enemy, but David only saw God's chosen king.

Let's continue reading 1 Samuel 26:13–16. Although the army was there to hunt David down, he actually admonished Saul's guard for being lax in his duties! This was again because he saw Saul not as an enemy, but as God's anointed. It is clear that despite the dangers he faced, David still feared the Lord, and therefore respected His servants.

Let's finish the rest of the chapter by reading 1 Samuel 26:17–25. David once again wisely emphasized his lack of action against Saul and showed both deference and respect towards the king of Israel. This was the last meeting between Saul and David, and because of David's fear of the Lord, they once again parted on peaceful terms.

1. David's discernment of God's will

From man's point of view, David had two ideal opportunities to eliminate the threat to his life. Any normal person would have killed Saul, justifying it as self-defense. David's men, for example, saw Saul as a threat to his life, an enemy, and an obstacle to the throne. Their actions reflected this view. They even attributed the ideal circumstances to God's will (1 Sam 24:4; 26:8)! But David feared the Lord, so he was able to discern God's true will. By refusing to kill Saul as he was urged, David protected both himself and his men from sin and judgment (26:9). This act alone reveals much of David's character and shows us why God considered him "a man after [His] own heart" (Acts 13:22)!

2. David's trust in the Lord

David's fear of the Lord had a solid foundation: he fully trusted in the Lord's power and provision. When he was a shepherd, the Lord protected him from lions and bears and gave him the strength to protect his flock. Later, the Lord protected him from Goliath and continued to protect him from Saul's grasp. They had a two-way relationship: God gave David His protection because David fully trusted in the Lord and served Him completely. We can see this in the numerous instances when David asked for God's guidance before making any move to act, and in the fact that he refused to kill Saul. His trust, however, extended beyond mere preservation of his life. He also trusted that the Lord would repay any wickedness done to him, and that his time as king would come when the Lord willed it.

a. Vengeance is the Lord's

We have very little control over many circumstances in life, but we do have control over how we react when faced with an unjust situation. Let's read Romans 12:17–21. This is an important teaching that David clearly acts out. In both instances, Saul admits that David is more righteous (1 Sam 24:17; 26:21) and returns upon seeing his own sin and shame.

David truly overcame evil with good and deferred the judgment of Saul into God's hands. He knew that vengeance belonged to God, and God alone. He emphasizes this in one of his psalms, where he wrote, "Depart from evil, and do good; and dwell forevermore. For the LORD loves justice, and does not forsake His saints; they are preserved forever, but the descendants of the wicked shall be cut off" (Ps 37:27–28).

b. Wait for God's timing

David's trust in the Lord extended far beyond the present and into the unseen, unknown future. David was anointed at quite a young age by Samuel, but it wasn't until he was thirty years old that he began his reign as king. If he were a teenager when he was anointed, then he would have waited for about fifteen years. This is quite a long time to wait! But David knew that God's time had not yet come. He could have become king the moment he killed Saul, but he submitted to God's timing with patience.

In Psalm 31:15, David wrote, "My times are in Your hand," showing his understanding that his entire life was in God's hand. In Psalm 27, a psalm of trust, David teaches us, "Wait on the LORD; be of good courage, and He shall strengthen your heart; wait, I say, on the LORD!" (Ps 27:14). He knew that God was in control of all things. So, although he may have felt impatient, angry, or upset at his circumstances, he chose to hold on to his hope and faith that the Lord had everything under control. He fully trusted God in all matters of his life.

Check for Understanding

1. **How did David greet Saul outside the cave in En Gedi? Why did he use these titles?** He called Saul his "lord the king," his "father," and "the king of Israel." He was conveying deference and respect towards Saul.
2. **What do David's actions at En Gedi teach us about his character?** David feared the Lord, and he also possessed great mercy.
3. **What was David's reply when Abishai offered to kill Saul for him? Why were their responses so different?** He said, "The LORD forbid that I should stretch out my hand against the LORD's anointed." Abishai saw Saul as an enemy, but David only saw God's chosen king.

- 4. Why was David so adamantly against killing Saul?** He knew that Saul was God’s anointed, and he feared God enough that he was able to discern God’s true will. David was willing to wait for God’s timing.

Life Application

1. Respecting God’s Anointed

“Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God. Therefore whoever resists the authority resists the ordinance of God, and those who resist will bring judgment on themselves” (Rom 13:1–2).

These verses teach us that God has placed the government and given its leaders authority. Like David, we may not know why, but we are to respect the roles and positions given by God. Even if we disagree with them, they are still God’s workmanship, placed in their position for the purpose of governing. When we honor these people, we are honoring God. This means respecting our teachers, employers, or officers, and respecting the positions that they hold.

Secular authorities are not the only ones that we should respect. There are also those appointed as authorities by God in the church. Let’s read Hebrews 13:17. “Obey those who rule over you, and be submissive, for they watch out for your souls, as those who must give account. Let them do so with joy and not with grief, for that would be unprofitable for you.” We need to “obey” and “be submissive” to authorities within the church, even when we know that they are also imperfect humans like us. This is not only because their concern is for our spiritual welfare, but also because by honoring our RE teachers, church council members, and ordained ministers, we are also honoring God (1 Pet 5:5–7).

Peter wrote, “Submit yourselves for the Lord’s sake to every human authority: whether to the emperor, as the supreme authority, or to governors, who are sent by him to punish those who do wrong and to command those who do right” (1 Pet 2:13–14 NIV). In this verse, the emperor to which he referred was a corrupt emperor of ancient Rome. Yet, he tells us that we need to “honor the emperor” (v. 17 NIV) and submit ourselves to authority.

Submission doesn’t come easily, especially towards someone with whom we disagree. As humans, we are naturally prideful, and on top of this, our leaders are just as human and imperfect as the rest of us. So how can we “submit,” other than clothing ourselves in humility, especially if we can see this imperfection? Aside from showing humility, we must also trust God. We need to trust that they are His chosen, and trust that His justice and righteousness will prevail. Lastly, if we see or experience injustice, prejudice, or inequality, we can actively pray to God for those whom we feel are abusing their authority.

So, how are we supposed to “honor the emperor”? Paul once instructed Timothy to pray for the leaders and officials. Let’s read 1 Timothy 2:1–2. “Therefore I exhort first of all that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men, for kings and all who are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and reverence.” By praying for our leaders, we are doing as God commanded us to do, and we will be rewarded with peaceful and quiet lives. It is important to pray for our teachers, ministers, and council members within our own church as well, so that they can lead the church with wisdom and peace in unity.

2. Vengeance Belongs to the Lord

Do you know the story of David and Nabal? David protected Nabal's servants and politely asked for some food in exchange. However, Nabal not only rejected David's messengers, but he also insulted David quite badly. David angrily rose up with his army to destroy every man in Nabal's household. However, Abigail, Nabal's wife, wisely intervened. After about ten days, the Lord struck Nabal, and he died (1 Sam 25:38). Upon hearing this, David said, "Blessed be the LORD, who has pleaded the cause of my reproach from the hand of Nabal, and has kept His servant from evil! For the LORD has returned the wickedness of Nabal on his own head" (v. 39).

Proverbs advises us: "Do not say, 'I'll pay you back for this wrong!' Wait for the LORD, and he will avenge you" (Prov 20:22 NIV). Moreover, Paul wrote, "Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath; for it is written, 'Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,' says the Lord" (Rom 12:19). But why is it so important that we leave vengeance to the Lord?

a. Anger leads to sin

David said that the Lord had "kept His servant from evil" by punishing Nabal for him. When we get angry, we tend to lose control of ourselves. As a result, we end up doing something we regret. Have you ever gotten into an argument with someone, or perhaps been attacked in some way verbally or socially? It is often our instinct to respond with anger. But the Bible reminds us to "[cease] from anger, and forsake wrath; do not fret—it only causes harm" (Ps 37:8). Let's read James 1:20. "[For] the wrath of man does not produce the righteousness of God."

Share a time you became angry and did or said something that you later regretted. What about a time when you tried to act upon an unjust situation, but ended up making everything worse? What are some ways we can control our anger or desire for vengeance?

b. Live in peace

It is difficult to deny ourselves vengeance when there are always people who are mean-spirited or ignorant of the hurt that they are dealing to us. We are always particularly vulnerable to our family members, who are able to hurt us more because of their closeness. But the Lord desires that we live peacefully, even with those who hurt us. Jesus taught us, in both His words and His actions, "[Love] your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you" (Mt 5:44). He embodied this teaching when He prayed for God to forgive the very people who crucified Him on the cross! Hebrews 12:14 also teaches us, "Pursue peace with all people, and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord."

Have you ever struggled to live in peace with someone? Perhaps with a quarrelsome family member, or with someone at school who loves to verbally jab you under the pretense of jokes? How can we change our environment and our actions so that we can live in peace with them?

When we seek vengeance, we give way to our anger and open the door to sin. To live a godly life, we need to control our desire for vengeance, and learn to let the Lord handle the situation instead. David refused to take vengeance for himself because he knew that killing the Lord's anointed was a serious sin. On top of this, he told Abishai, "As the LORD lives, the LORD shall strike him, or his day shall come to die, or he shall go out to battle and perish" (1 Sam 26:10). David understood that Saul's fate belonged to God. We should also remember this and strive to live out God's command to leave vengeance to Him, and learn to live in peace with our enemies.

3. Waiting on the Lord

One of David's remarkable characteristics was the amount of patience that he had. For around fifteen years, he lived first as an armorbearer, and then as a fugitive. While a fugitive, he was forced to fight constant battles. Yet during this entire time, David never made a single move to take the crown that had been spiritually given to him as a young boy when Samuel anointed him. Even when faced with two separate opportunities to kill Saul and finally take control of the kingdom, he refused! This is because David was able to wait on the Lord, and to completely depend on Him while waiting.

David wrote, "Rest in the LORD, and wait patiently for Him" (Ps 37:7), and also, "Wait on the LORD; be of good courage, and He shall strengthen your heart; wait, I say, on the LORD!" (Ps 27:14). Of course, waiting on the Lord is difficult when we want an answer to our problems *right now!*

Do you remember the story of Joseph? He was sold, made a slave, and thrown into prison, all entirely unjustly. Joseph must have continuously prayed for freedom, but it wasn't until years later that he was finally freed – and in a most miraculous way! Because Joseph waited for God's time and purpose, he was able to preserve his family, and to help lay down the foundation for the Israelite nation in Egypt. If he had chosen to try and escape, or to seek vengeance on his brothers, then the story would have turned out quite differently!

We naturally want to take matters into our own hands, but in order to grow and mature in spirit, we need to learn to rely on God more, and remember that God's way is the best way. Humans are impatient by nature, though, so we need to remind ourselves to wait, and to keep waiting, even when we have prayed about something for a long time with no reply from God.

Discussion

- Have you ever had to wait a long time for God's reply? Perhaps for the Holy Spirit, or for His help in a spiritual matter? What was the result of waiting?
- Why do you think God keeps us waiting for something that we have been praying for?
- Have you ever gotten impatient waiting for something and given up, only to find that God had already set in motion an answer to your prayers long ago?
- Do you think you are able to peacefully wait for God's timetable? Or do you like to take matters into your own hands?

Memory Verse

"Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath; for it is written, 'Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,' says the Lord." (Romans 12:19)

Meaning

Like David, we must not let our desire for vengeance or justice get in the way of following God's will. God wants us to live in peace, not to avenge ourselves! One reason is because we are simply unqualified to judge others, being human and imperfect. God, on the other hand, is perfect, and His judgments are fair and just. So instead of becoming angry or seeking revenge for a wrong done against us, we should learn to live in peace as Jesus commanded, and let God enact His will in His own time.

Conclusion

Saul treated David unjustly in so many ways, yet David refused to take Saul's life. This is because of his great faith in God – He valued God's judgments and God's will more than his own desire for vengeance. Instead of letting his emotions dictate his actions, David acted out of fear of the Lord. Like David, we should learn to respect authority figures given by God, even if we disagree with them, and live in peace with everyone, including our enemies. When we wait on the Lord in this manner, we can avoid sin and live in holiness.

Lesson 9 Homework Assignment Answer Key

1. What is a reason we should not avenge ourselves?
Being human and imperfect, we are unqualified to judge others. God, on the other hand, is perfect, and His judgments are fair and just. Also, Jesus commanded us to live in peace.
2. “[...] He raised up for them _____ as _____, to whom also He gave testimony and said, ‘I have found _____ the son of Jesse, a man after My own _____, who will _____ all My _____.’” (Acts 13:22)
David, king, David, heart, do, will
3. How did David address Saul at En Gedi? Why did he use these titles?
He called Saul his “lord the king,” his “father,” and “the king of Israel.” He used these titles to show deference and respect to Saul and his position as king. He was showing that he had no intention of forcibly claiming his position as king of Israel.
4. How did David’s actions towards Saul reflect the Lord Jesus’ actions towards us?
He showed grace to Saul by having mercy on him and preserving his life. The Lord Jesus also gave us life through grace.
5. What are the differences between how David saw Saul and how David’s men saw Saul?
David’s men saw Saul as a threat to David’s life, an enemy, and an obstacle to the throne. David saw him as God’s chosen, the Lord’s anointed king over Israel.
6. Have you ever become impatient waiting for God’s response to your prayers? How can you remind yourself to wait on the Lord?
Personal answers.

Absalom: A Heart of Hatred and Conceit

Passages: 2 Samuel 13–18

Memory Verse

“Before destruction the heart of a man is haughty, and before honor is humility.” (Proverbs 18:12)

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. Absalom allowed his hatred and conceit to control his actions.2. Absalom’s pride and ignorance of God’s ways led to his death.3. God is the true ruler, and nothing can thwart God from carrying out His will.	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. God is sovereign.2. God is all-powerful.	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Train ourselves to consider God in our daily lives.2. Exchange worldly desires with godly by resolving conflicts with each other and actively seeking God.

Overview

Events and Spiritual Teachings

- A. Absalom’s Hatred: His Sin, Exile, and Return
- B. Absalom’s Rebellion: Treason Against David
- C. Absalom’s Conceit: His Death

Life Application: Exchanging Worldly Desires for Godly Desires

Memory Verse

Conclusion: In the end, no matter how much Absalom planned or plotted for the throne, everything went according to God’s will, and his own pride caused his death. To avoid walking the same path as Absalom, we need to learn to exchange our worldly desires for godly desires.

Events and Spiritual Teachings

Introduction

- If you were to describe the characteristics and qualities of a king, what would they be? (*Allow students to brainstorm.*)
- What are the qualities of a king according to God's standards compared to mankind's standards? (*Allow students to brainstorm – if the previous discussion was written on the board, you can also circle or mark which characteristics are according to whose standards, God's or mankind's.*)

As the third son of King David, Absalom had everything that a person would want in this world. He was handsome, famous, and wealthy. The Bible tells us that “[from] the sole of his foot to the crown of his head there was no blemish in him,” and that he had a heavy head of hair (2 Sam 14:25–26). However, for all of the privileges that he had, he neglected to remember God in his life.

A. Absalom's Hatred: His Sin, Exile, and Return

When we look at Absalom's characteristics objectively, we can see that he is actually a gifted individual; from a worldly perspective, he had many qualities that would be useful as a ruler. If he had used these qualities to help his father, he would have been an invaluable asset to David and the kingdom. However, Absalom made the choice to use his talents for his own gain. Let's take a closer look at his actions and how they affected the lives of those around him.

1. Repaid evil with evil

Then Jonadab the son of Shimeah, David's brother, answered and said, "Let not my lord suppose they have killed all the young men, the king's sons, for only Amnon is dead. For by the command of Absalom this has been determined from the day that he forced his sister Tamar. Now therefore, let not my lord the king take the thing to his heart, to think that all the king's sons are dead. For only Amnon is dead."

(2 Sam 13:32–33)

In this chapter, Amnon raped Tamar and then threw her out of his place, leaving her devastated and ruined. In response, Absalom waited for an opportunity to kill Amnon. Let's read 2 Samuel 13:22–29. Although Amnon did a terrible deed, Absalom also sinned by repaying evil with evil. He allowed his hatred to dictate his actions, and he executed his own form of justice instead of leaving vengeance to God.

Paul wrote, “Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath; for it is written, ‘Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,’ says the Lord” (Rom 12:19). Absalom was driven by his hatred, to the point that he chose to break the law and take matters into his own hands instead of leaving them to God.

2. Selfishly burned Joab's fields

Therefore Absalom sent for Joab, to send him to the king, but he would not come to him. And when he sent again the second time, he would not come. So he said to his servants, "See, Joab's field is near mine, and he has barley there; go and set it on fire." And Absalom's servants set the field on fire.

After killing Amnon, Absalom fled to his grandfather in Geshur and lived in exile for three years. It was only after Joab intervened that David allowed Absalom's return to Jerusalem. For two years, he lived in Jerusalem, yet David did not call Absalom or meet him for another two years. When Absalom tried to contact Joab, however, Joab ignored his summons. Let's read 2 Samuel 14:25–33.

Rather than wait for Joab, Absalom forced his hand with an act of willful destruction. However, when Joab confronted him, Absalom made no apology for his actions. It is clear that he did not think he had done anything wrong in either killing Amnon or burning Joab's fields.

B. Absalom's Rebellion: Treason Against David

After his reconciliation with King David, Absalom turned around and began to plot against his own father in an attempt to take the throne. Undermining David's rule would not have been easy, so how did he go about doing it? Let's read 2 Samuel 15:1–12.

1. Flaunted his wealth and position (v. 1)

Absalom was clearly concerned with his public image. Horses were only owned by the rich and having fifty men run before him was an announcement of his wealth. But these things were not simply a sign of his riches – they emphasized his power due to his status as son of the king.

2. Raised his reputation by sowing doubt in David's reputation (vv. 2–6)

Absalom clearly had a plan in mind. He didn't only show off his power and status, he also spent time speaking to individuals and gaining their support. At the same time, he spread false stories that made it seem like he would be a better ruler than David.

3. Used God as an excuse for his own ends (vv. 7–12)

Absalom showed a strategic mind and a sense for detail. To make his trip to Hebron seem legitimate, he used God as an excuse, a purpose that David would not refuse. Hebron was also significant because it was the location David was anointed as king – Absalom was purposefully inserting himself into David's place.

From the events that we read, we can see that Absalom commanded enough authority to convince his people to kill Amnon. He also had the charisma to draw support from the Israelites, and he was knowledgeable enough about politics to figure out how exactly to rebel against King David. But while his actions against Amnon could be seen as disobedience against God's laws, subverting the Israelites against their own king was an act of rebellion against both David and the Lord. However, Absalom's acts did not stop there.

Absalom's Prideful and Foolish Decisions

Once he left for Hebron, Absalom's followers continued to increase in number. It came to the point that a messenger came to David, saying, "The hearts of the men of Israel are with Absalom" (2 Sam 15:13). With Absalom having successfully taken the throne, David was forced to flee from Jerusalem with his loyal followers, and Absalom was able to enter the city (15:14, 37). Let's continue reading 2 Samuel 16:15–23.

1. Permitted Hushai to remain as advisor (2 Sam 16:15–19)

When Hushai returned to Jerusalem, Absalom justly questioned his motives, knowing that he was loyal to David. Let's read Hushai's words to Absalom in 2 Samuel 16:15–19. If we closely examine what he said, he never actually specifies Absalom directly – in fact, his words are quite clearly referring to David, not Absalom.

- a. Long live the king: At present, David was still technically king over Israel
- b. Whom the Lord chooses: David was God's anointed, chosen to rule over Israel

Absalom saw only what he wanted in Hushai's words: an advisor who had chosen to leave his father in favor of him. If he were less prideful, perhaps he would have seen Hushai's words for what they truly were: a declaration of loyalty to David, not Absalom.

2. Slept with his father's concubines (2 Sam 16:20–22)

Ahithophel's advice might have seemed to be for political gain. But this act only served to express Absalom's utter disrespect for his own father, his ignorance of the ways of God, and his ignorance of God's command over the nation. In the end, it did nothing to stabilize his political position, and only severed the relationship between Absalom and his father beyond repair.

3. Followed Hushai's advice despite his lack of experience in battle (2 Sam 17:5–14)

Absalom was not a military leader as his father was. King David spent years in battle while evading capture from King Saul, and he defeated the Philistines to usher in an era of peace in Israel. Absalom did not have this same experience, but he still chose the advice that made him look better in his own eyes and elevated his public image. As a result, Hushai gained more time for David and his followers to escape with their lives.

Optional Teaching: Who was Ahithophel?

The Bible records that he was the father of Eliam, one of the mighty men of David. This made Ahithophel the grandfather of Bathsheba, the woman whom David took for himself. Later, when Bathsheba found herself pregnant from their affair, David commanded that Uriah be killed in battle to cover his sin. It is somewhat ironic that it was Ahithophel, the grandfather of the woman whom David coveted, who advised that Absalom take David's concubines for himself.

From his first three actions we studied, we can see that Absalom was an intelligent person, but from the last three, we can see that his pride and ego got in the way of his success. As crafty and as cunning as he may have been, following his desires and trying to run ahead of God's schedule led to his own death.

C. Absalom's Conceit: His Death

Let's read 2 Samuel 18:1–4. David had fought in numerous battles throughout his life, so he was an experienced military leader. He had every reason to think it right to lead his people into a fight. However, he humbly submitted to sound advice, realizing that his men were correct. In contrast, Absalom decided that it would be a good idea to gather up a large army and lead them into a fight, despite having very little experience in battle, especially compared to David and his mighty men.

We discussed earlier that Absalom's qualities could actually have been considered good qualities in a king – he was charismatic, communicative, and able to command loyalty in his followers. But when he drove King David out of Jerusalem and took the city for himself, he wasn't wise enough to evaluate the counsel that he received. He instead made prideful decisions that were contrary to his goal. What was

the result? Let's read 2 Samuel 18:6–15. We learned that when Absalom cut his hair each year, it was weighed at 200 shekels, which is almost six pounds (2 Sam 14:25–26)! From the Bible's description of Absalom, we can infer that he valued his good looks, and his hair was likely a point of pride for him. It was an outward reflection of his conceit.

Let's read Proverbs 18:12. From Absalom's actions, we can see that he was proud enough to think that he had the right to kill his brother and later take the position of king from his father. But like his head that got him caught in the branches of a tree, his prideful decisions resulted in a battle that his army lost. Despite years of planning, his treason only resulted in his execution at the hand of Joab. This was in part because of his failure to consider God's will. In his conceit, Absalom had forgotten that Israel belongs to God, not to the king.

God's Sovereignty

Let's read 2 Samuel 15:24–26. Although David's life had changed a lot over his years, his heart was still centered upon God. Let's turn to Psalm 3. Although God had anointed David as king over Israel, he was now being chased from his throne. Yet despite this, David still called the Lord "a shield" and the one who sustains him (Ps 3:3–5).

In comparison, we learned today that Absalom repeatedly failed to consider God. There is no mention of God in any of Absalom's actions, except for the time he used a vow to God as an excuse to leave Jerusalem and make his way to Hebron. Absalom even considered God Himself as a tool for his personal use. However, although Absalom did not consider God, we can see that God was very much still in charge of his life. Even his evil deed of sleeping with David's concubines was a fulfillment of God's will (2 Sam 12:11–12) and an answer to David's prayer (15:31).

Let's read 2 Samuel 17:14. "So Absalom and all the men of Israel said, 'The advice of Hushai the Archite is better than the advice of Ahithophel.' For the LORD had purposed to defeat the good advice of Ahithophel, to the intent that the LORD might bring disaster on Absalom." Absalom had a clever plan and was patient enough to execute it in his rebellion. But his desire to overthrow his father's rule meant nothing in the face of God's control over all history and life on this earth. Nothing can thwart God from carrying out His will. As David wrote, "Salvation belongs to the LORD. Your blessing is upon Your people" (Ps 3:8).

Check for Understanding

- 1. What was the reason Absalom burned Joab's fields? What does this reveal about his character?** Because Joab did not answer when Absalom summoned him. This shows that Absalom was not only willfully destructive in seeking his own gain, but that he also did not think he had done anything wrong.
- 2. What three actions did Absalom take in his revolt against the throne?** He flaunted his wealth and position; he raised his reputation by sowing doubt in David's reputation; and he used God as an excuse for his own ends so that David would permit him to go to Hebron.
- 3. What three actions did Absalom take when he drove his father out of Jerusalem?** He permitted Hushai to remain as advisor; he slept with his father's concubines; and he followed Hushai's advice despite his lack of experience in battle.
- 4. What do these six actions tell us about Absalom's character?** From the first three actions, we can see that Absalom was an intelligent person, but from the last three, we can see that his pride and ego got in the way of his success.

- 5. Why is it ironic that Absalom died as a result of his head getting caught in a tree?** His head full of hair was an outward reflection of his conceit. Like his head that got him caught in the branches of a tree, his prideful decisions resulted in a battle that his army lost. Despite years of planning, his treason only resulted in his execution at the hand of Joab.

Life Application

Exchanging Worldly Desires for Godly Desires

Absalom's life in the Bible revolved around his conflicts against others – he came into conflict with Amnon, then Joab, and finally his father David. When we take a closer look at Absalom's actions, we can narrow down the reasons behind them to two things: his anger and his conceit. He allowed his desires to drive his actions. First, his desire for vengeance drove him to murder his own brother, and his arrogance broke the familial and political relationship between himself and his father beyond repair. He had no consideration for God's will, and instead prioritized his own desires.

It is easy for us to look back on Absalom's life and point out his selfish decisions. But it is much more difficult to look at our own lives and see if we have also been driven by our own desires. How do we train ourselves to consider God in our daily lives, instead of disregarding His will as Absalom did? How do we avoid making selfish decisions that are driven by our desires? The most basic line of defense against following our personal desires is increasing our love for each other, and especially for God. When we do so, we will naturally grow in our desire for God rather than for things of this world, then we can successfully avoid getting caught in the same conflicts that Absalom did.

Of course, growing in our love for others is never easy, especially compared to the sacrificial love that Jesus Christ showed towards us. But we can begin by resolving any conflicts that we have, both with our brethren, and with God.

1. Resolve Conflicts with One Another

"If someone says, 'I love God,' and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen? And this commandment we have from Him: that he who loves God must love his brother also." (1 Jn 4:20–21)

Anger often blinds us. When we get riled up or angry at someone or something, we immediately lash out, or internalize our hatred and slowly grow in resentment. Our speech and actions become fueled by bitterness, and our anger begins to interfere with our spiritual growth. To avoid making the same mistakes as Absalom, we need to let go of such negative feelings. By doing so, we are less prone to sinning against God, and our judgment is no longer clouded by anger or hate. We need to resolve conflicts with one another before approaching God (Mt 5:23–24). Let's take a moment to consider the following:

- Have you ever felt angry or irritated at someone, or gotten into a big argument that lasted for several days?
- How do you handle these feelings? Do you try to move on, or do you spend hours or days thinking of things to say or do towards the person in question?
- If someone says or does something hurtful towards you, what steps can you take to resolve the situation? Based on circumstances that you've experienced, discuss with the class different actions that you can take that are in line with God's will. Take a look at

the following verses. For each, write down what the Bible suggests you can do when faced with conflict.

- Rom 12:17, 19 – *Avoid evil acts and do not act out of vengeance. Instead do what is right in the eyes of men.*
- Eph 4:31–32 – *Learn to let go of negative feelings, and instead act with kindness towards others.*
- Mt 18:15–17 – *Use dialogue to settle the matter with the brethren who sinned against you, or if the matter cannot be resolved, ask another to help mediate.*
- Col 3:13 – *Forgive others, as Christ forgave us.*
- Eph 4:26 – *Try to resolve any conflicts before too much time passes.*
- Prov 17:14 – *Stop or pause a dialogue when you realize that it is becoming an argument.*
- Jas 1:19 – *Think before you speak.*

2. Resolve Conflicts with God

“Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded.” (Jas 4:8)

To draw near to God and resolve our conflicts with Him, we must first humble ourselves and repent of anything that we have done against His will. This means we need to spend time examining our daily lives and learning what is right or wrong in God’s eyes. We often learn about the importance of repenting, but we may still feel like God is very distant, or that our prayers are ineffective. How do we grow in our understanding of God if it feels like He isn’t close to us?

- *“Then you will call upon Me and go and pray to Me, and I will listen to you. And you will seek Me and find Me, when you search for Me with all your heart.” (Jer 29:12–13)*

As backwards as it may seem, if we feel distant from God, the first thing we need to do is ask God for help! He has promised that when we seek Him out, He will draw near to us. But we need to grasp on to this promise ourselves and be proactive in seeking Him out. Like taking vitamins or medication, seeking God means establishing a daily habit or ritual to improve our spiritual health.

If you don’t already have a set time, write down a time of day you can set aside so that you can spend at least a few minutes with God. If you already have a set time that you spend with God, write down how you can use this time to “seek” God more effectively.

- *“For everyone who partakes only of milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, for he is a babe. But solid food belongs to those who are of full age, that is, those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.” (Heb 5:13–14)*

It is easy for us to fall into a “routine” in our spirituality. Many brethren fall into the trap of believing that they do not need to do anything beyond attending services each Sabbath. But the Bible often calls us to greater action – we need avoid settling into a “lukewarm” faith, and instead push ourselves closer and closer to God. We need to seek “solid food.” When we do so, we become more discerning of what is right and wrong, and it becomes easier for us to pick out the things in our lives that are against God’s will.

Take a moment to discuss with your class: what do you think “solid food” means to you

personally? How can you seek this out in your life?

To avoid being driven by our worldly desires as Absalom was, we need to increase our awareness of both God and man. By caring for one another and actively seeking out God, we will slowly learn to replace our worldly desires with godly ones. When we do so, we will naturally learn to make wiser decisions that are in alignment with God's will, and He will bless us with His protection and salvation (Ps 3:3, 8).

Memory Verse

"Before destruction the heart of a man is haughty, and before honor is humility." (Proverbs 18:12)

Meaning

See the teachings in *Events and Spiritual Teachings, Section C*.

Conclusion

We learned today that Absalom had many qualities that would have been an asset as a ruler. He had a clever plan to take the throne, and he was patient enough to execute it in his rebellion. But in his hatred and conceit, he forgot God's presence and power. In the end, no matter how much Absalom planned or plotted for the throne, everything went according to God's will, and his own pride caused his death – both the physical "pride" in his hair, and his internal pride in making foolish and conceited decisions. To avoid walking the same path as Absalom, we should not let ourselves be controlled by our desires or by our conceit. Instead, we need to learn to exchange our worldly desires for godly desires. In this way, we can live in humility and be at peace both with men and with God.

Lesson 10 Homework Assignment Answer Key

1. In what way did Absalom's haughty heart lead to his destruction?
In the end, it was the hair on his head – an outward reflection of his inward pride – that led to his death.
2. What was the reason Absalom burned Joab's fields? What does this reveal about his character?
Because Joab did not answer when Absalom summoned him. This shows that Absalom was not only willfully destructive in seeking his own gain, but that he also did not think he had done anything wrong.
3. What three actions did Absalom take in his revolt against the throne?
He flaunted his wealth and position; he raised his reputation by sowing doubt in David's; and he used God as an excuse for his own ends so that David would permit him to go to Hebron.
4. Although he was clever and patient with his rebellion, why did Absalom fail?
His desire to overthrow his father's rule meant nothing in the face of God's control over all history and life on this earth. Nothing can thwart God from carrying out His will.
5. What is the most basic line of defense against following our personal desires? How can we do this?
The most basic line of defense is increasing our love for each other, and especially for God. We can do this by resolving conflicts with one another and resolving conflicts with God.
6. Have you ever gotten into a serious conflict with someone? How did you resolve it? Would you approach the situation differently today?
Personal answers.

Solomon: A Heart Led Astray

Passages: As listed in the lesson.

Memory Verse

“Therefore put to death your members which are on the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry.” (Colossians 3:5)

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. Solomon asked for a wise heart, but grew insensitive to God’s commands over time.2. Solomon allowed his own desires to deteriorate his spiritual life.	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. God is a jealous God.2. God’s warnings are always clear and precise.	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Idolatry is a danger to our faith when left unchecked.2. We should search our hearts daily and strive to remove any sin that we find.

Overview

Events and Spiritual Teachings

- A. Solomon’s Wisdom
- B. Solomon Builds God’s Temple
- C. God’s Second Appearance to Solomon
- D. Solomon’s Downfall

Life Application: The Danger of Idolatry

Memory Verse

Conclusion: Whenever we leave room for sin to enter our lives, no matter how innocent it may seem in the beginning, it can take hold of us until we can no longer refuse. We need to be constantly aware of this danger, and be determined to turn away from any sin that can harm our faith.

Events and Spiritual Teachings

Introduction

Ask your students to think about several things they would do if they had all the money or time in the world. Ask them to each share their thoughts. After they have expressed themselves, ask them to think about whether those things will hurt their faith. Why or why not?

Write the list on the whiteboard. Which ones do they feel are worse than others in terms of affecting their faith? Have them explain their reasons.

After David's death, the kingdom was given to Solomon. His name in Hebrew is *Shēlomoh*, from the root word *shalom*, meaning "peace." True to his name, God blessed the kingdom with a brief period of peace after years of war. The Bible says of his time as king, "And Judah and Israel dwelt safely, each man under his vine and his fig tree, from Dan as far as Beersheba, all the days of Solomon" (1 Kgs 4:25). Through Solomon, the Lord ushered in an age of unity both within his country and with the countries around Israel (1 Kgs 4:24; 1 Chr 22:9).

A. Solomon's Wisdom

God appeared to Solomon at Gibeon in a dream and asked him what the Lord should give him. Let's read 1 Kings 3:5–9. What request did Solomon ask of God, and for what two reasons? (*He asked for an "understanding heart" to judge God's people and to discern between good and evil.*)

The Bible demonstrates Solomon's wisdom with a difficult case: two women each claimed to be the mother of a child, with no witnesses to prove which was speaking the truth. But Solomon, with the wisdom God gave to him, solved the case with a simple test that discerned each woman's motives. Let's read 1 Kings 4:29–34. Solomon's wisdom was so great that his fame crossed borders!

The Queen of Sheba herself, the ruler of a very powerful and wealthy nation at the time, came to see if everything she had heard about Solomon was true. When she saw his wisdom, she said, "Blessed be the LORD your God, who delighted in you, setting you on the throne of Israel! Because the LORD has loved Israel forever, therefore He made you king, to do justice and righteousness" (1 Kgs 10:9). Solomon used his wisdom to demonstrate the existence and sovereignty of the Lord, to the point that even non-believers saw his fear of the Lord and respected God's power for it.

B. Solomon Builds God's Temple

(Teachers: There are plenty of images online that are easily searchable if you'd like to show images or replicas of the temple.)

Although David wanted to build a temple for God, the Lord told him, "You shall not build a house for My name, because you have been a man of war and have shed blood" (1 Chr 28:3). God also told David that his son would build the Lord's house. Solomon was true to David's command (v. 10), and he dedicated seven years to building a temple that would last in the Israelites' memory for years on end.

It's difficult to imagine all of the measurements just from reading the Bible, but the building he constructed was a marvel of its time. The Bible records more than 150,000 laborers to help transport all of the stone that was needed. Solomon put such care into the temple's construction that "no hammer or chisel or any iron tool was heard in the temple while it was being built" (1 Kgs 6:7). This took not only

great attention to detail, but also a great deal of skill, as everything had to be measured and cut perfectly to fit together on site!

When it was finally completed, Solomon dedicated the temple to the Lord. Let’s read 1 Kings 8:62–66. After a prayer, Solomon offered great sacrifices, praise, and worship. God was so pleased with his offering that He filled the temple with His divine presence in the form of a cloud (vv. 10–11).

C. God’s Second Appearance to Solomon

After Solomon finished building both the temple and his own home, the Lord appeared to him a second time. Let’s read 1 Kings 9:4–9. Let’s briefly go over what the Lord promised Solomon in these verses.

If Solomon...	God will...
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Walks before God as David walked • Walks in integrity of heart and in uprightness • Does according to God’s commands • Keeps God’s statutes and judgments 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish his throne in Israel forever • Keep His promise to David
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Turns from following God • Does not keep His commandments or statutes • Serves other gods and worships them 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cut off Israel from the land • Cast out of His sight the temple built for Him • Turn Israel into a warning to other nations

These consequences seem quite dire! But there is one more promise that God gave to Solomon in this appearance. Let’s turn to 2 Chronicles 7:14. “[If] My people who are called by My name will humble themselves, and pray and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land.” Even if the people made the mistake of disobeying God, the Lord would have mercy if they repented of their ways. All of His assorted warnings and promises may seem harsh to us, but they were in fact a demonstration of His love. God loves us, and He wants to take care of His people! But for Him to do so, we must obey Him first.

D. Solomon’s Downfall

Unfortunately, despite the wisdom God gave to him, Solomon eventually did fall away from God, so he suffered the consequences for his disobedience. He was a great leader for his people, but he failed to exercise the same kind of wisdom in his personal life. But how did Solomon turn out this way? First, let’s read God’s standards regarding Israel’s kings and how they should act. Let’s read Deuteronomy 17:14–17. Let’s go over each standard and see how Solomon acted in comparison.

1. “But he shall not multiply horses for himself, nor cause the people to return to Egypt to multiply horses” (v. 16)

In biblical times, horses were a sign of military strength. They signified how great an army and, in turn, their nation was. The Lord didn’t want Israel’s kings to rely on their military strength, but to rely on God’s strength. Let’s read 1 Kings 10:26, 28. This passage tells us that Solomon had thousands of horses imported from Egypt. Simply owning such an astounding number may not be a sin, but it would have caused the Israelites to rely on their own military power, rather than trusting in the invisible power of God to protect and deliver them. Solomon himself wrote, “The horse is prepared for the day of battle, but deliverance is of the LORD” (Prov 21:31).

2. “Neither shall he multiply wives for himself, lest his heart turn away” (v. 17)

Although Solomon began his rule as someone who “loved the LORD, walking in the statutes of his father David” (1 Kgs 3:3), this didn’t last. Solomon had made a marriage alliance with Egypt by marrying the Pharaoh’s daughter (v. 1), a common practice in those days as a method of keeping the peace between nations. But Solomon’s marital troubles had only just begun; he married many foreign women to form political alliances, and none of them worshipped God. Let’s read 1 Kings 11:1–10.

Solomon may have at first resisted their requests to bow down to their false gods, but with 700 wives and 300 concubines, he was eventually persuaded to turn to idolatry (1 Kgs 11:4). God’s warning in Deuteronomy was clearly a valid concern. Unfortunately, this seemed to be a vice of Solomon’s, as he “clung to [his wives] in love” (v. 2). Solomon simply couldn’t refuse women, and, as a result, he allowed his desires to pull him away from God.

3. “[Nor] shall he greatly multiply silver and gold for himself” (v. 17)

Another sign of a powerful nation was its wealth, and it may have been common for kings to take advantage of their positions by accumulating riches for themselves. However, God wanted His kings to abide by different standards. He didn’t want Israel to boast of its wealth, and He didn’t want His kings to oppress His people, or to live in so much luxury that they forgot that they were merely caretakers of a nation that belonged to God. Let’s read 1 Kings 10:14–25. From this passage, we can only imagine the amount of wealth and luxury that Solomon accumulated! Solomon focused on accumulating riches for himself, and he failed to follow God’s standards for the kings of Israel.

The Debilitating Power of Small Sins

Solomon didn’t suddenly turn away from God one day. It was a gradual process that began with his marriage to a Gentile who didn’t worship the Lord as he did. His weakness towards women grew entirely out of control and led to his downfall. Small sins can often be the first steps in turning away from God. It isn’t the sins that we don’t know about, but the sins that we excuse, that cause the greatest trouble. Each piece of gold and every woman that he married may not have been cause for concern individually. But accumulating so many added up bit by bit, until he finally allowed his worldly pleasures to become a solid wall between him and God.

Did you know that the Book of Ecclesiastes was written by King Solomon? Did you also know that one of the book’s main themes is how empty it is to pursue worldly pleasures? Let’s read Ecclesiastes 12:8. Solomon had likely become one of the wealthiest men of the time, yet he frequently wrote how quickly life vanishes before you. He used the word “vanity” more than thirty times, and often used words like “emptiness” and “vapor” to emphasize how meaningless worldly pleasures are.

In the end, Solomon rather ironically concluded that the enjoyment of this life can never satisfy the deep longings in our heart. Rather, the duty of man is to “[fear] God and keep His commandments, for this is man’s all. For God will bring every work into judgment, including every secret thing, whether good or evil” (Eccl 12:13–14). For all of the wealth that he accumulated, the pleasures that he found in his love of his wives, and the leading might of the Israelite nation during his reign, Solomon at last concluded that the wisest thing for any person to do is to fear God and keep His commandments.

Check for Understanding

1. **What did Solomon ask for when God appeared to him?** He asked for an understanding heart to judge God's people and to discern between good and evil.
2. **What did God promise Solomon in His second appearance?** He promised blessings if Solomon kept God's commands. If Solomon didn't obey Him, however, there would be consequences.
3. **In which three ways did Solomon disobey God as a king of Israel?** He multiplied horses for the nation, had many wives, and amassed wealth and riches for himself.
4. **What can we learn from the gradual process by which Solomon turned from God?** Small sins can often be the first steps in turning away from God. It isn't the sins that we don't know about, but the sins that we excuse, that cause the greatest trouble.
5. **What was Solomon's conclusion at the end of the Book of Ecclesiastes?** The enjoyment of this life can never satisfy the deep longings in our hearts, and the duty of man is to fear God and keep His commandments.

Life Application

The Danger of Idolatry

1. What Is Idolatry?

In biblical times, the Israelites worshipped foreign gods such as Baal. Today, it is more difficult to identify the idols in our hearts. An idol can be anything that takes the place of God. It is anything that receives our passionate devotion. What is considered to be idolatry today? Let's brainstorm a list together. *(Examples may be: money, objects, hobbies, celebrities, athletes, social media, television, video games, a boyfriend/girlfriend, academics, etc.)*

We all have some sort of weakness that each of us face on our own. It's likely more common that you might think! Do you struggle with any of the items on our list? Let's read a few scenarios. For each, first identify the idol that each person struggles with, and then answer the discussion questions as a group.

Scenario #1

A concert starring Samantha's favorite group is fast approaching, and she's wanted to go for months. But her parents are refusing to let her go because it is on a Friday night, and they have insisted that they observe the Sabbath. On top of this, they think Samantha's being overly obsessive about this group. She has their posters plastered all over her walls, spends most of her allowance on their products, is always singing or playing their music, and even dresses like them whenever she can. It is starting to make her parents worry. But Samantha can't believe how insensitive her parents are being. How could they just veto her request? It simply isn't fair.

- What is Samantha's idol?
- Why is it dangerous for us to fixate on certain groups or celebrities?
- Do you think it is okay to listen to any type of music?
- What kind of music can hinder or even break down our spiritual growth?
- What kind of music do you think is beneficial to our spiritual growth?

Scenario #2

John sat in front of his computer, struggling with himself. It had all begun when his friends invited him over to watch some movies while their parents were out. John had said no at first, knowing that they were referring to adult-only movies. But after they persisted a second and a third time, his curiosity was stirred enough that he said yes. He had felt guilty the first time, but since then, he found himself searching for more and more to watch. The more he watched, the more he ignored his guilt. John began watching all sorts of adult-only movies. Worse, he couldn't seem to stop thinking about them, even

during service at church. When he finally realized what was happening, though, he couldn't seem to convince himself to stop.

- What is John's idol?
- How did John fall into this form of idolatry?
- What are some basic steps John can start taking to put away the idol in his heart?
- If you were John's friend and he confided in you, how do you think you could help him?

Scenario #3

When Carly found a wallet on the sidewalk, instead of taking it to the police station, she instead peeked inside. She wasn't sure what to expect, but she was surprised when she found almost 100 dollars inside. Her thoughts immediately went to the new bracelets that all of her friends now wore. Since entering high school, Carly had been extremely conscious of keeping up with all the latest fashions and trends, to fit in with her friends. This was, however, an expensive hobby, and her parents had begun to limit her spending. With the money in this wallet, she could buy a new bracelet without her parents knowing. All she needed to do was throw it back on the sidewalk where she found it after taking the money for herself.

- What is Carly's idol?
- How might Carly's particular hobby negatively affect her spirituality?
- How can money be a threat to our spirituality?
- How can Carly learn to control her shopping habits?
- At what point do you think hobbies become a danger to our faith?

2. Putting Idolatry to Death

His abundant wealth and riches may have seemed like a blessing for Solomon, but in truth, they contributed to his downfall. As he increased in wealth, he decreased in his spirituality and his sensitivity to sin. The money itself may not have been inherently bad, but Solomon allowed his physical desires to ensnare his heart and pull him away from God.

The more we want the things of the world, the more destructive our desires become to our spiritual lives. We should never underestimate our physical desires, but ask God for a wise and discerning heart, so that we can see the desires hidden in ourselves and learn to control them. To do this, we need to be filled with the Holy Spirit. Without the Spirit's help, it is impossible to put idolatry to death. Let's read Colossians 3:5. "Therefore put to death your members which are on the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry." So what does God want us to pursue instead? What does He want from us? Let's look up the following verses. For each, write down what it is that God wants us to do.

- 1 Kings 3:3–7; Matthew 6:33 – *God wants us to seek Him with all of our heart.*
- 1 Kings 3:11–13; 1 Samuel 2:30; 1 Corinthians 10:31 – *God wants us to honor Him.*
- Matthew 11:28–30; 1 Peter 5:7 – *God wants us to rely on Him.*
- Proverbs 13:20; 22:24–25 – *God wants us to be careful with the friends we make.*
- Exodus 20:3 – *God wants us to worship Him, and Him alone.*

Have you unintentionally placed any idols before God? Have you forgotten to seek Him through prayer or Bible reading at home? Did you dishonor God by making a poor choice at home or at school, or perhaps forget to rely on Him for an important test or trial? Who have you surrounded yourself with? Do you live a life that glorifies God, and God alone? Take a moment to examine your actions this past month. Now, take a few minutes to write a letter to God. In the letter, explain what kinds of idols you

have recently been struggling with, and how they have been affecting your spiritual life. Conclude your letter by writing down the steps you can take this week to reduce the idol's hold on your life. Try writing the letter as if you were having a personal conversation with the Lord!

Example letter:

Dear God,

Lately, I have been struggling with _____ (what idol in your heart has negatively affected your decisions and thoughts?) _____ . Because of it, I _____ (what action did your idol cause you to take that was a negative influence on your spirituality?) _____ .

To begin to free myself from this idol, this week I am going to _____ (what step will you take to reduce the idol's hold on your heart?) _____ . Please give me the strength to overcome this idol so that I can grow in my faith and strengthen my relationship with You.

Love,

We need to remember that Solomon's decline was gradual, but it wasn't necessarily inevitable. Despite all the wisdom that God bestowed on him, what Solomon failed at was examining himself and identifying his own sins. We should learn from this and examine ourselves every day. Avoid letting even a small sin slide by, or it may transform into something that eventually pulls us away from God! Instead, we should learn to obey God's commands. If we do, He has promised to bless us in so many ways!

Memory Verse

"Therefore put to death your members which are on the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry." (Colossians 3:5)

Meaning

To put something inside us "to death" means eliminating it entirely within ourselves. It means refusing to give in or submit to any of these desires, until they no longer exist in our hearts. Of course, when we are surrounded by a world that encourages such pleasures, putting such things to death is easier said than done! So how do we do this? In order to avoid these sins, it is important that we fill our hearts instead with something else – like any container, the more we fill ourselves with one thing, the less we can add of something else. The Bible tells us, "For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also" (Mt 6:21). The more we treasure God's word, the less we will be concerned with the things of the world.

Conclusion

As Christians, many of us feel confident that we do not worship anything but God alone. What we fail to recognize is that we often fall into the trap of idolizing things. They are just as likely to become more important than God in our lives. Whenever we leave room for sin to enter our lives, no matter how innocent it may seem in the beginning, it can take hold of us until we can no longer refuse. We need to be constantly aware of this danger and be determined to turn away from any sin that can harm our faith.

Lesson 11 Homework Assignment Answer Key

1. What does it mean to put something inside us “to death”?
It means eliminating it entirely within ourselves and refusing to give in or submit to any of these desires, until they no longer exist in our hearts.
2. “[...] _____ God and keep His _____, for this is man’s all. For God will bring every _____ into _____, including every _____ thing, whether _____ or _____.” (Ecclesiastes 12:13–14)
Fear, commandments, work, judgment, secret, good, evil.
3. What was the Queen of Sheba’s reaction upon meeting Solomon? Why is this unusual?
She praised God. This is unusual because even though she was a Gentile, she could still see Solomon’s fear of the Lord, and she respected God’s power for it.
4. Aside from His warnings and blessings to Solomon, what additional promise did God give to Israel?
He promised that if the Israelites ever made the mistake of disobeying God, the Lord would have mercy if they repented of their ways.
5. Why did God not want Israel’s kings to “multiply horses for [themselves]”?
He didn’t want them to rely on their military strength, but on God’s strength.
6. What can we learn from the process of Solomon’s deterioration in his faith?
Small sins can cause the greatest trouble, because they continue to add up until they become a wall between us and God.
7. Why do you think Solomon concluded that the duty of man is to “fear God and keep His commandments”? Do you think you follow this principle in your own life? Why or why not?
Personal answers.

Rehoboam and Jeroboam: Leading the Nations into Sin

Passages: As listed in the lesson.

Memory Verse

“If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth.” (Colossians 3:1–2)

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. Rehoboam’s foolish actions divided the kingdom.2. Both Jeroboam and Rehoboam failed to follow God’s laws and led the Israelites into sin.	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. God is a jealous God.2. God wants us to follow Him wholeheartedly.	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Prepare our hearts to seek the Lord by trusting Him, leaning on His understanding, and acknowledging Him.2. Make wise decisions in accordance with God’s principles.

Overview

Events and Spiritual Teachings

- A. Jeroboam and Rehoboam’s Rise to Power
- B. Jeroboam Leads Israel into Idolatry
- C. Rehoboam’s Rule over Judah

Life Application

1. Prepare Our Hearts to Seek the Lord
2. Making Wise Decisions

Memory Verse

Conclusion: We need to learn from Jeroboam and Rehoboam’s failures. Learn to make wise decisions based on biblical principles and set our hearts to seek God, so that we can draw closer to Him in every decision and action that we take.

Events and Spiritual Teachings

Introduction

Because of Solomon and the Israelites' disobedience, the kingdom of Israel was split in two during the reign of the following kings: Rehoboam and Jeroboam. Rehoboam was Solomon's son, while Jeroboam was appointed by Solomon as officer over one of his labor forces. Unfortunately, neither walked in David's ways, but instead continued the nation's spiritual decline that had begun in Solomon's reign.

A. Jeroboam and Rehoboam's Rise to Power

1. Jeroboam

When he is first introduced, the Bible says Jeroboam was "a mighty man of valor; and Solomon, seeing that the young man was industrious, made him the officer over all the labor force of the house of Joseph" (1 Kgs 11:28). But why did Jeroboam come to rebel against the king (v. 26)? Let's read 1 Kings 11:29–40.

Ahijah's proclamation to Jeroboam is quite dramatic. God was planning to divide the kingdom of Israel, and part of it would go to Jeroboam. While David had been willing to wait for God's timing, though, Jeroboam immediately "rebelled against the king" (1 Kgs 11:26). So Solomon sought to kill Jeroboam, prompting him to flee to Egypt (v. 40).

2. Rehoboam

Solomon appointed his son Rehoboam as his successor. Unfortunately, Rehoboam did not have his father's wisdom. Let's read 1 Kings 12:4–15. Rehoboam received advice from two different groups of people, but he didn't think through the advice carefully. The advice offered by the older group was wiser, but he instead followed his peers. He chose to follow what was good for himself, not what was good for his people.

Let's read what happened in 1 Kings 12:17–19. Because of his rash decision, the people were so angered that they stoned Rehoboam's taskmaster Adoram to death.

Rehoboam's rash reply had an immediate and lasting effect: the division of Israel. The people were so angered that Rehoboam became afraid and began to mobilize his forces. The houses of Judah and Benjamin assembled under Rehoboam, ready to fight their own brethren. However, the Lord stepped in and sent word through His prophet. They obeyed God and managed to avoid civil war, but this event marked the beginning of the kingdom's division, one that lasted for centuries.

While it's clear that like David, Jeroboam and Rehoboam were chosen by God for a specific purpose, it is also clear that unlike David, neither of them walked according to God's commands. Let's first look at what actions Jeroboam took as king.

B. Jeroboam Leads Israel into Idolatry

Rather than fulfilling God's promise as a king who followed God's command, Jeroboam decided to do whatever he could to secure his position as king. He didn't want his authority as king to be undermined, as he was not of David's lineage. As a result, he didn't want his people to go to Solomon's temple to offer sacrifices to the Lord. His choice was a political one. Unfortunately, his choice also meant disobeying the Lord. His first step was to choose Shechem as his new capital, and he set about rebuilding and fortifying it (1 Kgs 12:25). But how did he disobey God?

1. Jeroboam builds two golden idols

Let’s read 1 Kings 12:26–33. Clearly, his heart didn’t follow God. According to the laws, all Israelites were required to travel to worship God in Jerusalem three times each year (Deut 16:16). During the rest of the year, other worship services were conducted in the tribal areas by priests and Levites, who lived throughout the land.

Jeroboam didn’t only tell his people that it was too much trouble to travel to Jerusalem. He also, rather shrewdly, placed two golden idols in Bethel and Dan for the people to worship. Bethel was on the main road that led to Jerusalem, which would have enticed Israelites from the north to worship there instead of travel all the way to Jerusalem.

2. Jeroboam changes God’s holy days

Let’s read 1 Kings 12:32–33. Instead of observing the Feast of the Tabernacle in the seventh month, Jeroboam instituted an alternate feast in the eighth month, a time that “he had devised in his own heart.” It’s clear that Jeroboam was not acting in accordance with God’s will.

3. Jeroboam appoints priests

God had specifically commanded that only people from the tribe of Levi could be priests (Num 3:10). Let’s read what Jeroboam did in 1 Kings 13:33–34. Jeroboam’s sin of appointing priests on his own was so serious that this led to his entire house being cut off from the earth.

The Result of Jeroboam’s Sins

The Bible teaches us that adding or taking away from God’s words is a very serious sin. Despite being appointed by the Lord, Jeroboam changed God’s commands and led the kingdom to stray in their faith. As a result, God punished him severely.

When Jeroboam’s son grew ill, he asked his wife to disguise herself and go to Ahijah, the prophet who had first announced Jeroboam’s kingship. When she went, however, the Lord told Ahijah exactly who she was, and Ahijah announced God’s judgment on the house of Jeroboam. Let’s read 1 Kings 14:7–16. What did Jeroboam do, and how did God punish him?

Jeroboam...	So God...
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Did more evil than those before him (v. 9) • Made other gods and molded images (v. 9) • Cast God behind his back (v. 9) • Led Israel into sin (vv. 15–16) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cut off Jeroboam from Israel (v. 10) • Cut off Jeroboam’s family and all who belonged to him (vv. 10–11, 14) • Took away Jeroboam’s child (v. 13) • Uprooted Israel (v. 15) • Gave Israel up (v. 16)

Jeroboam’s sins were made all the worse because he led an entire nation into sin with him. God did place some blame on the people, as He said that the Israelites “made their wooden images, provoking the LORD to anger” (1 Kgs 14:15). However, as their king, Jeroboam had the responsibility of setting an example and following God’s commands. Instead, he encouraged them to follow pagan practices, so God punished both him and the Israelites. In the end, Jeroboam died after twenty-two years of rule, upon which he was buried with his ancestors.

C. Rehoboam’s Rule over Judah

Although it was Rehoboam's actions that divided the nation, the Bible says that God was with him for three years. This was in part because Jeroboam rejected the Levites as priests, driving them to the southern kingdom where Rehoboam ruled. Let's read 2 Chronicles 11:16–17.

From these verses, we can see that the beginning of Rehoboam's reign was blessed by God. But unfortunately, Rehoboam followed in his father's footsteps and sinned by taking numerous wives for himself (Deut 17:17; 2 Chr 11:21). Rehoboam also forsook God's laws as Solomon had.

The Sins of the Southern Kingdom

The Bible says that "when Rehoboam had established the kingdom and had strengthened himself, that he forsook the law of the LORD, and all Israel along with him" (2 Chr 12:1). Let's turn to 1 Kings 14:22–24 and list out the ways the southern kingdom sinned against God.

- Judah did evil in the sight of the Lord (v. 22)
- They provoked Him to jealousy with their sins (v. 22)
- They built high places, sacred pillars, and wooden images (v. 23)
- They followed the abominations of the nations that God had rejected (v. 24)

God had repeatedly warned the Israelites against following the pagan practices of the Gentile nations, but they had done exactly that, and fallen into their evil practices. And just as with Jeroboam and the northern kingdom, the Lord punished Rehoboam and his people for their sins. He sent Shemaiah the prophet to deliver His message.

The Result of Judah's Sins

Let's read 2 Chronicles 12:5–12. The Lord's proclamation upon Judah was less personal than the one that He gave to Jeroboam, but no less devastating. The Lord would give them up to another nation because of their sins. However, the reaction of Judah's leaders was very different. They humbled themselves and said, "The LORD is righteous" (v. 6). Because of their humility, God changed their punishment. The nation wouldn't be taken entirely by Shishak, king of Egypt. However, the glory of their nation, God's temple, was completely ransacked by the Egyptians a mere five years after Solomon's death (1 Kgs 14:25–26). Considering the sheer amount of effort and construction that went into the temple, this was a huge tragedy.

Unfortunately, Rehoboam's life and rule was equally tragic, as the Bible records that "he did evil, because he did not prepare his heart to seek the LORD" (2 Chr 12:14). He ruled over Judah for seventeen years and was buried with his ancestors in the city of David when he died.

Check for Understanding

- 1. How did Jeroboam learn of God's plans for him?** Ahijah approached him, tore his garment in twelve, and announced that God was going to divide the kingdom and that Jeroboam would rule over ten of the tribes.
- 2. What foolish decision did Rehoboam make, and what was the result?** He rejected the wise counsel of his elders and followed his peers' advice instead. The result was the division of Israel.
- 3. Why did Jeroboam set up the golden idols at Bethel and Dan?** He didn't want the people going to Jerusalem. It was for the purpose of strengthening his political power.
- 4. What happened at the beginning of Rehoboam's reign?** Jeroboam's rejection of the Levites drove the priests into Rehoboam's kingdom, leading to a stronger faith and God's presence in Judah for three years.

- 5. What happened after the initial three years of Rehoboam's reign? What was the consequence?**
Rehoboam and the kingdom of Judah forgot God's laws and began to sin. As a result, God allowed Shishak, the king of Egypt, to ransack the temple a mere five years after Solomon's death.

Life Application

1. Prepare Our Hearts to Seek the Lord

Rehoboam's biggest failure was that "he did not prepare his heart to seek the LORD" (2 Chr 12:14). In contrast, his grandfather David was described as a man after God's own heart. He was constantly seeking God throughout his life. What does it mean, then, to seek the Lord? To answer this question, let's first turn to Proverbs 3:5–6. "Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths."

a. Trust in the Lord

When he decided to set up golden idols for the Israelites to worship, Jeroboam was showing a lack of trust in God. Rehoboam had a more legitimate claim to the kingdom, so he was concerned about establishing and strengthening his political power. His logic was based on the reasoning of the world, not on God's reasoning.

When we follow our own understanding, as Jeroboam did, we rely on our own perceptions. But because we are human, and limited, we become filled with anxiety, fear, worry, and doubt. On the other hand, if we fully trust God and rest on His understanding and wisdom, we are allowing Him to direct our paths. Therefore, to seek the Lord requires that we first trust in Him. Everything else will fall into place when we do.

b. Lean not on your own understanding

The second step to seeking the Lord is learning to rely on His wisdom, rather than on our own. This is difficult because His actions are often incomprehensible to us. We don't like doing things without knowing the reason why! Yet, many of God's commands are exactly that: doing things without understanding their purpose. Abraham experienced this when God told him to sacrifice Isaac. Likewise, Joseph had no idea why God allowed him to be sold into slavery until the day he met his brothers and saved them from the famine.

God has told us, "For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts" (Isa 55:9). This doesn't only mean that God's ways are beyond our understanding. This also means that because He is so much higher than us, His way is perfect. So, to seek Him, we should lean on God's understanding, not on our own.

c. In all your ways acknowledge Him

At the peak of his kingdom's prosperity, Rehoboam abandoned God, completely forgetting that it was God who had given Judah its success. He forgot to acknowledge God in all that he did. But what does it mean to "acknowledge" God? Another way of translating this word is to *perceive*, to *see*, or to *recognize*. This means that in everything we do, we need to recognize God's presence and power. For example, we are acknowledging God's grace when we say grace before our meals. We should learn to extend this acknowledgement to everything else that we do. When we learn to constantly see God's presence in our lives, we are less likely to sin, and more likely to seek Him.

Seeking the Lord requires a conscious and conscientious effort in focusing our minds and hearts upon Him. It involves effort. A lot of times, we don't bother making this effort because we are so preoccupied with the things of the world. Our physical desires often block our way. But God has promised to reward those who seek Him (Heb 11:6).

Survey: Does My Heart Seek God?

Take a moment to fill out the following survey. At the end, tally up your numbers on the following page, and then reflect on which areas you need to improve upon the most! *(Teachers: The survey has been placed on two separate pages at the end of this lesson so that you can print it out for your students. A follow-up question has been included in their homework.)*

2. Making Wise Decisions

Learning to make wise decisions is an important step in our spirituality; Rehoboam failed to do so, and the kingdom became divided as a result. We make choices every day in our lives, some less important, some with lasting effects on our lives. How should we use our time or money? What school should we apply to? What job do we want? Wise choices give birth to wise results, but foolish decisions can be detrimental not only to our life, but also to our faith. So, it is important that we learn to choose wisely according to God's standards. Generally, there are two ways that we can find wise counsel.

a. Wise counsel from our friends

It is often said that bad company corrupts good character (1 Cor 15:33). We should learn from Rehoboam's failures and try to surround ourselves with people who affect our spirituality in a positive way. We need to seek people who raise up our faith, not people who drag it down. It is, of course, easiest to find these people at church.

We may hesitate to ask for help, but if you ever need help in making a decision, it is always a good idea to ask your RE teachers, local ministers, deacons, or an elder at church for help. It may feel awkward, but they can most likely offer a lot of wisdom that you wouldn't think of, because of their years of experience and spiritual growth! Overall, the most important thing is that we surround ourselves with friends and mentors who are willing to tell us what we need to hear, not what we want to hear.

b. A heart guided by God's wisdom

Have any of you ever been asked for advice? For example, I might ask *[student name]* for advice on whether or not I should buy a new laptop. What kinds of questions would you ask me to allow you to be able to advise me better? *(Allow students to answer. Examples may be: Can you afford it? Do you need it for work or for play?)* When we make decisions about big purchases, there are a lot of factors that we learn to consider, whether consciously or unconsciously. We try to balance cost, effectiveness, value, and so on.

We apply similar principles to other decisions in our lives, too. What kinds of big choices have you made recently, and what factors did you consider when you made your decision? *(Allow students to share. Examples may be which electives to take at school, whether to pursue a hobby or sport, or maybe whether to make a big purchase with their allowance.)* Do you think you made a wise decision?

As God's children, making wise choices means learning to follow certain principles in our decision-making process. What principles do the following verses tell us to follow?

- Hebrews 12:2 (*Always look to Jesus and consider what He wants of you.*)
- 2 Corinthians 4:18 (*Always consider the consequences for your spiritual life.*)
- 2 Timothy 4:7–8 (*Choose the path of faith that leads you to the crown of righteousness.*)
- Matthew 7:13–14 (*Determine to follow the narrow path. It is always the more difficult choice, but it leads to life instead of destruction.*)

Making wise decisions is never easy. Neither Rehoboam nor Jeroboam were able to find the wisest path for their kingdoms, leading to disastrous results. This teaches us that it is often difficult for us to see the right path to take, especially when our faith is low. But the Lord has given us wise counsel in the form of our spiritual friends, God’s word, and the Holy Spirit. With all of these helpers at hand, all that we need to do is train ourselves to apply the principles of the Bible to our decisions, and learn to accept wise counsel from those around us. When we do so, then we will grow in wisdom. And whoever finds wisdom “finds life, and obtains favor from the LORD” (Prov 8:35).

Discussion

(Teachers: Depending on the size of the class, you may want to split them into groups. Have them discuss each student’s weakness as a group, and give them time to brainstorm different types of “wise counsel” for each other’s weaknesses.)

- Do you tend to try and find solutions on your own, even when the problems are too big for you to handle on your own?
- What specific area in your life do you need more wisdom in? Examples may be spending habits, school-related decisions, time management, etc.
- What kind of wise counsel can we share with each other for each area?

Memory Verse

“If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth.” (Colossians 3:1–2)

Meaning

1. When we were baptized, we were raised with Christ. Therefore, we should act as Christ acted as well. This means seeking the things that are above, placing God as our priority in our daily decisions.
2. Setting our minds on things above means concentrating on our eternal rewards in heaven, rather than on the temporary things of the earth. The more we see life as Christ sees it, the more we will shine for Him and glorify Him.

Conclusion

Because of their failure to follow God’s laws, Jeroboam and Rehoboam continued the nation’s spiritual decline that had begun with Solomon. In his desire for political strength, Jeroboam led the Israelites into idolatry, while Rehoboam forgot God’s provision at the peak of his power. As a result, God enacted punishment on both the rulers and the Israelites themselves. We need to learn from their failures by making wise decisions based on biblical principles and setting our hearts to seek God, so that we can draw closer to Him in every decision and action that we take.

Lesson 12 Homework Assignment Answer Key

1. What does it mean to set our minds on things above?
It means to concentrate on our eternal rewards in heaven, rather than on the temporary things of the earth.
2. "And he did _____, because he did not _____ his _____ to _____ the _____." (2 Chronicles 12:14)
evil, prepare, heart, seek, Lord
3. "_____ in the LORD with all your _____, and _____ not on your own _____; in all your ways _____ Him, and He shall direct your paths." (Proverbs 3:5–6)
Trust, heart, lean, understanding, acknowledge
4. What three major sins did Jeroboam commit?
He built golden idols to prevent the Israelites from going to Jerusalem; he changed God's holy days; he appointed priests of his own who were not Levites.
5. How did Rehoboam sin against the Lord? What was the result?
He multiplied many wives for himself and forsook God's laws when his kingdom was prosperous. As a result, the Lord allowed Solomon's temple to be completely ransacked by the Egyptians.
6. Name at least two important principles that we need to follow to make wise choices.
Look to Jesus and consider what He wants of us; always consider the consequences upon our spiritual life; choose the path of faith that leads to our crown of righteousness; and determine to follow the narrow path. It is always the more difficult choice, but it leads to life instead of destruction.
7. Based on the survey you did during class, in which area do you need to improve upon the most? Why do you think you struggle with this aspect of seeking God?
Personal answers.

Name: _____

Survey: Does My Heart Seek God?

Take a moment to fill out the following survey. At the end, tally up your numbers on the following page, and then reflect on which areas you need to improve upon the most!

Trust in the Lord									
When faced with a decision, the first thing I do is kneel down to pray and ask God for help.									
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
<i>Never</i>			<i>Sometimes</i>				<i>Always</i>		
I easily accept bad times and smile through them, knowing that God is still taking care of me.									
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
<i>Never</i>			<i>Sometimes</i>				<i>Always</i>		
When in a financial, academic, or personal crisis, I accept that God is letting it happen for a reason.									
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
<i>Never</i>			<i>Sometimes</i>				<i>Always</i>		
Even when God doesn't immediately answer my prayers, I patiently wait for His answer.									
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
<i>Never</i>			<i>Sometimes</i>				<i>Always</i>		
Lean on God's Understanding									
When I realize what God wants me to do, I immediately follow His will.									
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
<i>Never</i>			<i>Sometimes</i>				<i>Always</i>		
I never question any of God's commands in the Bible and simply accept them as they are.									
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
<i>Never</i>			<i>Sometimes</i>				<i>Always</i>		
I prioritize spiritual wisdom and understanding, much more than academic or worldly knowledge.									
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
<i>Never</i>			<i>Sometimes</i>				<i>Always</i>		
When the Bible doesn't make sense, I pray for wisdom and seek answers to my questions.									
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
<i>Never</i>			<i>Sometimes</i>				<i>Always</i>		
Acknowledge God									
When something good happens, I immediately give thanks to God.									
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
<i>Never</i>			<i>Sometimes</i>				<i>Always</i>		
If something bad happens, I recognize God's presence and reflect on whether He is disciplining me.									
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
<i>Never</i>			<i>Sometimes</i>				<i>Always</i>		
I am always thinking about whether my actions reflect Jesus Christ.									
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
<i>Never</i>			<i>Sometimes</i>				<i>Always</i>		
I always try to use words that will glorify God every time I open my mouth to speak.									
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
<i>Never</i>			<i>Sometimes</i>				<i>Always</i>		

Survey Score: Does My Heart Seek God?

Trust in the Lord: _____ /40

If my score is...	
≤ 15	It is my instinct to trust in my own abilities rather than God’s power. I do not yet understand that God is all-powerful, and that He wants me to rely on Him, not on myself.
16 to 30	I find it easier to trust God when it is convenient for me, but I still sometimes wonder why He lets certain things happen.
≥ 31	I have experienced God’s care, and have learned to trust that everything is under His control. Whether I am faced with good times or bad, I know that He is taking care of me.

Lean on God’s Understanding: _____ /40

If my score is...	
≤ 15	It is extremely difficult for me to do God’s will without seeing the reason why. When things don’t make sense, I’d much rather just do things my own way.
16 to 30	I know that sometimes God does things in ways that don’t make sense. Sometimes I accept this, but other times, I try to use my worldly knowledge to figure out how to proceed.
≥ 31	I know that no matter how illogical events may be to me, God’s way is perfect. It may be difficult at times for me to follow His will, but it is important to me that I at least try.

Acknowledge God: _____ /40

If my score is...	
≤ 15	It is easy for me to forget God’s presence in my life. I tend to attribute good things to my own abilities and bad things to poor luck. I do not yet understand that God is in control of everything, and that He wants me to remember how much He has given me.
16 to 30	I remember God during bad times, but sometimes forget Him during good times. I think of Him when making big decisions, but sometimes do or say things that do not glorify Him.
≥ 31	I often give thanks to God, both in good and bad times. I am always conscious of whether my actions or speech reflect Christ-like behavior and try to be a Christian 24/7.

Overall Score: _____ /120

Junior 1 Year 3 Book 3 Review

Memory Verses

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

depart	Philistines	refuge	uncleanness
humility	train	vengeance	mind
delivered	gone	hand	pride
death	raised	destruction	thinks
avenge	see	repay	idolatry
boast	heart	razor	grace
above	haughty	perfect	deceives
go	reward	outward	eyes
something	flesh	wrath	Nazirite

Colossians 3:1–2	1 Samuel 16:7b	Romans 12:19	Judges 4:14a
Proverbs 18:12	Judges 13:5	Proverbs 22:6	Colossians 3:5
Galatians 6:3	1 John 2:15–16	Ruth 2:12	2 Corinthians 12:9

- “Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world—the lust of the _____, the lust of the _____, and the _____ of life—is not of the Father but is of the world.” (_____)
- “Then Deborah said to Barak, ‘Up! For this is the day in which the LORD has _____ Sisera into your _____. Has not the LORD _____ out before you?’” (_____)
- “And He said to me, ‘My _____ is sufficient for you, for My strength is made _____ in weakness.’ Therefore most gladly I will rather _____ in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.” (_____)

4. "For behold, you shall conceive and bear a son. And no _____ shall come upon his head, for the child shall be a _____ to God from the womb; and he shall begin to deliver Israel out of the hand of the _____." (_____)
5. "The LORD _____ your work, and a full _____ be given you by the LORD God of Israel, under whose wings you have come for _____."
(_____)
6. "_____ up a child in the way he should _____, and when he is old he will not _____ from it." (_____)
7. "For if anyone _____ himself to be _____, when he is nothing, he _____ himself." (_____)
8. "For the LORD does not _____ as man sees; for man looks at the _____ appearance, but the LORD looks at the _____."
(_____)
9. "Beloved, do not _____ yourselves, but rather give place to _____; for it is written, '_____ is Mine, I will repay,' says the Lord." (_____)
10. "Before _____ the heart of a man is _____, and before honor is _____." (_____)
11. "Therefore put to _____ your members which are on the earth: fornication, _____, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is _____."
(_____)
12. "If then you were _____ with Christ, seek those things which are _____, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. Set your _____ on things above, not on things on the earth." (_____)

Multiple Choice

1. ____ : Which of these is false regarding the story of Lot?
 - a. He chose where to dwell based on sight.
 - b. He willingly moved out of Sodom and Gomorrah.
 - c. His wife turned into a pillar of salt.
 - d. He had children with his daughters.

2. ____ : Who killed Sisera, the commander of King Jabin's army?
 - a. Jael
 - b. Deborah
 - c. Barak
 - d. Jabin

3. ____ : According to Deuteronomy 8:11–17, what is one of the dangers to our faith?
 - a. Failing to praise God for His creation
 - b. Boasting about our accomplishments
 - c. Forgetting what God has given us
 - d. Going against God's commandments

4. ____ : What was not one of Samson's three main weaknesses?
 - a. He was self-centered.
 - b. He lacked resolve.
 - c. He lacked a relationship with God.
 - d. He was violent.

5. ____ : Which of these actions showed that Saul disobeyed God?
 - a. He kept the news of being anointed as king to himself.
 - b. He spared the life of King Agag.
 - c. He aided the city of Jabesh in battle.
 - d. All of the above.

6. ____ : Why didn't David kill King Saul?
 - a. He did not have the chance to catch Saul unguarded.
 - b. Saul begged David to spare his life.
 - c. His men told him not to.
 - d. Saul was God's anointed.

7. ____ : What did Solomon ask for when God appeared to him?
 - a. An understanding heart
 - b. Blessings from God
 - c. Horses to build a great army
 - d. Wealth and riches

Who Is This?

Instructions: Match the description with the person it is describing.

Person	Description
1. _____: Absalom	A. Set aside by the Lord, but a focus on worldly pleasures caused a great downfall
2. _____: David	B. Made a decision that caused the division of Israel; led the kingdom to sin against God
3. _____: Deborah	C. Anointed by God, served with spiritual wisdom, and overcame evil with good
4. _____: Eli	D. Built two golden idols and changed God’s holy days in an attempt to keep Israelites from going elsewhere to worship
5. _____: Gideon	E. Filled with wisdom, yet was led astray by idolatry
6. _____: Jeroboam	F. Faithful, obedient, and compassionate, even in times of difficulty
7. _____: Lot	G. Poor spiritual eyesight hindered ability to lead and to discipline
8. _____: Rehoboam	H. Supported and encouraged brethren to carry out God’s will
9. _____: Ruth	I. Doubtful when called by the Lord, but then was filled with His power to become victorious
10. _____: Samson	J. Became close to sin due to unwise decisions and compromises, and experienced many unfortunate consequences
11. _____: Saul	K. Once a great, faithful leader that fell due to pride and jealousy
12. _____: Solomon	L. Led a life filled with conceit and rebelled against the king

Ruth Displays Great Faith

Instructions: Place the events and dialogue of the story of Ruth in chronological order from 1-13.

_____ “So she brought out and gave to her what she had kept back after she had been satisfied.”

_____ “Sit still, my daughter, until you know how the matter will turn out; for the man will not rest until he has concluded the matter this day.”

_____ “All that you say to me I will do.”

_____ “My daughter, shall I not seek security for you, that it may be well with you?”

_____ “Blessed are you of the Lord, my daughter! For you have shown more kindness at the end than at the beginning, in that you did not go after young men, whether poor or rich.”

_____ “Whose young woman is this? [...] ‘It is the young Moabite woman who came back with Naomi.’”

_____ “Do not go to glean in another field, nor go from here, but stay close by my young women.”

_____ “Moreover, Ruth the Moabitess, [...], I have acquired as my wife, to perpetuate the name of the death through his inheritance [...]. You are witnesses this day.”

_____ “Blessed be the Lord, who has not left you this day without a close relative [...]. ‘There is a son born to Naomi.’ And they called his name Obed. He is the father of Jesse, the father of David.”

_____ “Please let me go to the field, and glean heads of grain after him in whose sight I may find favor.”

_____ “Come here, and eat of the bread, and dip your piece of bread in the vinegar.”

_____ “So she stayed close by the young women of Boaz, to glean until the end of the barley harvest.”

_____ “Your people shall be my people, and your God, my God. [...] The Lord do so to me, and more also, if anything but death parts you and me.”

Short Answer

1. (Lesson 1) To experience God’s mercy, what must we first do?

2. (Lesson 2) How should we encourage our brethren when they are weak in spirit or fighting a spiritual battle?

3. (Lesson 3) What was the first thing God commanded Gideon to do? What does this teach us?

4. (Lesson 4) What kind of threat do worldly desires pose to our faith?

5. (Lesson 6) What are three reasons we experience discipline from our parents and from God? How did Eli fail as a parent?

6. (Lesson 7) Why is disobeying God such a serious sin?

7. (Lesson 8) Why is it important that we are anointed by the Holy Spirit?

8. (Lesson 9) How did David's actions towards Saul reflect the Lord Jesus' actions towards us?

9. (Lesson 10) What is the most basic line of defense against following our personal desires? How can we do this?

10. (Lesson 12) Name at least two important principles that we need to follow to make wise choices.

Junior 1 Year 3 Book 3 Review Answer Key

Memory Verses

1. “Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world—the lust of the **flesh**, the lust of the **eyes**, and the **pride** of life—is not of the Father but is of the world.” (**1 John 2:15–16**)
2. “Then Deborah said to Barak, ‘Up! For this is the day in which the LORD has **delivered** Sisera into your **hand**. Has not the LORD **gone** out before you?’” (**Judges 4:14a**)
3. “And He said to me, ‘My **grace** is sufficient for you, for My strength is made **perfect** in weakness.’ Therefore most gladly I will rather **boast** in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.” (**2 Corinthians 12:9**)
4. “For behold, you shall conceive and bear a son. And no **razor** shall come upon his head, for the child shall be a **Nazirite** to God from the womb; and he shall begin to deliver Israel out of the hand of the **Philistines**.” (**Judges 13:5**)
5. “The LORD **repay** your work, and a full **reward** be given you by the LORD God of Israel, under whose wings you have come for **refuge**.” (**Ruth 2:12**)
6. “**Train** up a child in the way he should **go**, and when he is old he will not **depart** from it.” (**Proverbs 22:6**)
7. “For if anyone **thinks** himself to be **something**, when he is nothing, he **deceives** himself.” (**Galatians 6:3**)
8. “For the LORD does not **see** as man sees; for man looks at the **outward** appearance, but the LORD looks at the **heart**.” (**1 Samuel 16:7b**)
9. “Beloved, do not **avenge** yourselves, but rather give place to **wrath**; for it is written, ‘**Vengeance** is Mine, I will repay,’ says the Lord.” (**Romans 12:19**)
10. “Before **destruction** the heart of a man is **haughty**, and before honor is **humility**.” (**Proverbs 18:12**)
11. “Therefore put to **death** your members which are on the earth: fornication, **uncleanness**, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is **idolatry**.” (**Colossians 3:5**)
12. “If then you were **raised** with Christ, seek those things which are **above**, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. Set your **mind** on things above, not on things on the earth.” (**Colossians 3:1–2**)

Multiple Choice

1. ____ : Which of these is false regarding the story of Lot?
 - a. He chose where to dwell based on sight.
 - b. He willingly moved out of Sodom and Gomorrah.**
 - c. His wife turned into a pillar of salt.
 - d. He had children with his daughters.
2. ____ : Who killed Sisera, the commander of King Jabin’s army?
 - a. Jael**
 - b. Deborah
 - c. Barak
 - d. Jabin
3. ____ : According to Deuteronomy 8:11–17, what is one of the dangers to our faith?
 - a. Failing to praise God for His creation
 - b. Boasting about our accomplishments**

- c. **Forgetting what God has given us**
 - d. Going against God's commandments
4. ____ : What was not one of Samson's three main weaknesses?
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 - b. He lacked resolve.
 - c. He lacked a relationship with God.
 - d. **He was violent.**
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 - b. **He spared the life of King Agag.**
 - c. He aided the city of Jabesh in battle.
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- a. He did not have a chance to catch Saul unguarded.
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 - c. His men told him not to.
 - d. **Saul was God's anointed.**
7. ____ : What did Solomon ask for when God appeared to him?
- a. **An understanding heart**
 - b. Blessings from God
 - c. Horses to build a great army
 - d. Wealth and riches

Who Is This?

- 1. L
- 2. C
- 3. H
- 4. G
- 5. I
- 6. D
- 7. J
- 8. B
- 9. F
- 10. A
- 11. K
- 12. E

Ruth Displays Great Faith

- 6 "So she brought out and gave to her what she had kept back after she had been satisfied."
(Ruth 2:18)

- 11 "Sit still, my daughter, until you know how the matter will turn out; for the man will not rest until he has concluded the matter this day." (Ruth 3:18)
- 9 "All that you say to me I will do." (Ruth 3:5)
- 8 "My daughter, shall I not seek security for you, that it may be well with you?" (Ruth 3:1)
- 10 "Blessed are you of the Lord, my daughter! For you have shown more kindness at the end than at the beginning, in that you did not go after young men, whether poor or rich." (Ruth 3:10)
- 3 "Whose young woman is this? [...] 'It is the young Moabite woman who came back with Naomi.'" (Ruth 2:5-6)
- 4 "Do not go to glean in another field, nor go from here, but stay close by my young women." (Ruth 2:8)
- 12 "Moreover, Ruth the Moabitess, [...], I have acquired as my wife, to perpetuate the name of the death through his inheritance [...]. You are witnesses this day." (Ruth 4:10)
- 13 "Blessed be the Lord, who has not left you this day without a close relative [...]. 'There is a son born to Naomi.' And they called his name Obed. He is the father of Jesse, the father of David." (Ruth 4:14, 17)
- 2 "Please let me go to the field, and glean heads of grain after him in whose sight I may find favor." (Ruth 2:2)
- 5 "Come here, and eat of the bread, and dip your piece of bread in the vinegar." (Ruth 2:14)
- 7 "So she stayed close by the young women of Boaz, to glean until the end of the barley harvest." (Ruth 2:23)
- 1 "Your people shall be my people, and your God, my God. [...] The Lord do so to me, and more also, if anything but death parts you and me." (Ruth 1:16–17)

Short Answer

- 1. (Lesson 1) To experience God's mercy, what must we first do?**
We must seek Him out and repent of our sins. While Lot chose to remain in Sodom, we ourselves must instead strive to live by God and His righteousness instead. We must learn to make choices that are for our spiritual benefit rather than our physical.
- 2. (Lesson 2) How should we encourage our brethren when they are weak in spirit or fighting a spiritual battle?**
Like Deborah, we should join them in their spiritual battles, not just in our prayers or in words, but let our actions prove our intentions and willingly help them through the task or trial that they are facing.
- 3. (Lesson 3) What was the first thing God commanded Gideon to do? What does this teach us?**
He commanded Gideon to tear down the altar of Baal. This teaches us that in order to serve Him, God first wants us to knock down our own Baals, the idols in our lives that pull us away from God.

4. (Lesson 4) What kind of threat do worldly desires pose to our faith?

Such desires encourage us to turn away from God, and we are in danger of becoming captive to our lusts. We become of the world rather than above the world. Following our desires erodes our control and, rather than fulfilling us, makes us thirst for more. This results in a deterioration of our faith.

5. (Lesson 6) What are three reasons we experience discipline from our parents and from God? How did Eli fail as a parent?

We experience discipline from our parents and God as an expression of their love; to teach us godly submission; and so that we can share in God's holiness and yield righteousness. He honored his sons above God by failing to punish them and allowing them to continue in their evil ways.

6. (Lesson 7) Why is disobeying God such a serious sin?

When we disobey God, it means that we do not value God or His place in our hearts. We no longer see Him as our sovereign God, as we have placed greater value on the ways of the world, which is a form of idolatry.

7. (Lesson 8) Why is it important that we are anointed by the Holy Spirit?

The Holy Spirit is a sign that we have been set apart for God's work, which allows us to be empowered by God for His service.

8. (Lesson 9) How did David's actions towards Saul reflect the Lord Jesus' actions towards us?

He showed grace to Saul by having mercy on him and preserving his life. The Lord Jesus also gave us life through grace.

9. (Lesson 10) What is the most basic line of defense against following our personal desires? How can we do this?

The most basic line of defense is increasing our love for each other, and especially for God. We can do this by resolving conflicts with one another and resolving conflicts with God.

10. (Lesson 12) Name at least two important principles that we need to follow to make wise choices.

Look to Jesus and consider what He wants of us; always consider the consequences upon our spiritual life; choose the path of faith that leads to our crown of righteousness; and determine to follow the narrow path. It is always the more difficult choice, but it leads to life instead of destruction.