

Sunday School Lessons  
Bancroft Mission  
Journeys of Faith

These lessons are adapted without permission from a book entitled *Journeys of Faith* by Paul Chappell

## Lesson One

### The Journey to Ararat

Genesis 6:1-9, “Now it came to pass, when men began to multiply on the face of the earth, and daughters were born to them, 2 that the sons of God saw the daughters of men, that they *were* beautiful; and they took wives for themselves of all whom they chose. 3 And the LORD said, “My Spirit shall not strive with man forever, for he *is* indeed flesh; yet his days shall be one hundred and twenty years.” 4 There were giants on the earth in those days, and also afterward, when the sons of God came in to the daughters of men and they bore *children* to them. Those *were* the mighty men who *were* of old, men of renown. 5 Then the LORD saw that the wickedness of man *was* great in the earth, and *that* every intent of the thoughts of his heart *was* only evil continually. 6 And the LORD was sorry that He had made man on the earth, and He was grieved in His heart. 7 So the LORD said, “I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth, both man and beast, creeping thing and birds of the air, for I am sorry that I have made them.” 8 But Noah found grace in the eyes of the LORD. 9 This is the genealogy of Noah. Noah was a just man, perfect in his generations. Noah walked with God.”

And

Genesis 6:22, “Thus Noah did; according to all that God commanded him, so he did.”

When God saw how wicked the people in the world had become, He was sorry that He had created them. Noah was the only one who walked with God. God warned Noah that He was going to destroy the world by a flood because of its wickedness, and He commanded him to build an ark for himself and his family. Noah obeyed without reservation. God gave him instructions for the ark, and he followed those instructions to the letter without questioning or reasoning with God. When the flood came, Noah and his family were safe in the ark. Because of Noah’s obedience, God provided for and protected them.

#### Lesson Aim

Obedience to God is essential to a successful journey of faith, and we must be ready to obey God with a right spirit and willing heart.

#### Lesson Goals

At the conclusion of this lesson, we should:

- Acknowledge that a corrupt heart will lead to a corrupt life.
- Be thankful for the grace of God at work in our lives.
- Desire to be ready for any God-given task.
- Rest in the safety and security provided by God when we live in obedience to Him.
- Understand the picture of salvation found in the story of Noah.

## I. The Reason for the Journey.

Genesis 6:5&6, “Then the LORD saw that the wickedness of man *was* great in the earth, and *that* every intent of the thoughts of his heart *was* only evil continually. 6 And the LORD was sorry that He had made man on the earth, and He was grieved in His heart.”

Between the time of creation and the time of Noah, extreme wickedness had developed on the earth. Man had become continually evil. God’s heart was grieved to the point that He purposed to destroy the wickedness with a worldwide flood. He examined the heart of every person on the earth and found righteousness in only one—Noah. He decided to send a flood, but He would save Noah and all who would heed His warning.

Genesis 6:7&8, “So the LORD said, “I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth, both man and beast, creeping thing and birds of the air, for I am sorry that I have made them.” 8 But Noah **found grace in the eyes of the LORD.**”

### A. Corrupt hearts.

In the beginning, God created Adam and Eve without sin. This holiness allowed them to enjoy fellowship with God. Satan, disguised as a serpent, spoke to Eve and tempted her to disobey God’s command. Eve, using her own reasoning, rationalized her disobedience. She gave the fruit of the tree to Adam, and he ate it. Because of their choice to sin, they experienced spiritual death, losing their fellowship with God.

After the fall, the population of the world began to multiply rapidly, and the inward and habitual sinfulness multiplied just as rapidly. Genesis 6:5 states that every imagination of their hearts was only evil continually. The Hebrew word for “imagination” refers to “fashioning pottery.” It means to make wickedness fashionable. The people of Noah’s day were truly corrupt and abominable, as the psalmist described in Psalm 14:1, “The fool has said in his heart, “There is no God.” They are corrupt, They have done abominable works, There is none who does good.”

### B. Corrupt lives.

A corrupt heart will always produce a corrupt life, and so was the case in Noah’s day. Sin was rampant. It had become accepted, even fashionable.

May we never grow accustomed to the blatant sinfulness of our day, and may we strive to live a holy life in the midst of a perverse and wicked culture.

## II. Readiness for the Journey.

The greatest decision in Noah’s life was not his decision to build the ark; it was his decision to walk with God. Before God can use us greatly, He must prepare us greatly. Noah was a man who was prepared and ready for an assignment from God. He developed a true relationship God that prepared him for the journey of faith on which he would embark.

### A. Ready because of his walk.

Genesis 6:8&9, “But Noah found grace in the eyes of the LORD. 9 This is the genealogy of Noah. Noah was a just man, perfect in his generations. Noah walked with God.”

While the world was only wicked continually, Noah was walking with God consistently. Contrary to the culture of his day, Noah chose to cultivate a personal relationship with God, and by daily walking with Him, Noah's life was transformed into one of exceptional character that prepared him for his journey to Ararat.

Let's make a decision to walk daily with our Savior. Let's decide to develop a purposeful and meaningful relationship with Him. John 15:3&4 says, "You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you. 4 "Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me."

Worshipping God was not just something Noah did occasionally. It was part of his daily life. May we prepare for the Master's use through cultivating a daily walk with God.

B. Ready because of his will.

Genesis 6:22, "Thus Noah did; according to all that God commanded him, so he did."

God honored Noah because of his obedient spirit. He was a man who practiced daily obedience to God. When God told Noah to build the ark, there was no question that he would obey. He had determined to respond to God in all things. Obedience to God was not a decision that had to be made every time a new situation arose. He had decided early in life to obey God.

Illustration: Roger Staubach, who led the Dallas Cowboys to the World Championship in 1971, admitted that his position as a quarterback who didn't call his own signals was a source of trial for him. Coach Landry sent in every play. He told Roger when to pass, when to run, and only in emergency situations could he change the play (and he had better be right!). Even though Roger considered coach Landry to have a "genius mind" when it came to football strategy, pride said that he should be able to run his own team. Roger later said, "I faced up to the issue of obedience. Once I learned to obey there was harmony, fulfillment, and victory."

If we want harmony, fulfillment, and victory in our lives, we must learn to obey as well. Surely Noah suffered reproach for obeying God! Yet, he faithfully continued to trust God out of a heart of reverential trust.

When we are walking in obedience to God, the choices will already be made before the difficult decisions come. We will choose to follow Him. The decision was already made when we purposed to obey.

III. The Results of the Journey.

God's holiness demands judgment. However, He always provides a way of escape. Noah told others of the coming flood and pleaded for men to repent, but they would not. The people of Noah's day chose to ignore the witness of God. The flood destroyed all human life that was not safe in the ark. Yet, God did not end the human race forever. There was one righteous man! Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord.

Noah's decision to build and enter the ark was instrumental in the preservation of the human race. Had he not stepped out in faith and obeyed God, the results of this journey would be drastically different.

A. Preservation of the people.

Genesis 6:14, "Make yourself an ark of gopherwood; make rooms in the ark, and cover it inside and outside with pitch."

The word "pitch" here is translated "redemption" and "atonement" in other places. How great our God is that He would use "redemption" even in the ark—keeping Noah, his family, and the animals safe.

Genesis 7:1, "Then the LORD said to Noah, "Come into the ark, you and all your household, because I have seen that you are righteous before Me in this generation."

God's grace was clearly displayed to all who lived during Noah's time. It was seen in His warning of a coming flood, His invitation to join Noah on the ark, and His provision for a way of escape.

When we follow God in obedience, by faith, we can completely trust in the safety He provides. Proverbs 3:5&6, "Trust in the LORD with all your heart, And lean not on your own understanding; 6 In all your ways acknowledge Him, And He shall direct your paths."

B. Preservation of the faith.

Genesis 6:9, "This is the genealogy of Noah. Noah was a just man, perfect in his generations. Noah walked with God."

The Bible calls Noah a "preacher of righteousness." Although only his family chose to heed the warning. Noah still proclaimed the truth of the coming judgment. 2<sup>nd</sup> Peter 2:5 says, "and did not spare the ancient world, but saved Noah, one of eight people, a preacher of righteousness, bringing in the flood on the world of the ungodly;" God offers the journey of grace to those who would follow Him out of a heart of belief.

By sparing Noah and his family, God preserved the faith for future generations.

Questions for home.

1. Why did God regret that He had created the World? What did He decide to do as a result?

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2. What does a corrupt heart always lead to? \_\_\_\_\_
3. How can people of today escape God's judgment? \_\_\_\_\_
4. Take a moment to identify areas in your life in which God is calling you to obedience.

## Lesson Two

### The Journey to Mount Moriah

Genesis 22:1-19, "Now it came to pass after these things that God tested Abraham, and said to him, "Abraham!" And he said, "Here I am." 2 Then He said, "Take now your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I shall tell you." 3 So Abraham rose early in the morning and saddled his donkey, and took two of his young men with him, and Isaac his son; and he split the wood for the burnt offering, and arose and went to the place of which God had told him. 4 Then on the third day Abraham lifted his eyes and saw the place afar off. 5 And Abraham said to his young men, "Stay here with the donkey; the lad and I will go yonder and worship, and we will come back to you." 6 So Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering and laid it on Isaac his son; and he took the fire in his hand, and a knife, and the two of them went together. 7 But Isaac spoke to Abraham his father and said, "My father!" And he said, "Here I am, my son." Then he said, "Look, the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?" 8 And Abraham said, "My son, God will provide for Himself the lamb for a burnt offering." So the two of them went together. 9 Then they came to the place of which God had told him. And Abraham built an altar there and placed the wood in order; and he bound Isaac his son and laid him on the altar, upon the wood. 10 And Abraham stretched out his hand and took the knife to slay his son. 11 But the Angel of the LORD called to him from heaven and said, "Abraham, Abraham!" So he said, "Here I am." 12 And He said, "Do not lay your hand on the lad, or do anything to him; for now I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your son, your only son, from Me." 13 Then Abraham lifted his eyes and looked, and there behind him was a ram caught in a thicket by its horns. So Abraham went and took the ram, and offered it up for a burnt offering instead of his son. 14 And Abraham called the name of the place, The-LORD-Will-Provide; as it is said to this day, "In the Mount of the LORD it shall be provided." 15 Then the Angel of the LORD called to Abraham a second time out of heaven, 16 and said: "By Myself I have sworn, says the LORD, because you have done this thing, and have not withheld your son, your only son— 17 "blessing I will bless you, and multiplying I will multiply your descendants as the stars of the heaven and as the sand which is on the seashore; and your descendants shall possess the gate of their enemies. 18 "In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice." 19 So Abraham returned to his young men, and they rose and went together to Beersheba; and Abraham dwelt at Beersheba."

#### Lesson Aim

When god calls us to testing and sacrifice, our response should be one of immediate and faithful obedience, trusting Him to bring about His desired result in our lives.

#### Lesson Goals

At the conclusion of this lesson, students should:

- Realize that trials and testing are a part of the Christian life.
- Strive to respond to God's voice with obedience.
- Prepare to be ready to sacrifice for the Lord.
- Trust God to meet their needs as they respond to Him in faith and obedience.

#### Introduction:

Every day, we express faith in many different ways—whether by taking a prescription from the doctor, flying in an airplane, or ordering fast food restaurant! We express faith in the people who render their services to us on a daily basis. Most of the time, we give it no thought at all.

As Christians, it is easy for us to follow God’s directives when things are going our way. Yet, as soon as an instruction comes that is contrary to our nature, or that seems utterly impossible, our faith tends to waver drastically.

The Bible says that Abraham was a great man of faith:

Hebrews 11:8&9, “By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to the place which he would receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going. 9 By faith he dwelt in the land of promise as *in* a foreign country, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise;”

The Greek word “kal-eh'-o” is also translated as “invite.” God invited Abraham on a journey of faith.

Abraham was called/invited by God to leave the land of his father, the Ur of the Chaldees (modern day Iraq). Abraham responded to God out of a heart of belief. God was taking Abraham on a journey of faith,

Abraham had waited many years for God to fulfill the promise of a son, and it seemed as though all possibility of bearing a child was gone. Abraham was ninety-nine years old, and there was still no son of promise. Yet, God came to Abraham and reminded him of the promises He had given.

Genesis 17:15&16, “Then God said to Abraham, “As for Sarai your wife, you shall not call her name Sarai, but Sarah shall be her name. 16 “And I will bless her and also give you a son by her; then I will bless her, and she shall be a mother of nations; kings of peoples shall be from her.”

God was faithful to remember Abraham and Sarah. Undoubtedly this fulfilled promise brought great joy to their lives. In this lesson, however, we will learn from the supreme test of Abraham’s faith. God required from Abraham absolute trust and a complete willingness to sacrifice his hopes and dreams of a great nation. His journey to Mount Moriah would be the ultimate test of his faith.

“Tests” are not for God; they are for us. During a “test” we discover where we are in our relationship and priorities and have the opportunity to make adjustments if necessary.

#### I. The Request from the Lord.

Genesis 22:1&2, “Now it came to pass after these things that God tested Abraham, and said to him, “Abraham!” And he said, “Here I am.” 2 Then He said, “Take now your son, your only *son* Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I shall tell you.”

Though the request to sacrifice Isaac was perhaps the greatest test of Abraham’s faith, it was not the first. Genesis records three major trials he faced, his response to the trials, and God’s subsequent blessing and continual faithfulness.

The record of Abraham's testing in the Bible allows us to follow one man's journey of faith. His response to God illustrates a journey filled with right decisions and God's provision. Through the trial of his faith, Abraham discovered what was most important in his life.

A. A call to testing (Vs. 1).

1. When God called Abraham to offer his son Isaac on the altar, it was an evaluation of his commitment to God. How he responded to this test would reveal his true heart condition.

**The Bible says God tempted Abraham. In our day, the word "tempted" often implies an enticement to do evil. However, in Genesis 22, the meaning is "to try" or "to prove." It is important to note that God does not tempt us to sin. James 1:13, "Let no one say when he is tempted, "I am tempted by God"; for God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He Himself tempt anyone."**

**God works to bring us closer to Him. You see, true faith goes into operation when there are no answers to be found, and God uses trying circumstances to stretch our faith and draw us closer to Him.**

2. **1<sup>st</sup> Peter 1:7&8, "that the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ, & whom having not seen you love. Though now you do not see Him, yet believing, you rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory."**

B. A call to sacrifice (Vs. 2).

1. Abraham is asked to sacrifice what was most dear to him; his son, Isaac.

2. Isaac was the promised seed mentioned in Genesis 15:5

Genesis 15:5, "Then He brought him outside and said, "Look now toward heaven, and count the stars if you are able to number them." And He said to him, "So shall your descendants be."

3. Isaac was a daily reminder of God's faithfulness and blessing.

**Isaac was not only the promised seed, he was also the promised son. God had miraculously provided a son for Abraham. (Notice God asks for his "only son" in verse two. Ishmael was not the son God had promised to Abraham and had already been sent away.). Abraham and Sarah thought they were too old to have a son, but God kept His promise.**

4. Sarah was definitely past the age of conceiving a child, and then giving birth. Yet, God remained faithful to fulfill His promise to Abraham and Sarah.

Hebrews 11:11&12, "By faith Sarah herself also received strength to conceive seed, and she bore a child when she was past the age, because she judged Him faithful who had promised. 12 Therefore from one man, and him as good as dead, were born *as many* as the stars of the sky in multitude— innumerable as the sand which is by the seashore."

II. The Response of Obedience.

Genesis 22:3-8, "So Abraham rose early in the morning and saddled his donkey, and took two of his young men with him, and Isaac his son; and he split the wood for the burnt offering, and arose and went



to the place of which God had told him. 4 Then on the third day Abraham lifted his eyes and saw the place afar off. 5 And Abraham said to his young men, "Stay here with the donkey; the lad and I will go yonder and worship, and we will come back to you." 6 So Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering and laid *it* on Isaac his son; and he took the fire in his hand, and a knife, and the two of them went together. 7 But Isaac spoke to Abraham his father and said, "My father!" And he said, "Here I am, my son." Then he said, "Look, the fire and the wood, but where *is* the lamb for a burnt offering?" 8 And Abraham said, "My son, **God will provide** for Himself the lamb for a burnt offering." So the two of them went together."

A. Immediate obedience (Vss. 3-7).

1. When God called Abraham, there was no hesitation. Abraham did not ask for a reason. He acted in complete faith and gathered everything needed to obey God entirely. Abraham prepared to offer Isaac on the altar.

**George Mueller said, "Faith does not operate in the realm of the possible. There is no glory for God in that which is humanly possible. Faith begins where man's power ends."**

2. Romans 1:17, "For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, "The just shall live by faith."

The calmness in which Abraham expressed his obedience was due to his total trust in God. In verse 5, he told his servants that he and the lad would come again unto them. God had promised that through Isaac's seed, Abraham's people would proceed, and Abraham chose to believe in faith. **D. L. Moody once said, "I prayed for faith and it did not come, but when I read the Word of God then faith came." Abraham trusted the word of God and acted in obedience to His Word.**

Hebrews 11:1-3, "Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. 2 For by it the elders obtained a good testimony. 3 By faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that the things which are seen were not made of things which are visible."

AND

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."

III. The Result of Faith.

Does God try us simply to see how much pressure we can handle? Does He test us to determine how strong our faith is? God knows the strength of our faith. He tests us to build our faith, to be an example to other believers, and to increase our spiritual capacity to enjoy a meaningful relationship with Him.

2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians 1:3&4, "Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, 4 who comforts us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort those who are in any trouble, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God."

A. Abraham prepares to sacrifice.

Genesis 22:9&10, “Then they came to the place of which God had told him. And Abraham built an altar there and placed the wood in order; and he bound Isaac his son and laid him on the altar, upon the wood. 10 And Abraham stretched out his hand and took the knife to slay his son.”

1. Abraham finds himself at the moral elevation of his trial; however, he proved himself willing to give his most precious possession to God. Even so, God was willing to give His only begotten Son for us. Isaac, as a picture of Christ, willingly laid down on the altar (verse 9). Christ willingly laid down His life as a sacrifice for our sins.

Philippians 2:7&8, “But made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, *and* coming in the likeness of men. 8 And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to *the point of death*, even the death of the cross.”

2. God was well pleased with Abraham’s faith and promised to bless him.

Genesis 22:15-18, “Then the Angel of the LORD called to Abraham a second time out of heaven, 16 and said: “By Myself I have sworn, says the LORD, because you have done this thing, and have not withheld your son, your only son— 17 “blessing I will bless you, and multiplying I will multiply your descendants as the stars of the heaven and as the sand which is on the seashore; and your descendants shall possess the gate of their enemies. 18 “In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice.”

**Is a willingness to sacrifice an evident result of the faith in our lives? Like Abraham, are we willing to serve and honor the Lord with the things in life which we hold dear? Are we reluctant to sacrifice our time or talents or treasures when called upon by God to do so? May we all prepare to sacrifice for our Savior.**

B. God provides a replacement.

Genesis 22:11-14, “But the Angel of the LORD called to him from heaven and said, “Abraham, Abraham!” So he said, “Here I am.” 12 And He said, “Do not lay your hand on the lad, or do anything to him; for now I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your son, your only *son*, from Me.” 13 Then Abraham lifted his eyes and looked, and there behind *him was* a ram caught in a thicket by its horns. So Abraham went and took the ram, and offered it up for a burnt offering instead of his son. 14 And Abraham called the name of the place, The-LORD-Will-Provide; as it is said *to this day*, “In the Mount of the LORD it shall be provided.”

1. Isaac was spared, and a ram caught in the thicket was provided in his place for the offering.

2. By providing a replacement, God preserved Isaac and the entire nation of Israel.

*Jehovah-jireh* means “the Lord has provided.” God provided for Abraham, and He has provided for us as well! May we never forget that God has provided a Lamb for us, and His Lamb offers forgiveness for our sins. Jesus is our Lamb of sacrifice. John 1:36 says, “And looking at Jesus as He walked, he said, “Behold the Lamb of God!” We can thank the Lord that Jesus took our place on the Cross. Because He provided a replacement, we can be confident of resting in Him.

**Lauren McCain was one of the students killed at Virginia Tech on April 16, 2007. The freshman from Shawnee, Oklahoma left a powerful statement about her faith on her personal web site. The 20-year-old had written, "The purpose and love of my life is Jesus Christ. I don't have to argue religion, philosophy, or historical evidence because I KNOW Him."**

1<sup>st</sup> Peter 1:18&19, "knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold, from your aimless conduct received by tradition from your fathers, 19 but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot."

#### A MUST READ: LUTHER BRIDGES STORY

Beginning to preach at the age of seventeen, Luther was educated at Asbury College in Wilmore, KY, from 1902 to 1906. There he met his wife, Sarah Veatch.

Several years later, at the age of twenty-six, he and his wife had three sons. Invitations to preach revivals were streaming in for this young evangelist. An invitation to preach a two-week revival near Harrodsburg, Kentucky arrived at Luther's mailbox and he accepted the invitation. This revival meeting was near the place where his wife's parents lived.

When Luther's wife found out about the invitation, she asked Luther if he would consider taking her and the boys along on the trip and letting them visit her parents while he travelled on to the nearby revival. Luther lived in Georgia and his in-laws did not get to see the boys often.

On the way to the revival, Luther stopped at his in-law's home to drop off his wife and boys for the next two weeks. As he left to continue on to his revival meeting, Luther kissed his wife and boys and patted the oldest boy's head and told him to help his mother with the younger boys.

The first week of the revival had great results. People were converted and Christians strengthened and encouraged. Near the middle of the second week of the revival in the middle of the night Luther heard knocking at the door of the place where he was staying.

When Luther answered the door, a policeman stood outside the door with his hat in his hand and asked, "are you Luther Bridgers?"

"Yes, I am", said Luther

The policeman struggled with his words and said, "Sir, I don't know how to tell you this, but your father and mother in-law's house burned down tonight, and your wife and three boys perished in the flames."

Nothing could have prepared Luther to hear this news. He was devastated and shocked. In the days that wore on, Luther thought about quitting the ministry. He was so grief-stricken that he thought he could not carry on preaching.

However, the gentle Holy Spirit started tugging at Luther's heart. After a period of time Luther received comfort and encouragement from the Lord to continue serving Him.

Luther wrote the words and the tune to his hymn *He Keeps Me Singing* shortly after this tragic event.

#### **He Keeps Me Singing**

1. *There's within my heart a melody  
Jesus whispers sweet and low,  
Fear not, I am with thee, peace, be still,  
In all of life's ebb and flow.*

*[Refrain] Jesus, Jesus, Jesus,  
Sweetest Name I know,  
Fills my every longing,  
Keeps me singing as I go.*

2. *All my life was wrecked by sin and strife,  
Discord filled my heart with pain,  
Jesus swept across the broken strings,  
Stirred the slumb'ring chords again. [Refrain]*

3. *Feasting on the riches of His grace,  
Resting 'neath His shelt'ring wing,  
Always looking on His smiling face,  
That is why I shout and sing. [Refrain]*

4. *Though sometimes He leads through waters deep,  
Trials fall across the way,  
Though sometimes the path seems rough and steep,  
See His footprints all the way. [Refrain]*

5. *Soon He's coming back to welcome me,  
Far beyond the starry sky;  
I shall wing my flight to worlds unknown,  
I shall reign with Him on high. [Refrain]*

Luther Bridgers spent the remaining 38 years of his life as a preacher of the Gospel in spite of this tragedy.

#### Study Questions

1. According to Genesis 17:16&17, what did God promise to Abraham and Sarah?

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2. According to Hebrews 11:6, what one element is required in order to please God?

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3. Has God required you to sacrifice something of significance in your life? How did you respond?

4. What does "Jehovah-Jireh" mean? \_\_\_\_\_

#### Lesson Three

#### The Journey to Egypt

Genesis 37:1-10, "Now Jacob dwelt in the land where his father was a stranger, in the land of Canaan. 2 This is the history of Jacob. Joseph, being seventeen years old, was feeding the flock with his brothers. And the lad was with the sons of Bilhah and the sons of Zilpah, his father's wives; and Joseph brought a bad report of them to his father. 3 Now Israel loved Joseph more than all his children, because he was the son of his old age. Also he made him a tunic of many colors. 4 But when his brothers saw that their father loved him more than all his brothers, they hated him and could not speak peaceably to him. 5 Now Joseph had a dream, and he told it to his brothers; and they hated him even more. 6 So he said to them, "Please hear this dream which I have dreamed: 7 "There we were, binding sheaves in the field. Then behold, my sheaf arose and also stood upright; and indeed your sheaves stood all around and bowed down to my sheaf." 8 And his brothers said to him, "Shall you indeed reign over us? Or shall you indeed have dominion over us?" So they hated him even more for his dreams and for his words. 9 Then he dreamed still another dream and told it to his brothers, and said, "Look, I have dreamed another dream. And this time, the sun, the moon, and the eleven stars bowed down to me." 10 So he told it to his father and his brothers; and his father rebuked him and said to him, "What is this dream that you have dreamed? Shall your mother and I and your brothers indeed come to bow down to the earth before you?"

#### Lesson Aim

To impress upon us the importance of faith, faithfulness, and forgiveness as key essentials to a successful journey.

#### Lesson Goals

- Seek to grow in the faith to share God's Word with others.
- Desire to be faithful to God through burdens and blessings.
- Learn to forgive others, as Christ has forgiven us.
- Acknowledge God's eternal purpose in our lives.

#### Introduction:

Horatio Nelson was a sickly boy living in eighteenth century England. As the nephew of a sea captain, he hoped one day to follow his uncle's example. Because Nelson's health was weak, his uncle was reluctant to take him on voyages. The death of his mother left him in the care of his uncle. Traveling on ship, he often became ill. His weak health finally forced Horatio to go home for a rest. Undaunted, he started another voyage as soon as possible. He was resolved to make his life worthy. He was promoted quickly to commander of a British ship, the *Agamemnon*. Commander Nelson fought in battle after battle, as he was always true to his mission in life—that his life should be worthy. Some sea battles were won; some were lost. During this time, he suffered much physical pain. He never flinched in the face of trouble. His strong resolve eventually made him a British hero. In a decisive battle, Lord Nelson led England to victory against Napoleon at Trafalgar. He was a man who was totally committed to his country. His determination made him unstoppable. Should Christians not be more committed to serve the One who gave His life to redeem us? What does it take to stop us from being faithful to God?

All people will face crisis at different times in our lives, and often, there are unexpected turns. Yet, most people would want to say what Paul, the apostle, said at the end of his life:

2<sup>nd</sup> Timothy 4:6&7, “For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure is at hand. 7 I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.”

Joseph was a man who finished his course. He was a man who suffered, yet he remained faithful to God. In many ways He was like the Lord Jesus Christ.

- Joseph was rejected by his brothers, so was Jesus.
- Joseph was loved by his father, so was Jesus.
- Joseph was victorious over temptation, so was Jesus.
- Joseph was taken into custody because of a false witness, so was Jesus.
- Joseph suffered from doing what was right, so did Jesus.
- Joseph was promoted from prison to rule the nation. Jesus was promoted from prison to rule the nations.

As we examine Joseph’s journey, we admire his strength to remain faithful to God through the trials, temptations, and blessings that came into his life. He was a man who was greatly used by God, a true Bible hero. The secret of Joseph’s strength of character was his unconditional faith in God. No matter what happened to him, his faith remained unshakable.

Let’s notice Joseph’s journey for God!

#### I. A Journey of Faith.

Genesis 35:1-5, “Then God said to Jacob, “Arise, go up to Bethel and dwell there; and make an altar there to God, who appeared to you when you fled from the face of Esau your brother.” 2 And Jacob said to his household and to all who were with him, “Put away the foreign gods that are among you, purify yourselves, and change your garments. 3 “Then let us arise and go up to Bethel; and I will make an altar there to God, who answered me in the day of my distress and has been with me in the way which I have gone.” 4 So they gave Jacob all the foreign gods which were in their hands, and the earrings which were in their ears; and Jacob hid them under the terebinth tree which was by Shechem. 5 And they journeyed, and the terror of God was upon the cities that were all around them, and they did not pursue the sons of Jacob.”

Part of faith is trusting in God’s plan. Hebrew 11:6 says, “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 to receive God’s revelation.

Genesis 37:5, “Now Joseph had a dream, and he told *it* to his brothers; and they hated him even more.”

1. God revealed His plan to Joseph in a dream, which gave him a glimpse of God’s plan for his life.

2. It takes faith to receive and believe the truths found in the Word of God. But may we, like Joseph, exercise faith to receive God’s Word and apply it to our lives.

1<sup>st</sup> Thessalonians 2:13, “For this reason we also thank God without ceasing, because when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you welcomed it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which also effectively works in you who believe.”

B. Faith to recite God’s revelation.

Genesis 37:6-8, “So he said to them, “Please hear this dream which I have dreamed: 7 “There we were, binding sheaves in the field. Then behold, my sheaf arose and also stood upright; and indeed your sheaves stood all around and bowed down to my sheaf.” 8 And his brothers said to him, “Shall you indeed reign over us? Or shall you indeed have dominion over us?” So they hated him even more for his dreams and for his words.”

1. Joseph acknowledged his revelation from God and had the faith to share it with his brothers. Resentment built in the hearts of his older brothers as Joseph recited the details of the dream to them.

1<sup>st</sup> Thessalonians 2:4 says, “But as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel, even so we speak, not as pleasing men, but God who tests our hearts.”

2. His brothers did not like Joseph’s dream, but it was not his dream; it was God’s dream.

3. God had a special purpose for Joseph’s life. Though He did not disclose every event along the journey, He promised to be with Joseph each step of the way.

Hebrews 13:5 tells us, “Let your conduct be without covetousness; be content with such things as you have. For He Himself has said, “I will never leave you nor forsake you.” As God was with Joseph, so will He be with us on our journeys of faith. He knows what we need, and HE will lovingly direct each step of the journey as we respond in faith.

II. A Journey of Faithfulness.

1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 4:2, “Moreover it is required in stewards that one be found faithful.”

Although no one plans, or wants, suffering, it is inevitable. When Joseph’s journey brought him through times of despair, he simply remained faithful. When he was sold into slavery by his brothers, he remained steadfast. God took Joseph on a journey that at times seemed to be headed in the opposite direction of his expected end, but he continued to trust God.

Joseph could have quit many times. He never wavered even when circumstances seemed to destroy his dream. He kept doing what he knew God wanted him to do, and each trial strengthened his faith. Every experience prepared Joseph to fulfill God’s purpose for his life.

A. When he was betrayed by his brothers.

Joseph’s brothers envied him, yet he remained faithful.

Genesis 37:11, “And his brothers envied him, but his father kept the matter in mind.”

Joseph's brothers persecuted him and planned to kill him, but instead cast him into a pit. Through all of this, Joseph remained faithful. We do not read of him retaliating or even getting even. He chose to trust God.

Genesis 37:20, "Come therefore, let us now kill him and cast him into some pit; and we shall say, 'Some wild beast has devoured him.' We shall see what will become of his dreams!"

Each of us will experience seasons of opposition in our lives, but we must remember that God is never surprised. We can learn from Joseph's brothers that God plans even our enemies! Our enemies may envy us and persecute us through gossip or slander. God can use the trying circumstances in ways we wouldn't even imagine.

B. When he was sold by his brothers.

Genesis 37:27&28, "Come and let us sell him to the Ishmaelites, and let not our hand be upon him, for he is our brother and our flesh." And his brothers listened. 28 Then Midianite traders passed by; so the brothers pulled Joseph up and lifted him out of the pit, and sold him to the Ishmaelites for twenty shekels of silver. And they took Joseph to Egypt."

1. Jealousy and envy developed in the hearts of Joseph's brothers who betrayed him and sold him into slavery, telling Jacob, their father, that Joseph was dead. (Do we ever feel like family and friends do not appreciate us? Remember Joseph!).

2<sup>nd</sup> Timothy 3:12, "Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution."

2. it is required of us to be faithful, not successful. Looking back at the story of Joseph, being sold into slavery seemed to be the opposite of success and the opposite of God's plan for him.

3. What looked like an unchangeable tragedy was another step in God's journey.

4. God was the planner; Joseph was only the instrument in God's hands.

C. When he was blessed in Egypt.

Genesis 39:2, "The LORD was with Joseph, and he was a successful man; and he was in the house of his master the Egyptian."

1. Joseph remained faithful through many trials.

a. Betrayed by his brothers.

b. Sold into slavery.

c. Accused wrongly.

d. Imprisoned unjustly.

2. Through each trial, Joseph's faith was strengthened.

a. 1<sup>st</sup> Peter 5:10, "But may the God of all grace, who called us to His eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after you have suffered a while, perfect, establish, strengthen, and settle you."



b. James 1:2-4, “My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, 3 knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. 4 But let patience have *its* perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing.”

3. Perhaps the greatest trial Joseph would face was being exalted.

Genesis 41:39&40, “Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, “Inasmuch as God has shown you all this, there is no one as discerning and wise as you. 40 “You shall be over my house, and all my people shall be ruled according to your word; only in regard to the throne will I be greater than you.”

D. When he was unjustly accused.

Genesis 39:7-9, “And it came to pass after these things that his master’s wife cast longing eyes on Joseph, and she said, “Lie with me.” 8 But he refused and said to his master’s wife, “Look, my master does not know what is with me in the house, and he has committed all that he has to my hand. 39 “There is no one greater in this house than I, nor has he kept back anything from me but you, because you are his wife. How then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?”

1. Potiphar’s wife attempted to seduce Joseph.

Joseph was willing to lose a coveted position in the world in order to maintain his integrity.

2. 2<sup>nd</sup> Timothy 2:22, “Flee also youthful lusts; but pursue righteousness, faith, love, peace with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart.”

a. Temptations will come in many different ways.

b. James 1:12, “Blessed is the man who endures temptation; for when he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him.”

3. Joseph was faithful to God.

“Joseph lost his coat, but he kept his character.”

4. God’s mercy sustained him.

Genesis 39:21, “But the LORD was with Joseph and showed him mercy, and He gave him favor in the sight of the keeper of the prison.”

**God does not say we have to be rich, strong, or talented to serve Him. The one requirement God places on us is that we be found faithful.**

III. Journey of Forgiveness.

Forgiveness must be a key ingredient found in the life of every Christian. Unforgiveness breeds bitterness that can result in a life that is ineffective in the Lord’s work. One of the great signs of Joseph’s effectiveness was his ability to endure without resentment.

Hebrews 12:14&15, “Pursue peace with all people, and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord: 15 looking carefully lest anyone fall short of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up cause trouble, and by this many become defiled;”

A. He forgave his brothers.

Genesis 45:1-5, “Then Joseph could not restrain himself before all those who stood by him, and he cried out, “Make everyone go out from me!” So no one stood with him while Joseph made himself known to his brothers. 2 And he wept aloud, and the Egyptians and the house of Pharaoh heard it. 3 Then Joseph said to his brothers, “I am Joseph; does my father still live?” But his brothers could not answer him, for they were dismayed in his presence. 4 And Joseph said to his brothers, “Please come near to me.” So they came near. Then he said: “I am Joseph your brother, whom you sold into Egypt. 5 “But now, do not therefore be grieved or angry with yourselves because you sold me here; for God sent me before you to preserve life.”

Joseph realized that God has used all the incidents in his life to bring him to this place of honor and did not take offense for the wounds his brothers had inflicted. **He forgave his brothers completely!**

B. He showed the grace of God.

Genesis 42:25, “Then Joseph gave a command to fill their sacks with grain, to restore every man’s money to his sack, and to give them provisions for the journey. Thus he did for them.”

C. He showed the purpose of God.

Genesis 45:7, “And God sent me before you to preserve a posterity for you in the earth, and to save your lives by a great deliverance.”

D. He focused on the Lord.

Genesis 50:19&20, “Joseph said to them, “Do not be afraid, for am I in the place of God? 20 “But as for you, you meant evil against me; but God meant it for good, in order to bring it about as it is this day, to save many people alive.”

Joseph saw a heavenly perspective—God meant it for good. Do we see earthly situations from a heavenly perspective? Interruptions of our plans are sometimes a Divine appointment. Let’s learn to see His hand in every situation.

Conclusion:

Joseph’s journey to Egypt was unplanned, but it was all according to God’s plan! His life brought delight and honor to God.

## Lesson 4

### The Journey to the Promised Land

Joshua 1:1-9, “After the death of Moses the servant of the LORD, it came to pass that the LORD spoke to Joshua the son of Nun, Moses’ assistant, saying: 2 “Moses My servant is dead. Now therefore, arise, go over this Jordan, you and all this people, to the land which I am giving to them—the children of Israel. 3 “Every place that the sole of your foot will tread upon I have given you, as I said to Moses. 4 “From the wilderness and this Lebanon as far as the great river, the River Euphrates, all the land of the Hittites, and to the Great Sea toward the going down of the sun, shall be your territory. 5 “No man shall *be able* to stand before you all the days of your life; as I was with Moses, *so* I will be with you. I will not leave you nor forsake you. 6 “Be strong and of good courage, for to this people you shall divide as an inheritance the land which I swore to their fathers to give them. 7 “Only be strong and very courageous, that you may observe to do according to all the law which Moses My servant commanded you; do not turn from it to the right hand or to the left, that you may prosper wherever you go. 8 “This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate in it day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success. 9 “Have I not commanded you? Be strong and of good courage; do not be afraid, nor be dismayed, for the LORD your God *is* with you wherever you go.”

Moses, the leader of Israel had died. Joshua, God’s chosen leader had taken his place. He was the man who would lead the children of Israel into the Promised Land. We will study the life of Joshua and discover why God chose him to lead the children.

#### Lesson Aim

Many Christians feel inadequate when called upon by God to lead. God gives us the example of Joshua as he is placed in a position of leadership. We will look at how God prepared him and supplied everything he needed to do what God wanted him to do.

#### Lesson Goals

At the conclusion of this lesson, we should:

- Recognize the character traits in Joshua’s life that made him a leader God could use.
- Realize that God calls every Christian to some measure of influence.
- Understand the responsibilities that come with God-given influence.
- Claim the resources God offers to those who seek to be used of Him.

#### I. Joshua’s Resume.

##### A. He was proven.

Exodus 17:8-13, “Now Amalek came and fought with Israel in Rephidim. 9 And Moses said to Joshua, “Choose us some men and go out, fight with Amalek. Tomorrow I will stand on the top of the hill with the rod of God in my hand.” 10 So Joshua did as Moses said to him, and fought with Amalek. And Moses, Aaron, and Hur went up to the top of the hill. 11 And so it was, when Moses held up his hand, that Israel prevailed; and when he let down his hand, Amalek prevailed. 12 But Moses’ hands became heavy; so they took a stone and put it under him, and he sat on it. And Aaron and Hur supported his hands, one on

one side, and the other on the other side; and his hands were steady until the going down of the sun. 13 So Joshua defeated Amalek and his people with the edge of the sword.”

Joshua demonstrated great faith as he fought against the Amalekites, and in doing so, proved himself to be someone who could be used of God.

**“A faith that is not worth testing is not worth trusting.”**

B. He was a servant.

Exodus 24:12&13, “Then the LORD said to Moses, “Come up to Me on the mountain and be there; and I will give you tablets of stone, and the law and commandments which I have written, that you may teach them.” 13 So Moses arose with his assistant (servant) Joshua, and Moses went up to the mountain of God.

When people today use the term *servant*, it many times suggests a position of low esteem. Yet, when God uses the term servant, it signifies honor and greatness. In the Bible, God often referred to His chosen leaders as servants.

Mark 10:45, “For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.”

Joshua was a servant of Moses. We see this specifically demonstrated while Moses was on Mt. Sinai receiving the Ten Commandments. While Moses was on the mountain for forty days and nights, Joshua patiently waited for him and ministered to him.

People are prepared to lead when they have learned to serve. Joshua learned to serve before God made him a leader.

Joshua not only learned to serve God, but he also learned to serve men. He was not less of a leader because he served others. Serving God and others was the overshadowing purpose for all of his actions.

**“The measure of a man’s greatness is not how many people serve him, but how many he serves.”**

Mark 10:43, “Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you shall be your servant.”

When Joshua was chosen to be the leader of Israel, he was a servant to Moses. At the end of his life, Joshua was still known as a servant of the Lord. May we learn from his example and seek to be true and faithful servants of God!

C. He was patient.

Exodus 24:18, “So Moses went into the midst of the cloud and went up into the mountain. And Moses was on the mountain forty days and forty nights.”

Joshua spent forty days waiting for Moses on Mount Sinai. He could have gotten impatient, frustrated, or bored, but he chose to faithfully and patiently anticipate Moses’ needs.

Joshua's journey for the faith serves as an excellent example of patience! Many of us today don't think twice before we resign from a task, journey, or church. But God desires that we remain patient on our journeys trusting Him to accomplish His work in and through us.

During World War II, Hitler began to blitz London. The British government evacuated people by the train loads. As the citizens of England were running toward the trains, a man saw a young boy running to safety by himself. The man looked at the boy and said, "You know where you're going?" The boy replied, "No, but the king does!"

We may not know where God is taking us on our journeys of faith, and we may not understand periods of waiting and silence. But we can trust the heart and plan of our King and wait patiently on the Lord.

D. He had a vision.

Numbers 14:6-9, "But Joshua the son of Nun and Caleb the son of Jephunneh, *who were* among those who had spied out the land, tore their clothes; 7 and they spoke to all the congregation of the children of Israel, saying: "The land we passed through to spy out *is* an exceedingly good land. 8 "If the LORD delights in us, then He will bring us into this land and give it to us, 'a land which flows with milk and honey.' 9 "Only do not rebel against the LORD, nor fear the people of the land, for they *are* our bread; their protection has departed from them, and the LORD *is* with us. Do not fear them."

Joshua had a Godly vision. When he and Caleb searched out the land God had promised to them, they came back excited and energized by what they saw. The land was exceedingly good, and it flowed with milk and honey!

Joshua's vision to claim the land was based upon God's words, and he never lost sight of it.

Joshua 1:6, "Be strong and of good courage, for to this people you shall divide as an inheritance the land which I swore to their fathers to give them."

II. Joshua's Responsibility.

A. To provide leadership.

On our journeys, God will appoint and anoint us to lead. We may not even recognize it when He does! Leadership is influence; therefore, we all lead because we all influence others. For some, it will be leading at home, in a classroom, or at our employment. For others it will be leading a church or a business. No matter what capacity God has designed for us to fill, each one of us is called to be a leader.

Joshua provided great leadership for his family.

Joshua 24:15, "And if it seems evil to you to serve the LORD, choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods which your fathers served that *were* on the other side of the River, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you dwell. But as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD."

J. Sidlow Baxter, "What is the difference between an obstacle and an opportunity? Our attitude toward it. Every opportunity has a difficulty, and every difficulty has an opportunity."

B. To claim the promises.

Joshua 1:4&5, "From the wilderness and this Lebanon as far as the great river, the River Euphrates, all the land of the Hittites, and to the Great Sea toward the going down of the sun, shall be your territory. 5 "No man shall be able to stand before you all the days of your life; as I was with Moses, so I will be with you. I will not leave you nor forsake you."

The Promised Land was 300,000 square miles. Because of lack of faith, Israel never claimed more than 10% of the land God had given to them. Perhaps there are some promises of God that we must take the responsibility in our lives.

Jeremiah 29:11, "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."

Habakuk 2:3, "For the vision *is* yet for an appointed time; But at the end it will speak, and it will not lie. Though it tarries, wait for it; Because it will surely come, It will not tarry."

God promised Joshua complete victory in conquering the enemy. In the same way, He promises us complete victory over sin. He promises that we are more than conquerors through Him! Thank God for this wonderful promise.

1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 15:57, "But thanks *be* to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."

Romans 8:36-38, "Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. 38 For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, 38 nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

### III. Joshuas Resources.

Joshua 1:5-8, "No man shall *be able to* stand before you all the days of your life; as I was with Moses, so I will be with you. I will not leave you nor forsake you. 6 "Be strong and of good courage, for to this people you shall divide as an inheritance the land which I swore to their fathers to give them. 7 "Only be strong and very courageous, that you may observe to do according to all the law which Moses My servant commanded you; do not turn from it to the right hand or to the left, that you may prosper wherever you go. 8 "This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate in it day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success."

Have we ever started our day with the thought, *How will all this get done?* Perhaps that is how Joshua felt when he assumed leadership and began to claim God's promises. There was much work to be done in order to enjoy the victory of the Promised Land.

As God always does, He provided the resources Joshua needed to accomplish His work. These resources are still available to us today; they are just as powerful and helpful as they were during the time of Joshua.

#### A. God's presence (vs. 5).

Hebrews 13:5&6, “Let your conduct be without covetousness; be content with such things as you have. For He Himself has said, “I will never leave you nor forsake you.” 6 So we may boldly say: “The LORD is my helper; I will not fear. What can man do to me?”

Zechariah 4:6, “So he answered and said to me: “This *is* the word of the LORD to Zerubbabel: ‘Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit,’ Says the LORD of hosts.”

The story is told of some preachers, who, many years ago, were discussing D. L. Moody and the possibility of inviting him to speak at one of their meetings. One of the preachers who opposed asking D. L. Moody, somewhat critically asked, “Does D. L. Moody have a monopoly on the Holy Spirit?” To which an older and wiser preacher replied, “No. The Holy Spirit has a monopoly on D. L. Moody.”

God says to us, “Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 “teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, *even* to the end of the age.” Amen.” (Matthew 28:19&20).

B. God’s Word (Vs. 8).

Psalms 119:105, “Your word *is* a lamp to my feet And a light to my path.”

God commanded Joshua to mediate on this resource: the Word of God.

“If we want the God of truth, we must know the truth of God!”

God also told Joshua to obey His Word. He told him to observe *to do*, not just simply to observe!

Paul exhorted us to let the Word of Christ dwell in us richly (Colossians 3:16).

## Conclusion

Joshua was faithful to lead the people into the Promised Land. In what area is God leading us to provide leadership and make a difference?

## Lesson 5

## The Journey from Discouragement to Destiny.

Judges 6:1-13, "Then the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the LORD. So the LORD delivered them into the hand of Midian for seven years, 2 and the hand of Midian prevailed against Israel. Because of the Midianites, the children of Israel made for themselves the dens, the caves, and the strongholds which are in the mountains. 3 So it was, whenever Israel had sown, Midianites would come up; also Amalekites and the people of the East would come up against them. 4 Then they would encamp against them and destroy the produce of the earth as far as Gaza, and leave no sustenance for Israel, neither sheep nor ox nor donkey. 5 For they would come up with their livestock and their tents, coming in as numerous as locusts; both they and their camels were without number; and they would enter the land to destroy it. 6 So Israel was greatly impoverished because of the Midianites, and the children of Israel cried out to the LORD. 7 And it came to pass, when the children of Israel cried out to the LORD because of the Midianites, 8 that the LORD sent a prophet to the children of Israel, who said to them, "Thus says the LORD God of Israel: 'I brought you up from Egypt and brought you out of the house of bondage; 9 'and I delivered you out of the hand of the Egyptians and out of the hand of all who oppressed you, and drove them out before you and gave you their land. 10 'Also I said to you, "I am the LORD your God; do not fear the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you dwell." But you have not obeyed My voice.'" 11 Now the Angel of the LORD came and sat under the terebinth tree which was in Ophrah, which belonged to Joash the Abiezrite, while his son Gideon threshed wheat in the winepress, in order to hide it from the Midianites. 12 And the Angel of the LORD appeared to him, and said to him, "**The LORD is with you, you mighty man of valor!**" 13 Gideon said to Him, "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."

## Lesson Overview

Israel was once again in bondage for their disobedience. God sent a prophet to call Israel to repentance, but they also needed a deliverer. God chose Gideon, an unlikely candidate in men's eyes, to deliver Israel from the Midianites. Gideon gathered Israel's army, and God thinned out the troops until the victory could only be a miracle of God. God used an unlikely general.

## Lesson Aim

Many of us doubt our abilities and hide behind our feelings of inadequacy. We feel that God has a destiny for us to fulfill, but through our human reasoning, we do not see how we can reach that goal. That's what our journey of faith is about. God knows what He has called us to do, and He knows exactly what qualities we need to fulfill that purpose. He promises to supply our every need and to strengthen our confidence in Him on our journey of faith.

## Lesson Goals

- Understand the hindrances of living in fear.
- Trust God with feelings of inadequacy or insecurity.
- Recognize God's provision when we respond to him in faithful obedience.



## Introduction

“CHIPPIE THE PARAKEET NEVER saw it coming. One second, he was peacefully perched in his cage. The next he was sucked in, washed up, and blown over. The problems began when Chippie’s owner decided to clean Chippie’s cage with a vacuum cleaner. She removed the attachment from the end of the hose and stuck it in the cage. The phone rang, and she turned to pick it up. She’d barely said ‘hello’ when ‘sssopp!’ Chippie got sucked in.

“The bird owner gasped, put down the phone, turned off the vacuum, and opened the bag. There was Chippie– still alive but stunned. Since the bird was covered with dust and soot, she grabbed him and raced to the bathroom, turned on the faucet, and held Chippie under the running water. Then, realizing that Chippie was soaked and shivering, she did what any compassionate bird owner would do ... she reached for the hair dryer and blasted the pet with hot air.

“Poor Chippie never knew what hit him.

“A few days after the trauma, the reporter who’d initially written about the event contacted Chippie’s owner to see how the bird was recovering. ‘Well,’ she replied, ‘Chippie doesn’t sing much anymore he just sits and stares.’

“It’s hard not to see why. Sucked in, washed up, and blown over . . . that’s enough to steal the song from the stoutest heart.”

From *In the Eye of the Storm* by Max Lucado

### I. The Paralysis of Fear.

Judges 6:22&23, “Now Gideon perceived that He *was* the Angel of the LORD. So Gideon said, “Alas, O Lord GOD! For I have seen the Angel of the LORD face to face.” 23 Then the LORD said to him, “Peace *be* with you; do not fear, you shall not die.”

The encouragement to “fear not” is given dozens of times in God’s Word, yet many still suffer from the paralysis of fear! Gideon was one of those people. The circumstances in which he lived caused him to hide in desperation rather than trust God.

#### A. Fear leads to isolation.

Judges 6:11, “Now the Angel of the LORD came and sat under the terebinth tree which was in Ophrah, which belonged to Joash the Abiezrite, while his son Gideon threshed wheat in the winepress, in order to hide it from the Midianites.”

When we first see Gideon, he is threshing wheat in a winepress, hiding from the Midianites. He was isolated and alone.

Note: The Midianites were nomads who dwelt in the east and southeast region of the Dead Sea. Their genealogy is traced through Abraham’s concubine, Keturah.

Illustration: The story is told of a man on vacation who returned to his cabin from a hike. He was badly scratched and bruised.

“What happened?” asked his wife.

“I met a snake on the trail,” the man answered.

“Don’t you remember?” the woman responded. “Yesterday, the ranger told us that none of the snakes up here are poisonous.”

“They don’t have to be poisonous if they can make you jump off a twenty-foot cliff!”

This is no time for Christians to “jump off a cliff” and live in isolation and fear! This is the time for us to take the gospel of Christ to every creature. Do not let the new headlines or worldly culture drive you to isolation. Determine to punch holes in the darkness by spreading God’s love to a world dying in sin.

B. Fear leads to discouragement.

Judges 6:13, “Gideon said to Him, “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.”

Gideon was obviously discouraged by the oppression of the Midianites. When we allow fear to reign in our hearts, discouragement is sure to follow. Ethan the Ezrahite was also a man who experienced much discouragement. Notice his prayer:

Psalm 89:49, “Lord, where *are* Your former loving kindnesses, *Which* You swore to David in Your truth?”

The Bible tells us that God has not given us the spirit of fear (2<sup>nd</sup> Timothy 1:7). Are we afraid to take on a task God has laid on our heart? We can be sure that our fear did not come from Him. Let’s decide today to give our fears to the Lord. Do not linger in isolation and discouragement. Claim His promise and move forward in faith.

II. The Proving of Faith.

Romans 10:17, “So then faith comes by hearing and hearing and hearing and hearing..., and hearing by the word of God.”

Faith is listening to what God says in His Word and then acting on it. True faith always requires action, which we see evidenced in Gideon’s life.

When God first called Gideon, he responded with doubt and reservation. He saw no qualifications in himself to be the deliverer of Israel.

Judges 6:14&15, “Then the LORD turned to him and said, “Go in this might of yours, and you shall save Israel from the hand of the Midianites. Have I not sent you?” 15 So he said to Him, “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.”

Gideon questioned whether God had the right person. His faith was weak at this point; however, God promised that He would be with him to help him. God wanted to strengthen Gideon’s faith and trust in Him.

Judges 6:16, “And the LORD said to him, “Surely I will be with you, and you shall defeat the Midianites as one man.”

A. Faith is not self-confidence.

Judges 7:2-4, “And the LORD said to Gideon, “The people who *are* with you *are* too many for Me to give the Midianites into their hands, lest Israel claim glory for itself against Me, saying, ‘My own hand has saved me.’ 3 “Now therefore, proclaim in the hearing of the people, saying, ‘Whoever *is* fearful and afraid, let him turn and depart at once from Mount Gilead.’ ” And twenty-two thousand of the people returned, and ten thousand remained. 4 But the LORD said to Gideon, “The people *are* still *too* many; bring them down to the water, and I will test them for you there. Then it will be, *that* of whom I say to you, ‘This one shall go with you,’ the same shall go with you; and of whomever I say to you, ‘This one shall not go with you,’ the same shall not go.”

Although the Israelite army mustered only 32,000—one sixth of the Midianite host—the number was too great. The Lord wanted Gideon and his men to learn true dependence upon Him.

In verse 3, we notice that the fearful were released from duty. God told Gideon he had too many soldiers. He was to send home all those who did not want to fight. Twenty-two thousand left, leaving Gideon with only 10,000. God was developing the faith of Gideon and of Israel. Gideon started with 32,000 and lost 22,000 in the first test!

In verse 6, we notice that the negligent were also released from duty. There were still too many soldiers. After another test, 9,700 were sent away. God had prepared Gideon to fight the Midianites with just three hundred men.

By faith, Gideon trusted God’s directions. He is later mentioned in the great hall of faith in Hebrews 11.

Hebrews 11:32-34, “And what more shall I say? For the time would fail me to tell of Gideon and Barak and Samson and Jephthah, also *of* David and Samuel and the prophets: 33 who through faith subdued kingdoms, worked righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, 34 quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, became valiant in battle, turned to flight the armies of the aliens”

Illustration: Fifty two of the fifty-five signers of the Declaration of Independence were believers in Christ. At the same time they declared independence from England they were declaring their dependence on God (Excerpt: That these United Colonies are, and of Right ought to be Free and Independent States; that they are Absolved from all Allegiance to the British Crown, and that all political connection between them and the State of Great Britain, is and ought to be totally dissolved; and that as Free and Independent States, they have full Power to levy War, conclude Peace, contract Alliances, establish Commerce, and to do all other Acts and Things which Independent States may of right do. And for the support of this Declaration, with a firm reliance on the protection of divine Providence, we mutually pledge to each other our Lives, our Fortunes and our sacred Honor.).

What is the task God has for us? Do not let our timid spirit be an excuse for disobedience. Decide to cast our dependence on God, just as Gideon, our founding fathers, and thousands of Christians throughout history did. He will never fail us!

## B. Faith is God-confident.

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.”

God saw Gideon’s potential. In Judges 6:12, he is referred to as a mighty man of valor. That was probably not how Gideon would have referred to himself. But God saw what He could accomplish through a willing vessel. God sees our potential was well. He wants us to use our faith and confidence in Him so He can develop it.

Judges 7:8&9, “ So the people took provisions and their trumpets in their hands. And he sent away all the rest of Israel, every man to his tent, and retained those three hundred men. Now the camp of Midian was below him in the valley. 9 It happened on the same night that the LORD said to him, “Arise, go down against the camp, for I have delivered it into your hand.”

When it was time to obey God, Gideon’s confidence in Him did not waver. He obeyed completely, even when the commands seemed irrational and unreasonable to the human way of thinking. Gideon followed the revelation of God, trusting that He would take care of Him. He answered God’s call and took up the challenge, realizing that his strength would come from the Lord.

Not only did God see Gideon’s potential, He blessed Gideon’s faith. In chapter 7, Gideon and God’s army were delivered from the hands of the Midianites. When we step out in faith, God will never let us down. He always blesses true faith in action.

Romans 8:31, “What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us?”

God takes every person on a different journey of faith. Each person is designed as a special creation to fulfill a specific purpose. He does not call every believer to the same task. Our task will probably be different from Gideon’s, yet it will still require confidence in God and will result in abundant blessings as we respond to Him.

## III. The Provision for the Faithful.

### A. God provides wisdom.

Judges 7:19-21, “So Gideon and the hundred men who *were* with him came to the outpost of the camp at the beginning of the middle watch, just as they had posted the watch; and they blew the trumpets and broke the pitchers that *were* in their hands. 20 Then the three companies blew the trumpets and broke the pitchers—they held the torches in their left hands and the trumpets in their right hands for blowing—and they cried, “The sword of the LORD and of Gideon!”

God instructed Gideon to give each of the three hundred men a trumpet, a pitcher, and a torch. God told Gideon to surround the Midianites, each man in place. When he gave the signal (at the beginning of the middle watch, which was after midnight), they were to blow their trumpets, break the pitchers, and shout, “*The sword of the Lord and of Gideon.*” Gideon and his army followed God’s command.

God provided the wisdom for them to stand in their places. We see this in verse 21. God desires faithfulness from each of us. The Bible says in Proverbs 27:8, “*Like a bird that wanders from its nest is a man who wanders from his place.*” Man is prone to wander, yet with God’s wisdom we can make

choices that will help us remain faithful. May we claim God’s wisdom to stay in our place—whether it be as a teacher, nursery worker, parent, friend, or encourager. God has a specific role for each of us, and He desires that we stay where He has put us.

God also provided wisdom to hold their trumpets and their lights. The army must have felt strange holding trumpets and lights in battle. You may feel as though you look strange in our world today.

Quote: “Justice Antonin Scalia said, “Christians who actually live according to the Bible in the USA can expect to be viewed as fools.”

Christianity and morals are despised in the society in which we live. Yet, God can give us wisdom to live righteously in a wicked world.

Quote: George Washington said, “It is impossible to righteously govern the world without God and the Bible.”

The same is true in our individual lives. We need God and His Word to give us the wisdom needed to govern and guide our daily steps.

From a human perspective, God’s battle plan for Gideon was not the method to use in conquering the Midianites. We most likely would have strategized and pursued full force with great weapons of war. Those who will gain confidence in God, however, must realize that God’s wisdom is infinitely greater than our own. Notice the following verses:

Isaiah 55:8&9, “For My thoughts *are* not your thoughts, Nor *are* your ways My ways,” says the LORD. 9 “For *as* the heavens are higher than the earth, So are My ways higher than your ways, And My thoughts than your thoughts.”

We can thank the Lord for providing the wisdom we need in every situation in life. We simply must ask, and He will give liberally.

James 1:5 NIV, “If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you.”

B. God provides tenacity.

Judges 8:1-4, “Now the men of Ephraim said to him, “Why have you done this to us by not calling us when you went to fight with the Midianites?” And they reprimanded him sharply. 2 So he said to them, “What have I done now in comparison with you? *Is* not the gleaning *of the grapes* of Ephraim better than the vintage of Abiezer? 3 “God has delivered into your hands the princes of Midian, Oreb and Zeeb. And what was I able to do in comparison with you?” Then their anger toward him subsided when he said that. 4 When Gideon came to the Jordan, he and the three hundred men who *were* with him crossed over, exhausted but still in pursuit.”

God provided the tenacity Gideon needed when he was criticized. If you do something for God, you will be criticized! Someone once said, “To avoid criticism, say nothing, do nothing, believe nothing.”

The Bible says in verse 4 that Gideon and his men were exhausted, yet they still pursued.

Man did not provide the help Gideon needed. We see in Judges 8:5-7 that the men of Succoth wouldn't help. In verse 9, the Bible records that the men of Penuel wouldn't help him either. God was the only help Gideon had or needed.

A man came to D. L. Moody once and criticized him for the method he used in winning souls. Moody listened politely and then asked, "How would you do it?" The man, taken back by the question, quietly mumbled that he didn't do it. "Well," said Moody, "I prefer the way I do it to the way you don't do it."

2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians 4:16-18, "Therefore we do not lose heart. Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day. 17 For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, 18 while we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal."

### Conclusion

God called Gladys to the mission field. She knew he wanted her to go to China to tell them about God's love. She attended the mission training school pending acceptance as a candidate, but she failed missionary training school. They told her that she was not qualified and refused to accept her as a missionary. Were they telling her God did not equip her to fulfill His purpose for her life? She refused to accept their decision and decided to trust God. Gladys was sure of her call and sure of her God. Taking a job as a maid, she saved money to buy a ticket to China. One day, she heard of an elderly missionary in China who was looking for someone to help her with her work.

Gladys left for China in 1932, during a time when Japan was at war with Russia and China. When Gladys finally arrived, the retired missionary was surprised to see her but put her to work immediately. She learned the Chinese language, a feat the mission board had said was impossible. Sharing the Gospel in surrounding villages, she began to take in unwanted children. The number of children under her care grew to one hundred. Through the circumstances of war, Gladys and the children had to flee to the safety of Siam over one hundred miles away. Gladys once again depended on God, and He showed Himself.

At the end of a life of reliance on God through many extreme circumstances, she wrote of herself, "My heart is full of praise that one so insignificant, uneducated, and ordinary in every way could be used to His glory for the blessing of His people in poor, persecuted China."

Like Gideon and his men, will we stand in our place? Will we pursue with purpose?

We do not have to be strong or mighty men of courage before God can use us. He does not look at our abilities and talents; He looks at our trust and obedience. By faith, we truly can move from discouragement to destiny.

## Lesson 6

## The Journey to Jericho

Joshua 2:1-9, “Now Joshua the son of Nun sent out two men from Acacia Grove to spy secretly, saying, “Go, view the land, especially Jericho.” So they went, and came to the house of a harlot named Rahab, and lodged there. 2 And it was told the king of Jericho, saying, “Behold, men have come here tonight from the children of Israel to search out the country.” 3 So the king of Jericho sent to Rahab, saying, “Bring out the men who have come to you, who have entered your house, for they have come to search out all the country.” 4 Then the woman took the two men and hid them. So she said, “Yes, the men came to me, but I did not know where they were from. 5 “And it happened as the gate was being shut, when it was dark, that the men went out. Where the men went I do not know; pursue them quickly, for you may overtake them.” 6 (But she had brought them up to the roof and hidden them with the stalks of flax, which she had laid in order on the roof.) 7 Then the men pursued them by the road to the Jordan, to the fords. And as soon as those who pursued them had gone out, they shut the gate. 8 Now before they lay down, she came up to them on the roof, 9 and said to the men: “I know that the LORD has given you the land, that the terror of you has fallen on us, and that all the inhabitants of the land are fainthearted because of you.”

## Lesson Overview

As Joshua and the children of Israel were claiming the land God had promised them, they came to a walled city called Jericho. This city had to be conquered if they were to possess the land. Before attacking, Joshua sent two spies into Jericho. The spies were soon within the city, mingling with the people and gathering information. The spies were found out and the city was on alert. When they turned into the home of woman named Rahab, she hid them, Sending the soldiers on a futile search through the streets of the city, she went up to the roof and talked with the spies. She declared her belief that Israel’s God was the one true God. Rahab asked for safety when they attacked the city. The spies made a pact with her that they would not destroy her family when they conquered Jericho.

## Lesson Aim

We should understand the change that salvation brings to the life of the believer. As new creatures in Christ, we want to live a life of faith demonstrated by works.

## Introduction

Most people esteem diamonds for two attributes—hardness and brilliance. Diamonds have long been known for their indestructibility, but it was not until fairly recently that their brilliance was discovered. Diamonds are made of carbon, one of the most common elements on earth. Carbon is a solid non-metallic element found in all living things. Carbon makes up roughly 18% of our body weight. Graphite (used in pencil lead) is a soft black mineral also made up of pure carbon. Why do we not place great value on pencil lead? What makes the two forms of carbon different?

Diamonds form about one hundred miles below the surface of the earth where there is just the right amount of pressure and heat. Carbon must be placed under at least 435,113 pounds per square inch of pressure at a temperature of at least 752 degrees Fahrenheit. If these two conditions are not

met, graphite instead of diamonds will result. The heat and pressure transform the carbon into a diamond.

When a person trusts Jesus as Savior, he begins his journey of faith. God takes the life of that believer and through the Word of God, the pressure of testing and the heat of trials (James 1:2-4, "My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, 2 knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. 4 But let patience have *its* perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing."), transforms the believer into a mature child of God. In our lesson today, God takes the life of Rahab and changes her into a diamond that will let the brilliance of God's light shine through her life.

God had promised the land of Canaan to the children of Israel. There were many cities and peoples already occupying the land. Joshua, as their leader, was to lead them in conquering each city. God promised to be with Joshua. "No man shall be able to stand before you all the days of your life; as I was with Moses, so I will be with you. I will not leave you nor forsake you." (Joshua 1:5).

As Joshua led the people to the shores of the Jordan River, they were now just a few miles west of the formidable city of Jericho, surrounded and protected by a wall.

Note: When Jericho was excavated in the late 1800s, archaeologists found remains of a wall 30 feet high and 10-12 feet wide.

#### I. The Reputation of Rahab.

When Joshua approached Jericho, he sent two spies to inspect the city. While there, they stayed at the house of Rahab.

##### A. A reputation of iniquity.

It doesn't take long to discover the reputation of Rahab. It is quickly stated in this chapter.

Joshua 2:1, "Now Joshua the son of Nun sent out two men from Acacia Grove to spy secretly, saying, "Go, view the land, especially Jericho." So they went, and came to the house of a harlot named Rahab, and lodged there."

Rahab was a harlot, and she was known for her wicked lifestyle. She was woman with a sin-filled life, yet God's mercy reached down to her, as we will see as our story unfolds.

##### B. A reputation of idolatry.

Rahab also had a reputation of worshipping idols. Idolatry was a common practice among the nations of the world at that time. The Canaanites were idolatrous people, and Jericho was a land of idolatry. The people were condemned by God as idol worshippers.

Numbers 33:51-53, "Speak to the children of Israel, and say to them: 'When you have crossed the Jordan into the land of Canaan, 52 'then you shall drive out all the inhabitants of the land from before you, destroy all their engraved stones, destroy all their molded images, and demolish all their high places; 53 'you shall dispossess the inhabitants of the land and dwell in it, for I have given you the land to possess.'"

An idol is any image or figure consecrated as an object of worship.



To worship is to ascribe worth.

Just as God wanted idols to be removed from Jericho, He wants the idols to be removed from our lives.

We all have something that “can” become an idol in our lives. Everyone has something that can “potentially” keep us from a life progressing in our faith:

- Selfishness.
- Recreation and sports.
- Material possessions.
- Education.
- Relationships.

*Today's idols are more in self than on the shelf!*

Rahab was a woman of iniquity living in a land of idolatry. We, like Rahab, would also have a poor reputation if it weren't for the grace of God saving us! Notice the wonderful redemption of Rahab.

## II. The Redemption of Rahab.

It doesn't matter where we've been or what we've done. God gave His Son for us, and He will save anyone who will turn to Him.

### A. Her realization.

Joshua 2:9, “and said to the men: “I know that the LORD has given you the land, that the terror of you has fallen on us, and that all the inhabitants of the land are fainthearted because of you.”

God must have been working on Rahab's heart and been revealing His power to her. We see evidence of this in her statement, “I know that the LORD has given you the land...” the word *know* mans to acknowledge or recognize.

God is constantly revealing Himself to this lost and dying world. In Rahab's time, He revealed Himself through drying up the Red Sea and through conquering the Egyptians. Acts such as these told the world that He was and is God.

Let's examine the extent of Rahab's realization. First, she realized who the God of the Israelites was. She called Him “Lord.” This is the name of God that is always associated with His salvation and deliverance.

No one will ever be saved until they realize their need for a Savior.

Second, Rahab realized that Israel's God had given Israel the land. This reveals that Rahab saw Israel's God as a source of goodness, blessing, and power.

Rahab may have been a woman of great iniquity; nevertheless, she came to an understanding and acceptance of the Truth. Just as Rahab, each of us must come to the Truth.

1<sup>st</sup> Timothy 2:4&5, “who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. 5 For there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus,”

B. Her faith and confession.

Joshua 2:11, "And as soon as we heard these things, our hearts melted; neither did there remain any more courage in anyone because of you, for the LORD your God, He is God in heaven above and on earth beneath."

Hebrews 11:31, "By faith the harlot Rahab did not perish with those who did not believe, when she had received the spies with peace."

Romans 10:9&10, "that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. 10 For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation."

III. The Faith of Rahab.

When faith in Christ is present, He changes us. Rahab had a working faith. Her faith was evidenced in her actions.

James 2:17&18, "Thus also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead. 18 But someone will say, "You have faith, and I have works." Show me your faith without your works, and I will show you my faith by my works."

A. To spare the spies.

Joshua 2:12-15, "Now therefore, I beg you, swear to me by the LORD, since I have shown you kindness, that you also will show kindness to my father's house, and give me a true token, 13 "and spare my father, my mother, my brothers, my sisters, and all that they have, and deliver our lives from death." 14 So the men answered her, "Our lives for yours, if none of you tell this business of ours. And it shall be, when the LORD has given us the land, that we will deal kindly and truly with you." 15 Then she let them down by a rope through the window, for her house was on the city wall; she dwelt on the wall."

Rahab demonstrated faith to spare the spies of Israel. She trusted the word of the spies and hung the scarlet rope out her window. Then risked her life for the sake of hiding the spies. This was an act of faith demonstrated by her works.

James 2:25, "Likewise, was not Rahab the harlot also justified by works when she received the messengers and sent them out another way?"

B. To save her family.

Joshua 2:12&13, "Now therefore, I beg you, swear to me by the LORD, since I have shown you kindness, that you also will show kindness to my father's house, and give me a true token, 13 "and spare my father, my mother, my brothers, my sisters, and all that they have, and deliver our lives from death."

Joshua 2:17&18, "So the men said to her: "We will be blameless of this oath of yours which you have made us swear, 18 "unless, when we come into the land, you bind this line of scarlet cord in the window through which you let us down, and unless you bring your father, your mother, your brothers, and all your father's household to your own home."

Rahab also had faith to save her family. She heard the word of the spies. She knew what would happen to her city, and she acted in faith. She boldly asked the spies to spare her family from the destruction that was imminent.

George Mueller said, "Faith does not operate in the realm of the possible. There is no glory for God in that which is humanly possible. Faith begins where man's power ends."

Joshua 6:22&23, "But Joshua had said to the two men who had spied out the country, "Go into the harlot's house, and from there bring out the woman and all that she has, as you swore to her." 23 And the young men who had been spies went in and brought out Rahab, her father, her mother, her brothers, and all that she had. So they brought out all her relatives and left them outside the camp of Israel."

Joshua 6:25, "And Joshua spared Rahab the harlot, her father's household, and all that she had. So she dwells in Israel to this day, because she hid the messengers whom Joshua sent to spy out Jericho."

### Conclusion

A few days after Rahab's encounter with the spies, Jericho was completely destroyed, but Rahab had been saved by faith.

Notice two other outcomes in Rahab's life:

1. God place her in the hall of faith.

Hebrews 11:31, "By faith the harlot Rahab did not perish with those who did not believe, when she had received the spies with peace."

2. She married an Israelite and was included in the Messianic line of Christ.

Matthew 1:5&6, "Salmon begot Boaz by Rahab, Boaz begot Obed by Ruth, Obed begot Jesse, 6 and Jesse begot David the king. David the king begot Solomon by her who had been the wife of Uriah."

These two acts are glorious pictures of the wonderful grace of God! May we remember these truths as we seek to live out our faith on a daily basis!

## Lesson 7

## The Journey to the Valley of Elah

1<sup>st</sup> Samuel 16:1-13, "Now the LORD said to Samuel, "How long will you mourn for Saul, seeing I have rejected him from reigning over Israel? Fill your horn with oil, and go; I am sending you to Jesse the Bethlehemite. For I have provided Myself a king among his sons." 2 And Samuel said, "How can I go? If Saul hears it, he will kill me." But the LORD said, "Take a heifer with you, and say, 'I have come to sacrifice to the LORD.' 3 "Then invite Jesse to the sacrifice, and I will show you what you shall do; you shall anoint for Me the one I name to you." 4 So Samuel did what the LORD said, and went to Bethlehem. And the elders of the town trembled at his coming, and said, "Do you come peaceably?" 5 And he said, "Peaceably; I have come to sacrifice to the LORD. Sanctify yourselves, and come with me to the sacrifice." Then he consecrated Jesse and his sons, and invited them to the sacrifice. 6 So it was, when they came, that he looked at Eliab and said, "Surely the LORD's anointed is before Him!" 7 But the LORD said to Samuel, "Do not look at his appearance or at his physical stature, because I have refused him. For the LORD does not see as man sees; for man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart." 8 So Jesse called Abinadab, and made him pass before Samuel. And he said, "Neither has the LORD chosen this one." 9 Then Jesse made Shammah pass by. And he said, "Neither has the LORD chosen this one." 10 Thus Jesse made seven of his sons pass before Samuel. And Samuel said to Jesse, "The LORD has not chosen these." 11 And Samuel said to Jesse, "Are all the young men here?" Then he said, "There remains yet the youngest, and there he is, keeping the sheep." And Samuel said to Jesse, "Send and bring him. For we will not sit down till he comes here." 12 So he sent and brought him in. Now he was ruddy, with bright eyes, and good-looking. And the LORD said, "Arise, anoint him; for this is the one!" 13 Then Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed him in the midst of his brothers; and the Spirit of the LORD came upon David from that day forward. So Samuel arose and went to Ramah."

## Lesson Overview

David was a young lad who obeyed God completely. He was a man after God's own heart, and God chose him to be the next king of Israel. God took David on a journey that caused his confidence in Him to grow. His most well-known battle was with Goliath, the giant Philistine in the Valley of Elah. Young David was the instrument God used to defeat the giant and give glory to God.

## Lesson Aim

Battles in the Christian life are inevitable, but as we cultivate hearts for God, we are given a purpose. We are able to live for a holy cause. Along the course of our journeys, God will prepare us for these battles. Then, he will give us the power to prevail for His glory!

## Lesson Goals

- Desire to have a heart for God.
- Determine to fulfill God's calling no matter the cost.
- Know their God-given cause and understand that some will challenge it.
- Accept times of preparation for greater battles and victories.

- Seek to honor God in the victories given along the journey.

## Introduction

The majesty of the giant redwood trees in Northern California can quiet even the noisiest sightseer. The mere size of these enormous trees is enough to strike awe in the heart. The tallest redwood in the world measured more than 378 feet in the year 2000. Some coastal redwoods have been growing for more than 2000 years.

What was happening 2000 years ago? Julius Caesar was ruler of the Roman Empire. Jesus was born in a manger. Some of the Redwood trees were around during the time of the first church. To think of all the history that occurred during the lifetime of a redwood!

When we ponder the immensity and tenacity of these trees, we can only be reminded of the power of God who created such a wonder. No known killing diseases infect the redwoods. Any insects associated with them cause insignificant damage. Fire is their worst enemy, but even fire cannot kill a giant redwood. The bark of the tree is too thick. Little can harm redwood.

David was a man after God's own heart. No king in Israel's history was more loved, mentioned, or compared to than David. He became a giant for God among men. His heart was so focused on God that nothing could destroy his passion for Him. He stood firm when ridiculed for God's sake. He stood boldly against those who would defame His God. This man of God was used in a tremendous way to establish the faith of Israel and bring this nation out of obscurity and into a world power in the Near East. David was an example of Christian service we should all follow.

### I. David's Calling.

1<sup>st</sup> Samuel 16:7-13, "But the LORD said to Samuel, "Do not look at his appearance or at his physical stature, because I have refused him. For the LORD does not see as man sees; for man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart." 8 So Jesse called Abinadab, and made him pass before Samuel. And he said, "Neither has the LORD chosen this one." 9 Then Jesse made Shammah pass by. And he said, "Neither has the LORD chosen this one." 10 Thus Jesse made seven of his sons pass before Samuel. And Samuel said to Jesse, "The LORD has not chosen these." 11 And Samuel said to Jesse, "Are all the young men here?" Then he said, "There remains yet the youngest, and there he is, keeping the sheep." And Samuel said to Jesse, "Send and bring him. For we will not sit down till he comes here." 12 So he sent and brought him in. Now he was ruddy, with bright eyes, and good-looking. And the LORD said, "Arise, anoint him; for this is the one!" 13 Then Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed him in the midst of his brothers; and the Spirit of the LORD came upon David from that day forward. So Samuel arose and went to Ramah."

#### A. The purpose of David's calling.

God sent Samuel to the house of Jesse, for He had chosen among Jesse's sons the next king of Israel.

1. There are two reasons why a new king was chosen of the Lord.

a. Saul was the king chosen of the people. The Scriptures record that the people demanded this king. He was a king of the people's will, not God's will.

b. God was looking for a man after His own heart. David, God's choice for the next king, had a heart for God and desire to know Him and obey all His commands. It was not his physical appearance, abilities, or talents that brought David favor with God; it was the condition of his heart.

#### David's heart in the twenty-third Psalm

- A believing heart— "The Lord is my Shepherd."
- A teachable heart— "He makes me lie down in green pastures; he leads me beside the still waters."
- A holy heart— "He leads me in the path of righteousness."
- A confident heart— "though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil."
- A thankful heart— "my cup runs over."
- A fixed heart— "Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life."

God is looking for the same attributes in Christians today. He is looking for someone to seek a relationship with Him and is willing to serve in whatever capacity He designs.

#### B. The process of David's calling.

God guided Samuel through the process of selecting the next king. While Samuel looked on the outward appearance, God's selection was not based on physical attributes.

Jesse brought his sons before Samuel. When Samuel saw Eliab, he was sure that he would be the next king. After all, he looked like a king! But he was not the one. God rejected Eliab and warned Samuel not to look at the outward appearance. God was looking at the heart of the man, not at his height or countenance.

1<sup>st</sup> Samuel 16:7, "But the LORD said to Samuel, "Do not look at his appearance or at his physical stature, because I have refused him. For the LORD does not see as man sees; for man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart."

Samuel went through the seven sons of Jesse, but God did not approve one! Then, Jesse remembered David, and they called for him.

1<sup>st</sup> Samuel 16:11&12, "And Samuel said to Jesse, "Are all the young men here?" Then he said, "There remains yet the youngest, and there he is, keeping the sheep." And Samuel said to Jesse, "Send and bring him. For we will not sit down till he comes here." 12 So he sent and brought him in. Now he was ruddy, with bright eyes, and good-looking. And the LORD said, "Arise, anoint him; for this is the one!"

God is looking for people with a heart for God and a desire to follow His Word in obedience.

Acts 13:22, "And when He had removed him, 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.'"

Robert Murray McCheyne wrote to a missionary friend just after his friend had been ordained and said, "In great measure, according to the purity and perfections of the instrument, will be the success. It is not great talents God blesses so much as great likeness to Jesus. A holy minister is an awful weapon in the hand of God."

Not only do we see the selection of David, but we also see the sanctification of David.

1<sup>st</sup> Samuel 16:13, "Then Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed him in the midst of his brothers; and the Spirit of the LORD came upon David from that day forward. So Samuel arose and went to Ramah."

Samuel took the horn of oil and poured it over David's head, anointing him to be the next King of Israel. In the Old Testament, the oil was symbolic of the Holy Spirit coming upon an individual to anoint him with power, wisdom, and the ability to serve God. The anointing was symbolic of what was affirmed in David's life when the Scripture says, "and the Spirit of the Lord came upon David from that day forward..."

God gives us His Spirit to indwell us at the New Birth. Then He wants to empower us with His Spirit for service.

Acts 1:8, "But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."

Although Samuel anointed David to be king that day, it would be many years before he actually took the throne. While David waited, he continued steadfast in watching his father's sheep and growing. His journey of faith would prepare him to be king of Israel one day.

## II. David's Cause.

David's cause is revealed in 1<sup>st</sup> Samuel 17, when he fought Goliath of Gath.

God had given David a cause to honor and glorify Him in all that he did. Along his journey, when David was still a young man, God proved his faith.

### A. His cause was for faith.

1<sup>st</sup> Samuel 17:1-8, "Now the Philistines gathered their armies together to battle, and were gathered at Sochoh, which belongs to Judah; they encamped between Sochoh and Azekah, in Ephes Dammim. 2 And Saul and the men of Israel were gathered together, and they encamped in the Valley of Elah, and drew up in battle array against the Philistines. 3 The Philistines stood on a mountain on one side, and Israel stood on a mountain on the other side, with a valley between them. 4 And a champion went out from the camp of the Philistines, named Goliath, from Gath, whose height was six cubits and a span. 5 He had a bronze helmet on his head, and he was armed with a coat of mail, and the weight of the coat was five thousand shekels of bronze. 6 And he had bronze armor on his legs and a bronze javelin

between his shoulders. 7 Now the staff of his spear was like a weaver's beam, and his iron spearhead weighed six hundred shekels; and a shield-bearer went before him. 8 Then he stood and cried out to the armies of Israel, and said to them, "Why have you come out to line up for battle? Am I not a Philistine, and you the servants of Saul? Choose a man for yourselves, and let him come down to me."

1<sup>st</sup> Samuel 17:16, "And the Philistine drew near and presented himself forty days, morning and evening."

In the verses listed above, we see the threat of the enemy. Israel, God's chosen people, and the Philistines were in a standoff. The Philistines were on one mountaintop and the Israelites were on the other. Each day, a giant Philistine, Goliath, would come out and challenge Israel to send a man to fight against him. God's army was petrified, obviously not trusting God to give them the victory. There is no indication that the army even sought God's help. They had become self-sufficient, just like their king. The army was unable to rout the enemy. They had forgotten that God was the one who would fight for them.

In 1<sup>st</sup> Samuel 17, we also see the concern of David. His older brothers were serving in Israel's army. So Jesse, David's father, sent him to check on his brothers and take supplies to them. When David reached the camp, he heard Goliath's challenge and watched the army tremble. He was surprised to find that this Philistine defied the army of God, and no one was troubled by it! David's only motivation was to defend God's honor. He did not look for recognition or praise. He aimed at nothing but the glory of God. David stood for God when no one else would.

1<sup>st</sup> Samuel 17:21-29, "For Israel and the Philistines had drawn up in battle array, army against army. 22 And David left his supplies in the hand of the supply keeper, ran to the army, and came and greeted his brothers. 23 Then as he talked with them, there was the champion, the Philistine of Gath, Goliath by name, coming up from the armies of the Philistines; and he spoke according to the same words. So David heard them. 24 And all the men of Israel, when they saw the man, fled from him and were dreadfully afraid. 25 So the men of Israel said, "Have you seen this man who has come up? Surely he has come up to defy Israel; and it shall be that the man who kills him the king will enrich with great riches, will give him his daughter, and give his father's house exemption from taxes in Israel." 26 Then David spoke to the men who stood by him, saying, "What shall be done for the man who kills this Philistine and takes away the reproach from Israel? For who is this uncircumcised Philistine, that he should defy the armies of the living God?" 27 And the people answered him in this manner, saying, "So shall it be done for the man who kills him." 28 Now Eliab his oldest brother heard when he spoke to the men; and Eliab's anger was aroused against David, and he said, "Why did you come down here? And with whom have you left those few sheep in the wilderness? I know your pride and the insolence of your heart, for you have come down to see the battle." 29 And David said, "What have I done now? Is there not a cause?"

B. His cause was challenged.

David was criticized by his brother. Eliab questioned David's integrity, motive, and ability. He unjustly criticized David out of anger, accusing him of leaving his responsibilities unattended in order to see the battle. Meanwhile, Eliab had done nothing to defeat the enemy of the Lord.

Chinese proverb, "Let the man who says it cannot be done not disturb the man doing it."



David was also challenged by Saul. Saul doubted David's ability, stating he was just a youth. David was probably somewhere between the ages of twelve and seventeen. He was a youth, but God still wanted to use him to defeat Goliath who was over nine feet tall, had a spear that weighed 65 pounds.

1<sup>st</sup> Samuel 17:31-33, "Now when the words which David spoke were heard, they reported *them* to Saul; and he sent for him. 32 Then David said to Saul, "Let no man's heart fail because of him; your servant will go and fight with this Philistine." 33 And Saul said to David, "You are not able to go against this Philistine to fight with him; for you *are* a youth, and he a man of war from his youth."

Both men, Eliab and Saul, forgot one thing: the Lord God of Israel.

### III. David's Conflict.

It is inevitable that we will face battles. Some will be daunting and seem like giants, yet our true character and faith is shown when we face overwhelming circumstances.

#### A. David's preparation for battle.

David was prepared by engaging in previous battles. His encounter with the lion and the bear prepared him for his encounter with Goliath.

1<sup>st</sup> Samuel 17:33-37, "And Saul said to David, "You are not able to go against this Philistine to fight with him; for you are a youth, and he a man of war from his youth." 34 But David said to Saul, "Your servant used to keep his father's sheep, and when a lion or a bear came and took a lamb out of the flock, 35 "I went out after it and struck it, and delivered the lamb from its mouth; and when it arose against me, I caught it by its beard, and struck and killed it. 36 "Your servant has killed both lion and bear; and this uncircumcised Philistine will be like one of them, seeing he has defied the armies of the living God." 37 Moreover David said, "The LORD, who delivered me from the paw of the lion and from the paw of the bear, He will deliver me from the hand of this Philistine." And Saul said to David, "Go, and the LORD be with you!"

While God does not cause every battle and trial in our lives, He will use them to prepare us for greater usefulness. David had learned to trust in God along his journey. God strengthened David to kill a bear and a lion while he was protecting his father's sheep. He knew his own weaknesses and learned to depend fully on God's strength to be made perfect in those weaknesses.

David was also prepared with proven methods. While Saul encouraged David to use his military armor, David chose to stick with what was proven in his life. His sling had been with him as a shepherd boy on a hill. He knew it was trustworthy.

1<sup>st</sup> Samuel 17:38-40, "So Saul clothed David with his armor, and he put a bronze helmet on his head; he also clothed him with a coat of mail. 39 David fastened his sword to his armor and tried to walk, for he had not tested them. And David said to Saul, "I cannot walk with these, for I have not tested them." So David took them off. 40 Then he took his staff in his hand; and he chose for himself five smooth stones from the brook, and put them in a shepherd's bag, in a pouch which he had, and his sling was in his hand. And he drew near to the Philistine."

#### B. David's power in battle.

Goliath was the best man the world could produce in weaponry and in advantage. The world may always seem to have the advantage with more intelligence and stronger might. On the surface, it often looks like the Goliaths in our lives will prevail. But with God, all things are possible! We simply need to take Him at His Word and trust Him.

Philippians 4:13, "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me."

David's power in battle came from his trust in the Lord. He was confident that God would work on his behalf to conquer the enemy.

When David was first anointed, even Samuel did not think David would be the one chosen to be king. His brothers ridiculed him when he went to the battlefield. Even the king of the land doubted that he would defeat the giant. David knew, though, that he was not in charge. The Lord was the one fighting the battle, and He could be trusted for the power and the victory.

1<sup>st</sup> Samuel 17:45-47, "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 name of the LORD of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied. 46 "This day the LORD will deliver you into my hand, and I will strike you and take your head from you. And this day I will give the carcasses of the camp of the Philistines to the birds of the air and the wild beasts of the earth, that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel. 47 "Then all this assembly shall know that the LORD does not save with sword and spear; for the battle *is* the LORD's, and He will give you into our hands."

David's power in battle was also a result of his desire to glorify God. His passion for God was undaunted by disapproval, ridicule, or fear. He was so focused on God and giving Him the glory that it did not matter what others thought.

His confidence in God's care and strength was so intense that he was valiant in his stand for God. David made it clear that Goliath had defied Israel's God by mocking His armies and that now he would feel the sting of God's might. If we were on the hill overlooking the valley Elah, would we have been trembling with the army of Israel or standing side by side with David?

Zechariah 4:6, "o he answered and said to me: "This *is* the word of the LORD to Zerubbabel: 'Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit,' Says the LORD of hosts."

C. David's prevailing in battle.

1<sup>st</sup> Samuel 17:48-51, "So it was, when the Philistine arose and came and drew near to meet David, that David hurried and ran toward the army to meet the Philistine. 49 Then David put his hand in his bag and took out a stone; and he slung it and struck the Philistine in his forehead, so that the stone sank into his forehead, and he fell on his face to the earth. 50 So David prevailed over the Philistine with a sling and a stone, and struck the Philistine and killed him. But there was no sword in the hand of David. 51 Therefore David ran and stood over the Philistine, took his sword and drew it out of its sheath and killed him, and cut off his head with it. And when the Philistines saw that their champion was dead, they fled."

Goliath arose (and "Goliaths" will arise in our lives, too). But the moment David saw Goliath move, he began to run toward the giant. With five smooth stones and a slingshot, David defeated the giant that day. God's power was upon him as he stood for God, and God's strength was demonstrated

through his life. It doesn't matter to God how many men He has for the battle, because the victory is not dependent upon man's power but God's.

Like David, let's claim God's power to prevail against the giants in our lives. We serve the same God that David did, and He will always prove Himself faithful in every task in which He sends us.

Psalm 115:1-3, "Not unto us, O LORD, not unto us, But to Your name give glory, Because of Your mercy, Because of Your truth. 2 Why should the Gentiles say, "So where is their God?" 3 But our God is in heaven; He does whatever He pleases."

Matthew 19:26, "But Jesus looked at *them* and said to them, "With men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible."

### Conclusion

David's journey of faith showed that he desired to serve God above all else. He spent time as a shepherd getting to know God, and he was familiar with His ways. He was a man after God's own heart and was committed to his God-given cause.

Just like David, we will all face giants on our journeys. We may feel outmanned, overwhelmed, or even defeated. But God is with us every step of the way. He stands ready to provide the strength and power needed for victory.

## Lesson 8

## Journey to the Cross

John 17:1-26, "Jesus spoke these words, lifted up His eyes to heaven, and said: "Father, the hour has come. Glorify Your Son, that Your Son also may glorify You, 2 "as You have given Him authority over all flesh, that He should give eternal life to as many as You have given Him. 3 "And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent. 4 "I have glorified You on the earth. I have finished the work which You have given Me to do. 5 "And now, O Father, glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world was. 6 "I have manifested Your name to the men whom You have given Me out of the world. They were Yours, You gave them to Me, and they have kept Your word. 7 "Now they have known that all things which You have given Me are from You. 8 "For I have given to them the words which You have given Me; and they have received them, and have known surely that I came forth from You; and they have believed that You sent Me. 9 "I pray for them. I do not pray for the world but for those whom You have given Me, for they are Yours. 10 "And all Mine are Yours, and Yours are Mine, and I am glorified in them. 11 "Now I am no longer in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to You. Holy Father, keep through Your name those whom You have given Me, that they may be one as We are. 12 "While I was with them in the world, I kept them in Your name. Those whom You gave Me I have kept; and none of them is lost except the son of perdition, that the Scripture might be fulfilled. 13 "But now I come to You, and these things I speak in the world, that they may have My joy fulfilled in themselves. 14 "I have given them Your word; and the world has hated them because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. 15 "I do not pray that You should take them out of the world, but that You should keep them from the evil one. 16 "They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. 17 "Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth. 18 "As You sent Me into the world, I also have sent them into the world. 19 "And for their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they also may be sanctified by the truth. 20 "I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word; 21 "that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me. 22 "And the glory which You gave Me I have given them, that they may be one just as We are one: 23 "I in them, and You in Me; that they may be made perfect in one, and that the world may know that You have sent Me, and have loved them as You have loved Me. 24 "Father, I desire that they also whom You gave Me may be with Me where I am, that they may behold My glory which You have given Me; for You loved Me before the foundation of the world. 25 "O righteous Father! The world has not known You, but I have known You; and these have known that You sent Me. 26 "And I have declared to them Your name, and will declare it, that the love with which You loved Me may be in them, and I in them."

## Lesson Overview

The most significant journey recorded in the Bible is the journey to the Cross. Jesus' journey to Golgotha was incredibly personal and painful. Yet His journey was wonderfully powerful, as He ultimately conquered death and the grave in an expression of love for mankind. This power is still changing lives today.

As Christians, we constantly examine our lives in light of Bible truth. By considering the people and events surrounding Jesus' death on the Cross, we can develop an understanding of the significance of Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection. We can evaluate our spiritual journeys in light of these truths, beginning with the confidence of salvation and continuing forward in a life of glorious living.

## Lesson Aim

We can realize that if Christ died for us, we could accept His gift of salvation and then determine to live our lives glorifying Him. Remember, worship is not an event, it is a lifestyle.

## Introduction

The United States Patent Office opened in 1790. Since that time there has been over 6 million patents granted. Each of these patents represents an idea that would solve a problem.

Nothing has ever occurred to God. Nothing surprises Him. He is omniscient, which means He is all knowing. He is not “wringing His hands” in fear about any event in the world today. Acts 15:18, in the KJV, says, “Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world.”

John 17 is one of the greatest prayers recorded in the bible. Jesus knew the journey to the Cross was upon Him. This journey was planned before the beginning of time to save people who believe in Him, yet it involved personal betrayal and immense physical pain.

Jesus entered Jerusalem in triumph, but was rejected by the Jewish leaders. He cleansed the temple. He ate the Passover meal and walked to the Valley of Kidron. Here, Jesus prayed to His Father for Himself, His disciples, and for us.

### I. A Planned Journey.

The crucifixion and its surrounding events were preordained by God before time began. Jesus began His prayer (in John 17) by acknowledging this hour had come.

#### A. A personal journey.

John 17:1-4, “Jesus spoke these words, lifted up His eyes to heaven, and said: “Father, the hour has come. Glorify Your Son, that Your Son also may glorify You, 2 “as You have given Him authority over all flesh, that He should give eternal life to as many as You have given Him. 3 “And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent. 4 “I have glorified You on the earth. I have finished the work which You have given Me to do.”

This personal journey was planned between God the Father and God the Son. John 17:1 indicates that Jesus acknowledged the plan to His Father,” Jesus spoke these words, lifted up His eyes to heaven, and said: “Father, the hour has come. Glorify Your Son, that Your Son also may glorify You.”

Jesus is eternal God! Before time came into existence, the virgin birth was planned, His earthly ministry was foreordained, and His journey to the Cross was all in the divine plan.

John 1:1&2, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 He was in the beginning with God.”

1<sup>st</sup> Peter 1:18-20, “knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, *like* silver or gold, from your aimless conduct *received* by tradition from your fathers, 19 but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot. 20 He indeed was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you”

## B. A purposeful journey.

The journey to the Cross served two primary purposes. The first purpose was to give eternal life. What an amazing and wonderful purpose! Because He was willing to give **His life**, we are able to experience **eternal life**.

1<sup>st</sup> John 5:20, "And we know that the Son of God has come and has given us an understanding, that we may know Him who is true; and we are in Him who is true, in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life."

The second purpose of His death on the Cross was to glorify God. Jesus said in John 17:4, "I have glorified You on the earth. I have finished the work which You have given Me to do." We see a second reference to the glory of the Father in John 12:23, "But Jesus answered them, saying, "The hour has come that the Son of Man should be glorified." In both instances, Jesus linked the glorification of God with the crucifixion.

God was glorified through Jesus' painful journey to the Cross. Jesus allowed God to accomplish His eternal purposes through Him. Jesus lived His life on earth aware of and focused on God's mission for Him. God has an eternal purpose for our lives, let's live focused on "knowing God, and manifesting His presence."

1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 6:20, "For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's."

## II. A painful journey.

The journey to the Cross took Jesus through the Garden of Gethsemane and up Golgotha' hill, where He experienced unbelievable pain.

### A. Personal betrayal.

John 18:1, "When Jesus had spoken these words, He went out with His disciples over the Brook Kidron, where there was a garden, which He and His disciples entered."

God uses people in the Bible to illustrate different aspects of our journeys. 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 10:11, "Now all these things happened to them as examples, and they were written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages have come." Some characters exemplify a model to follow while others demonstrate characteristics to avoid. Nevertheless, every example given in Scripture is for our edification. Two men in this story provide characteristics to avoid on our journeys in faith.

Jesus experienced personal betrayal from a man name Judas. The Bible says in John 18:5 that Judas stood with the men who had come for Jesus.

John 18:5, "They answered Him, "Jesus of Nazareth." Jesus said to them, "I am He." And Judas, who betrayed Him, also stood with them."

Judas arrived with a band of Roman soldiers, perhaps the guard of the Sanhedrin, and stood with them. He stood with Satan. He outwardly appeared to be as one of the disciples, but Jesus knew his heart.

Matthew 26:48, “Now His betrayer had given them a sign, saying, “Whomever I kiss, He is the One; seize Him.”

Judas was a Zealot. This was a sect of Judaism that was focused on overthrowing the Roman rule. When Jesus did not meet the expectations of Judas, he betrayed Him for 30 pieces of silver. Let’s be assured that our expectations of Jesus are God ordained. If not, we will not experience a personal relationship with Him that He so desires.

Another disciple, Peter, was there that night also. He was hiding out, warming his hands with those who were seeking to kill Jesus. He stood with the wrong crowd, and his fear caused him to deny Jesus. Praise God, Peter repented and went on to fulfill the purpose of God for his life. —Many of us have made wrong decisions and became influenced by wrong philosophies or teachings. Thank God, we can repent (change our focus or our minds) and live a life of productivity.

#### B. Physical beating.

The angry mob had taken Jesus to Pilate, who was Caesar’s representative in Judea. Pilate found no fault in Jesus. Yet, the physical beating endured by Jesus is almost beyond comprehension. He was treated unfairly and cruelly.

Perhaps Pilate thought that scourging Jesus would move the hearts of the Jews so they would want to see Him released. But their hearts were hard (John 12:40), and they were determined to destroy Him. The crowd wanted Him to die. They even asked that a common criminal, Barabbas, be released instead.

#### III. A Powerful Journey.

Four times, Pilate had declared Jesus’ innocence. Yet under public pressure, he gave in to the crowd and ordered Jesus to be crucified.

John 19:17-21, “And He, bearing His cross, went out to a place called the Place of a Skull, which is called in Hebrew, Golgotha, 18 where they crucified Him, and two others with Him, one on either side, and Jesus in the center. 19 Now Pilate wrote a title and put it on the cross. And the writing was: JESUS OF NAZARETH, THE KING OF THE JEWS. 20 Then many of the Jews read this title, for the place where Jesus was crucified was near the city; and it was written in Hebrew, Greek, and Latin. 21 Therefore the chief priests of the Jews said to Pilate, “Do not write, ‘The King of the Jews,’ but, ‘He said, “I am the King of the Jews.”””

#### A. The power of love.

Jesus’ death on the cross was of His great love for us. His life was not taken from Him, He willingly gave His life because He loved us.

Romans 5:6-8, “For when we were still without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. 7 For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet perhaps for a good man someone would even dare to die. 8 But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”

Ephesians 5:2, “And walk in love, as Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma.”

B. The power of humility.

Philippians 2:8, "And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to *the point of* death, even the death of the cross."

Jesus humbled Himself by being identified with transgressors.

Isaiah 53:12, "Therefore I will divide Him a portion with the great, And He shall divide the spoil with the strong, Because He poured out His soul unto death, And He was numbered with the transgressors, And He bore the sin of many, And made intercession for the transgressors."

Even though He was treated unfairly, Jesus still offered pardon from sins. We can thank the Lord that the first words from the Cross were words of forgiveness.

The story is told of an old preacher who had a dream about the crucifixion scene. In his dream, he was so disgusted with the treatment of His Savior, that he went up to a Roman soldier and grabbed him from behind. When the soldier turned around, the preacher saw his face on the soldier! He then realized that his own sins had nailed Jesus to the Cross.

C. The power of redemption.

John 19:30, "So when Jesus had received the sour wine, He said, "It is finished!" And bowing His head, He gave up His spirit"

The death of Jesus on the Cross meant that the payment for our sins had been made. The wages of our sin is death, and Jesus paid our sin debt when He died on the Cross.

D. M. Stearns (pastor of the Reformed Episcopal Church of the Atonement in the Germantown section of Philadelphia in the early 1900's) was preaching in Philadelphia. At the close of the service a stranger came up to him and said, "I don't like the way you spoke about the cross. I think that instead of emphasizing the death of Christ, it would be far better to preach Jesus, the teacher and example." Stearns replied, "If I presented Christ in that way, would you be willing to follow Him?" "I certainly would," said the stranger without hesitation. "All right then," said the preacher, "let's take the first step. He did no sin. Can you claim that for yourself?" The man looked confused and somewhat surprised. "Why, no," he said. "I acknowledge that I do sin." Stearns replied, "Then your greatest need is to have a Savior, not an example."

Conclusion

Matthew 12:40, "For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth."

While no one knows for sure what day Jesus was crucified, it is commonly believed it was Friday. We do know He was resurrected on the first day of the week; Sunday.

"It's Friday. Jesus is arrested in the garden where He was praying. But Sunday's coming.

It's Friday. The disciples are hiding and Peter's denying that he knows the Lord. But Sunday's coming.

It's Friday. Jesus is standing before the high priest of Israel, silent as a lamb before the slaughter. But Sunday's coming.



It's Friday. Jesus is beaten, mocked, and spit upon. But Sunday's coming.

It's Friday. Those Roman soldiers are flogging our Lord with a leather scourge that has bits of bones and glass and metal, tearing at his flesh. But Sunday's coming.

It's Friday. The Son of man stands firm as they press the crown of thorns down into his brow. But Sunday's coming.

It's Friday. See Him walking to Calvary, the blood dripping from His body. See the cross crashing down on His back as He stumbles beneath the load. It's Friday; but Sunday's a coming.

It's Friday. See those Roman soldiers driving the nails into the feet and hands of my Lord. Hear my Jesus cry, "Father, forgive them." It's Friday; but Sunday's coming.

It's Friday. Jesus is hanging on the cross, bloody and dying. But Sunday's coming.

It's Friday. The sky grows dark, the earth begins to tremble, and He who knew no sin became sin for us. Holy God, who will not abide with sin, pours out His wrath on that perfect sacrificial lamb who cries out, "My God, My God. Why hast thou forsaken me?" What a horrible cry. But Sunday's coming.

It's Friday. And at the moment of Jesus' death, the veil of the Temple that separates sinful man from Holy God was torn from the top to the bottom because Sunday's coming.

It's Friday. Jesus is hanging on the cross, heaven is weeping, and hell is partying. But that's because it's Friday, and they don't know it, but Sunday's a coming.

And on that horrible day 2,000 years ago, Jesus the Christ, the Lord of glory, the only begotten Son of God, the only perfect man, died on the cross of Calvary. Satan thought that he had won the victory. Surely, he had destroyed the Son of God. Finally he had disproved the prophecy God had uttered in the Garden and the one who was to crush his head had been destroyed. But that was Friday.

Now it's Sunday. And just about dawn on that first day of the week, there was a great earthquake. But that wasn't the only thing that was shaking, because now it's Sunday.

And the angel of the Lord is coming down out of heaven and rolling the stone away from the door of the tomb.

Yes, it's Sunday, and the angel of the Lord is sitting on that stone. And the guards posted at the tomb to keep the body from disappearing were shaking in their boots, because it's Sunday. And the lamb that was silent before the slaughter is now the resurrected lion from the tribe of Judah, for He is not here, the angel says. He is risen indeed.

It's Sunday, and the crucified and resurrected Christ has defeated death, hell, sin, and the grave. It's Sunday. And now everything has changed. It's the age of grace, God's grace poured out on all who would look to that crucified lamb of Calvary. Grace freely given to all who would believe that Jesus Christ died on the cross of Calvary was buried and rose again. All because it's Sunday.

It's Friiidaaaay!

*But Sunday's coming!"* (S. M. Lockridge, With Thanks to Dr. Michael G. Davis for the text version).

## Lesson 9

### Journey to the Tomb

Luke 24:1-8, "Now on the first day of the week, very early in the morning, they, and certain other women with them, came to the tomb bringing the spices which they had prepared. 2 But they found the stone rolled away from the tomb. 3 Then they went in and did not find the body of the Lord Jesus. 4 And it happened, as they were greatly perplexed about this, that behold, two men stood by them in shining garments. 5 Then, as they were afraid and bowed their faces to the earth, they said to them, "Why do you seek the living among the dead? 6 "He is not here, but is risen! Remember how He spoke to you when He was still in Galilee, 7 "saying, 'The Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again.'" 8 And they remembered His words."

#### Lesson Overview

Jesus died on the Cross, and, for His followers, all hope died with Him. He was placed in a tomb, and the tomb was sealed. The crucifixion was the ultimate of shattered dreams. There would be no kingdom. There would be no king. After days of mourning, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of Jesus, and other ladies were making a journey to the tomb to pay their last respects to the One in whom they had placed all of their hope. When they arrived, the stone was rolled away, and two angels appeared to them proclaiming the news that Jesus had risen. Bewildered, they ran to tell Jesus' disciples the wonderful news.

#### Lesson Aim

By examining the events surrounding the burial and resurrection of Christ, we should seek to understand that as we claim the promises of God and practice the presence of Christ, He can turn sorrow into joy on our journeys in faith, and transform us in the process!

#### Introduction

Placed amidst rambling townhouses in flat, sunny Houston, Texas, is a large building. It is the size of an airplane hangar. The purpose of this unconventional museum is to honor "one of the most important cultural rituals." It is the National Museum of Funeral History. There are no creaking doors or cobwebs in the corner. What one finds is a display of funeral memorabilia. Among the unusual items on display are a solid glass coffin, a casket for three, and a collection of hand-painted coffins from Ghana, Africa. Small signs throughout the museum warn, "Do not open the caskets."

The large display of funeral vehicles includes a sleek black funeral sleigh, hearses that carried famous people, and even a 1916 Packard funeral bus. The funeral bus, designed to eliminate the funeral procession, carried the coffin, pallbearers, and twenty mourners. The bus was used only once. While climbing the hills of San Francisco during a funeral, the weight of all the people and the coffin caused the bus to overturn, spilling the people and the coffin onto the street.

While this is a bizarre museum, and we may wonder whether the parking lot is ever filled with visitors, the truth is that the burial of a person is the last way we can honor the one who died. After Jesus' death and burial, several women came to honor Him with spices and oils. Praise the Lord, the difference between Jesus and others who die, is that Jesus did not stay in the grave.

John 19:16-19, "Then he delivered Him to them to be crucified. So they took Jesus and led Him away. 17 And He, bearing His cross, went out to a place called the Place of a Skull, which is called in Hebrew, Golgotha, 18 where they crucified Him, and two others with Him, one on either side, and Jesus in the center. 19 Now Pilate wrote a title and put it on the cross. And the writing was: JESUS OF NAZARETH, THE KING OF THE JEWS."

One can only imagine the devastation felt by early disciples of Jesus Christ as they stood at the foot of the Cross. At the end of the crucifixion, they made their journey to His tomb. These steps are the earliest of the Christian faith, though some, no doubt, thought they were the last.

#### Order of events

Mary Magdalene and other followers of Jesus journey to the tomb (Luke 23:55-24:1). Mary arrives before the other women in the party, sees the tomb opened, assumes that someone took His body, and runs off (John 20:1&2). The other women find the stone rolled away and the tomb empty (Luke 24:2-9). Mary Magdalene leaves to tell the disciples (John 20:1&2). Mary, the mother of James, draws closer and sees the angel. She goes back to meet the other women following with spices (Matthew 28:1&2). Peter and John arrive at the tomb, see that it is empty, and leave for their homes (John 20:3-10). Mary Magdalene returns, weeping. She sees the two angels and then Jesus (John 20:11-18). The risen Christ tells her to tell the disciples (John 20:17&18). Mary (mother of James) meanwhile returns with the women (Luke 24:1-4). They return and see the two angels (Luke 24:5; Mark 16:5). They also hear the angel's message (Matthew 28:6-8). On their way to find the disciples, they are met by the risen Christ (Matthew 28:9&10). Later in the afternoon, two disciples walk with Jesus and break bread with Him (Luke 24:13-31). Jesus appears in the evening in the upper room to the eleven (Luke 24:36-48; John 20:19-31).

#### I. A Sorrowful Journey

The disciples and followers of Jesus were devastated. As they stood at the foot of the Cross, their anticipation of a coming kingdom vanished. Jesus had been crucified. They had left everything to follow Him. They had walked with Him daily for three years. Their hearts must have been filled with confusion, fear, and apprehension. Their dreams seemed to be shattered. Their hope seemed to be gone. They seemed to have nothing left.

We begin with Mary Magdalene and others journeying to the tomb. It was a sad, fearful time for Mary (Jesus' mother), Mary Magdalene, and the other ladies as they walked toward the place of His burial.

*It is interesting to note that these ladies were the last ones at the Cross and first to go to the tomb.*

Mark 16:10, "She went and told those who had been with Him, as they mourned and wept."

#### A. Sorrowing the Savior's death.

Luke 24:1, "Now on the first day of the week, very early in the morning, they, and certain other women with them, came to the tomb bringing the spices which they had prepared."

When Jesus met Mary Magdalene (Luke 8), she was plagued by demons. He set her free and gave her new life.

Luke 8:2, “and certain women who had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities—Mary called Magdalene, out of whom had come seven demons,”

Mary Magdalene was changed from one who was separated from God to one who found hope through deliverance. Mark 16:9 says, “Now when He rose early on the first day of the week, He appeared first to Mary Magdalene, out of whom He had cast seven demons.” By God’s mercy Mary had a growing relationship with God through Jesus Christ. Now she faced the fear of life without the Lord Jesus. She sorrowed the death of the one who had changed her life forever.

#### B. Surprised by the empty tomb.

Luke 24:2-5, “But they found the stone rolled away from the tomb. 3 Then they went in and did not find the body of the Lord Jesus. 4 And it happened, as they were greatly perplexed about this, that behold, two men stood by them in shining garments. 5 Then, as they were afraid and bowed *their* faces to the earth, they said to them, “Why do you seek the living among the dead?”

John 20:1-4, “Now on the first *day* of the week Mary Magdalene went to the tomb early, while it was still dark, and saw *that* the stone had been taken away from the tomb. 2 Then she ran and came to Simon Peter, and to the other disciple, whom Jesus loved, and said to them, “They have taken away the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid Him.” 3 Peter therefore went out, and the other disciple, and were going to the tomb. 4 So they both ran together, and the other disciple outran Peter and came to the tomb first.”

Jesus had most certainly foretold of His own death, burial and resurrection, but sometimes in a trial we can lose perspective on the facts, and fear can hinder our ability to remember the promises of God.

John 2:19-22, “Jesus answered and said to them, “Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.” 20 Then the Jews said, “It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and will You raise it up in three days?” 21 But He was speaking of the temple of His body. 22 Therefore, when He had risen from the dead, His disciples remembered that He had said this to them; and they believed the Scripture and the word which Jesus had said.”

Matthew 26:31&32, “Then Jesus said to them, “All of you will be made to stumble because of Me this night, for it is written: *‘I will strike the Shepherd, And the sheep of the flock will be scattered.’* 32 “But after I have been raised, I will go before you to Galilee.”

His followers were planning to place spices on Jesus’ body in one last demonstration of their honor and love for the One who was dead. Their hearts were broken. When they arrived, they found the stone had been rolled away. As they looked inside, they found the tomb empty. Dismayed and surprised by the disappearance of Jesus, their despair increased. They had forgotten God’s promise to them!

A story is told of a group of primary aged children who had a “Show and Tell” demonstration at their school.

The first boy was called to the front of the class and said, "My name is Benjamin. I am Jewish, and this is the Star of David."

Next, a little girl was summoned to the front of the room, and she said, "My name is Mary. I am Roman Catholic, and this is a crucifix."

Finally, a little boy came to the front and said, "My name is Johnny. I am a Baptist, and this is a casserole."

Johnny was a little off when it came to identifying a great symbol of Baptists! He hadn't gotten it yet. He missed the truth of the Baptist's belief. In much the same way, the disciples hadn't gotten it yet when they came looking for Jesus. They did not realize the empty tomb was a great symbol testifying to the promises of God!

May we not be like Johnny or the followers of Christ who missed the point spiritually. May we not be surprised when God fulfills His Word!

## II. A Wonderful Journey.

Luke 24:8, "And they remembered His words."

Finally, Mary and those who were with her remembered His words! The journey is always wonderful when we remember His Words! When we gather together around God's Word in a Sunday school class, in a church gathering, alone, or as a family, we find perspective and great joy!

### A. Their fears were relieved.

Their fears were relieved by the Word of God. Psalm 119:24 says, "Your testimonies also are my delight And my counselors."

A very nervous airline passenger began pacing the terminal when bad weather delayed his flight. During his walk, he ran across one of those life insurance machines. It offered \$100,000 in the event of an untimely death aboard his flight. The policy was just three dollars.

He looked out the window at the threatening clouds and thought of his family at home. For that price it was foolish not to buy, so he bought the coverage. He then looked for a place to eat and settled on his favorite, Chinese. It was a relaxing meal until he opened his fortune cookie. It read, "Your recent investment will pay big dividends."

In an effort to relieve his fears, this man multiplied them! May we remember the words found in the New Testament, "For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind." (2<sup>nd</sup> Timothy 1:7).

They were not only relieved by the Word of Jesus, but also by the presence of Christ!

Luke 24:36-39, "Now as they said these things, Jesus Himself stood in the midst of them, and said to them, "Peace to you." 37 But they were terrified and frightened, and supposed they had seen a spirit. 38 And He said to them, "Why are you troubled? And why do doubts arise in your hearts? 39 "Behold My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself. Handle Me and see, for a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see I have."

If we can learn anything from the Resurrection, it is that Jesus will always be with us! And when Jesus is with us, we experience great peace. The pyramids in Egypt are famous because they contain the mummified bodies of ancient Egyptian kings. Westminster Abbey in London is well known because of English nobles and notables who are laid to rest there. Arlington Cemetery in Washington D. C. is revered as the honored resting place of many great Americans. We can thank the Lord that the tomb of Jesus is famous because it is empty!

Because the tomb is empty, our hearts can be filled with the presence of Christ! Jesus promises that He will never leave us or forsake us. Truly, it is a wonderful journey when we recognize that we are not alone!

B. Their sorrow was removed.

Luke 24:8&9, "And they remembered His words. 9 Then they returned from the tomb and told all these things to the eleven and to all the rest."

When Jesus arose, He planted the only durable rumor of hope amidst the widespread despair of a hopeless world.

Have your dreams been shattered? Are you confused or fearful? Are circumstances overwhelming you? When we try to figure it out on our own, nothing makes sense. When your life seems to be falling apart, you can transform your sorrowful journey into a joyful journey by turning to God's Word for help and strength. Whatever our burden is, the answer is found in the Bible.

What will you turn to to relieve your sorrow and hopelessness? The world turns to many things. May we as Christians turn to our Savior, for only then, will we find true deliverance from sorrow and despair.

III. A Transformational Journey.

A. Transformed through forgiveness.

We learned last week that Peter had walked away from the Lord. He had denied Christ three times.

Mark 14:66-72, "Now as Peter was below in the courtyard, one of the servant girls of the high priest came. 67 And when she saw Peter warming himself, she looked at him and said, "You also were with Jesus of Nazareth." 68 But he denied it, saying, "I neither know nor understand what you are saying." And he went out on the porch, and a rooster crowed. 69 And the servant girl saw him again, and began to say to those who stood by, "This is one of them." 70 But he denied it again. And a little later those who stood by said to Peter again, "Surely you are one of them; for you are a Galilean, and your speech shows it." 71 Then he began to curse and swear, "I do not know this Man of whom you speak!" 72 A second time the rooster crowed. Then Peter called to mind the word that Jesus had said to him, "Before the rooster crows twice, you will deny Me three times." And when he thought about it, he wept."

Disheartened by his disloyalty, Peter undoubtedly wondered whether Jesus would ever forgive and use him again. Peter walked away from the crucifixion mostly in despair, knowing that he had failed.

Nevertheless, the Lord forgave Peter. The angel gave a message to the disciples telling them where to wait to see Jesus. He included a special message to Peter that He would see him in Galilee.

Mark 16:6&7, “But he said to them, “Do not be alarmed. You seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He is risen! He is not here. See the place where they laid Him. 7 “But go, tell His disciples—and Peter—that He is going before you into Galilee; there you will see Him, as He said to you.”

God forgave Peter, and Peter was transformed as result of that forgiveness.

If you are a Christian who has failed God, you might tell yourself, “I blew it. Give up! I will never be able to serve God again.” However, God was not finished with Peter, and He is not finished with you!!!! He will forgive and transform your life. God’s forgiveness is complete.

1<sup>st</sup> John 1:9, “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us *our* sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”

God not only forgives but also chooses not to remember our sin. It is remembered no more. Psalm 103:12, “As far as the east is from the west, So far has He removed our transgressions from us.” God did not just forgive but also restore him back into fellowship, He wanted to see and talk with Peter again.

When God forgives, He receives us back into fellowship. Psalm 103:2-4 says, “Bless the LORD, O my soul, And forget not all His benefits: 3 Who forgives all your iniquities, Who heals all your diseases, 4 Who redeems your life from destruction, Who crowns you with lovingkindness and tender mercies,” God longs to restore us into complete fellowship with Him.

B. Transformed through faith.

John 20:24-29, “Now Thomas, called the Twin, one of the twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. 25 The other disciples therefore said to him, “We have seen the Lord.” So he said to them, “Unless I see in His hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and put my hand into His side, I will not believe.” 26 And after eight days His disciples were again inside, and Thomas with them. Jesus came, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, “Peace to you!” 27 Then He said to Thomas, “Reach your finger here, and look at My hands; and reach your hand here, and put it into My side. Do not be unbelieving, but believing.” 28 And Thomas answered and said to Him, “My Lord and my God!” 29 Jesus said to him, “Thomas, because you have seen Me, you have believed. Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.”

We can thank the Lord that the ultimate life transformation takes place when we are saved through faith! In order to be transformed through faith in salvation, we must believe the truth about ourselves: we are sinners in need of forgiveness.

Romans 3:23&24, “for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, 24 being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus,”

A Jew and a Christian were indulging in a friendly argument about their respective faiths. “Most of the good things you Christians have, you’ve taken from us,” the Jew said. “The Ten Commandments, for instance.” “I’ll admit we took the Ten Commandments from you,” answered the Christian, “but you can’t say that we’ve kept them.”

No person can keep all Ten Commandments. They were meant to show us our need for a Savior.

Not only must we believe the truth about ourselves, but we must also believe the truth about Jesus Christ!

John 11:25, "Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live."

Jesus redeems us when we come to Him by faith. Redemption speaks not only of our forgiveness of sin, but our eternity with the Lord.

John 17:3, "And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent.

1<sup>st</sup> John 2:25, "And this is the promise that He has promised us—eternal life.

1<sup>st</sup> John 5:11, "And this is the testimony: that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son."

1<sup>st</sup> John 5:20, "And we know that the Son of God has come and has given us an understanding, that we may know Him who is true; and we are in Him who is true, in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life."

#### Conclusion

Our core beliefs about Jesus Christ and His death, burial, and resurrection must be the foundation of our faith. As we journey through our Christian life, we may face disappointment and shattered dreams. However, our faith will draw us closer to God. When tempted to doubt or wander from the path that glorifies God, we must remember the countless promises God has given us in His Word and claim those promises as we continue on our journeys in faith.