



DEAF PERSONAL STUDY GUIDE



Joshua: Judges; Ruth

Tony Evans, General Editor

LIFE BY DESIGN

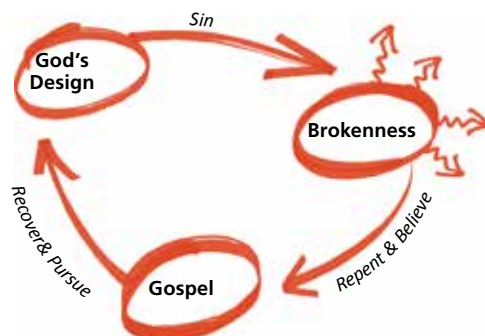
We live in a broken world. This brokenness is seen in suffering, violence, poverty, pain, and death around us. Brokenness leads us to search for a way to make **LIFE work.**

The Bible tells us that God originally planned a world that worked perfectly—where everything and everyone fit together in harmony. God made each of us with a purpose—to worship Him and walk with Him. (See Genesis 1:31 and Psalm 19:1.)

Life doesn't work when we ignore God and His original design for our lives. We selfishly insist on doing things our own way. The Bible calls this sin. Sin leads to a place of brokenness. The consequence of our sin is separation from God—in this life and for all of eternity. (See Romans 3:23 and Romans 6:23.)

At this point we need a remedy—some good news. Because of His love, God did not leave us in our brokenness. Jesus, God in human flesh, came to us and lived perfectly according to God's Design. Jesus came to rescue us—to do for us what we could not do for ourselves. He took our sin and shame to the cross, paying the penalty of our sin by His death. Jesus was then raised from the dead—to provide the only way for us to be rescued and restored to a relationship with God. (See John 3:16, Colossians 2:14, and 1 Corinthians 15:3-4.)

We don't have the power to escape this brokenness on our own. We need to be rescued. We must ask God to forgive us—turning from sin to trust in Jesus. This is what it means to repent and believe. Believing, we receive new life through Jesus. God turns our lives in a new direction. (See Mark 1:15, Ephesians 2:8-9, and Romans 10:9.)



When God restores our relationship to Him, we begin to discover meaning and purpose in a broken world. Now we can pursue God's Design in all areas of our lives. God's Spirit empowers us to recover His Design and assures us of His presence in this life and for all of eternity. (See Philippians 2:13 and Ephesians 2:10.)

Now that you have heard this Good News, God wants you to respond to Him. You can talk to Him using words like these: My life is broken—I recognize it's because of my sin. I believe Christ came to live, die, and was raised from the dead—to rescue me from my sin. Forgive me. I turn from my selfish ways and put my trust in You. I know that Jesus is Lord of all, and I will follow Him.

Excerpted from *Life on Mission: A Simple Way to Share the Gospel*.

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BIBLE READING PLAN

MONTH 1

- ☐ 1. Joshua 1:1-9
- ☐ 2. Joshua 1:10-18
- ☐ 3. Joshua 2:1-7
- ☐ 4. Joshua 2:8-24
- ☐ 5. Joshua 3:1-17
- ☐ 6. Joshua 4:1-13
- ☐ 7. Joshua 4:14-24
- ☐ 8. Joshua 5:1-15
- ☐ 9. Joshua 6:1-14
- ☐ 10. Joshua 6:15-27
- ☐ 11. Joshua 7:1-15
- ☐ 12. Joshua 7:16-26
- ☐ 13. Joshua 8:1-19
- ☐ 14. Joshua 8:20-35
- ☐ 15. Joshua 9:1-15
- ☐ 16. Joshua 9:16-27
- ☐ 17. Joshua 10:1-15
- ☐ 18. Joshua 10:16-27
- ☐ 19. Joshua 10:28-43
- ☐ 20. Joshua 11:1-15
- ☐ 21. Joshua 11:16-23
- ☐ 22. Joshua 12:1-24
- ☐ 23. Joshua 13:1-14
- ☐ 24. Joshua 13:15-33
- ☐ 25. Joshua 14:1-15
- ☐ 26. Joshua 15:1-12
- ☐ 27. Joshua 15:13-19
- ☐ 28. Joshua 15:20-63
- ☐ 29. Joshua 16:1-10
- ☐ 30. Joshua 17:1-13
- ☐ 31. Joshua 17:14-18

MONTH 2

- ☐ 1. Joshua 18:1-10
- ☐ 2. Joshua 18:11-28
- ☐ 3. Joshua 19:1-16
- ☐ 4. Joshua 19:17-31
- ☐ 5. Joshua 19:32-48
- ☐ 6. Joshua 19:49-20:9
- ☐ 7. Joshua 21:1-19
- ☐ 8. Joshua 21:20-42
- ☐ 9. Joshua 21:43-22:8
- ☐ 10. Joshua 22:9-20
- ☐ 11. Joshua 22:21-34
- ☐ 12. Joshua 23:1-16
- ☐ 13. Joshua 24:1-13
- ☐ 14. Joshua 24:14-33
- ☐ 15. Judges 1:1-15
- ☐ 16. Judges 1:16-26
- ☐ 17. Judges 1:27-36
- ☐ 18. Judges 2:1-15
- ☐ 19. Judges 2:16-23
- ☐ 20. Judges 3:1-11
- ☐ 21. Judges 3:12-31
- ☐ 22. Judges 4:1-16
- ☐ 23. Judges 4:17-24
- ☐ 24. Judges 5:1-15
- ☐ 25. Judges 5:16-31
- ☐ 26. Judges 6:1-18
- ☐ 27. Judges 6:19-32
- ☐ 28. Judges 6:33-7:8
- ☐ 29. Judges 7:9-14
- ☐ 30. Judges 7:15-23
- ☐ 31. Judges 7:24-8:12

MONTH 3

- ☐ 1. Judges 8:13-21
- ☐ 2. Judges 8:22-35
- ☐ 3. Judges 9:1-21
- ☐ 4. Judges 9:22-41
- ☐ 5. Judges 9:42-57
- ☐ 6. Judges 10:1-18
- ☐ 7. Judges 11:1-17
- ☐ 8. Judges 11:18-28
- ☐ 9. Judges 11:29-40
- ☐ 10. Judges 12:1-15
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- ☐ 20. Judges 19:1-15
- ☐ 21. Judges 19:16-30
- ☐ 22. Judges 20:1-23
- ☐ 23. Judges 20:24-48
- ☐ 24. Judges 21:1-25
- ☐ 25. Ruth 1:1-22
- ☐ 26. Ruth 2:1-23
- ☐ 27. Ruth 3:1-18
- ☐ 28. Ruth 4:1-22



ACCEPTING CHRIST



My name is Kuu. I am Deaf and I live in Thailand. I grew up in a Buddhist family and, even though my parents could not sign, they taught me to keep peace with the spirits and to honor the Buddha.

My boyfriend, Leke, took me to a Deaf church. I had no interest in the stories or the people. I did not watch or answer when they asked me questions. They were talking about someone named Jesus. I was not interested. Instead I used my iPhone and wished I was someplace else. Riding home after church, I ignored Leke.

That night I had a wild dream. I saw great white hills in the distance and a terrific light that seemed to draw me in. But huge gates and a crowd of people blocked my path. I slipped through the crowd, but the gates stopped me. Then, in my dream, I saw a great pit behind me. The pit was awful. It was a place of smoke, fire, and pain. When I reached for the gate someone caught me and drug me to the pit. The light seemed to say to me, "Too late. Too late." I longed for the light, but I was thrown into the pit. That is when I woke up.

I wakened Leke and asked, "What is this place of fire? Tell me about the light I cannot have!" Leke signed, "I have spoken to you before of the man Jesus, who is not a man but God."

For several weeks I learned about the Christian God. With this God there was no fear of the spirits that Thai people feared. I was very attracted to the God-man who showed his love by dying on the cross. It was not long after this that I signed a prayer of belief and accepted the God who loved me so much that He would die for me. I began my Christian life and was baptized in a swimming pool.

Soon Leke and I realized that we needed to be married. We lived together and we no longer felt like this was right since now we followed Jesus.

Leke and I now share Jesus with our Deaf Thai friends. We tell them the wonderful stories of Jesus and work in our church to help other people know Jesus. Our church is growing. We are so happy that we are now following Jesus.

You can follow Jesus too. Here's how:

Admit that you are a sinner.

Everyone has sinned and fallen short of God's glorious standard.
Romans 3:23

Believe that Jesus will forgive you and will come into your life when you invite him.

Believe in the Lord Jesus and you will be saved. Acts 16:31

Confess Jesus as your Savior.

All those who stand before others and say they believe in me, I will say before my Father in heaven that they belong to me. Matthew 10:32

INTRODUCTION TO JOSHUA; JUDGES; AND RUTH

Joshua

»» Who wrote the Book of Joshua?

The Book of Joshua does not tell who wrote the book. Many Bible teachers believe that Joshua wrote it. It is also possible that Eleazar and Phinehas, the high priests, wrote parts of the book.

»» When was the Book of Joshua written?

Joshua became the leader for the Jewish people after Moses died. Joshua wrote the book during the time that he was their leader. Eleazar and Phinehas may have added information after Joshua died.

»» To whom was the Book of Joshua written?

Joshua wrote the book for the Jewish people. It told them about how God kept His promises. It explained how they came to the land of Canaan. It also reminded the people that they had more to do.

»» Why was the Book of Joshua written?

The Book of Joshua tells the exciting story of what happened to the Jewish people. At the end of the Book of Deuteronomy, the Jewish people were on the east side of the Jordan River. The Book of Joshua tells how God gave them the land that He promised.

Judges

»» Who wrote the Book of Judges?

Many Bible teachers think the Book of Judges was written by King Hezekiah or King Josiah. These two kings were most interested in serving God. Others believe it was written by Samuel about the time King Saul began to rule over Israel.

»» When was the Book of Judges written?

The book of Judges does not tell when it was written, but the last event reported is in Judges 18:31.

➤➤ To whom was the Book of Judges written?

The book seems to have been written for the Jewish people to help them remember to be faithful to God. If Samuel was the author, then the audience was either the generation of Saul who wanted a king to rule over them (1 Samuel 8:1-22), or perhaps it was written to King Saul himself.

➤➤ Why was the Book of Judges written?

The Book of Judges is a history of the time between Joshua and King Saul. It tells stories about many times when the people of Israel turned from God, God punished them, and they returned to God. If one of the “good” kings of Israel wrote the book, it was probably to remind the people of the need to stay faithful to God.

Ruth

➤➤ Who wrote the Book of Ruth?

The Book of Ruth does not tell us who wrote it. Many Bible teachers believe it was written by Samuel, the prophet

➤➤ When was the Book of Ruth written?

The content of the Book of Ruth suggests it was written during the time of the Judges. The story of Ruth fits in that part of history. Also, the name of the town, Bethlehem in Judah, in Ruth 1:1 is only used in Judges 17:7, 19:1, and 1 Samuel 17:12.

➤➤ To whom was the Book of Ruth written?

Nothing in the book suggests to whom it was written, but it was probably written for the Jewish people.

➤➤ Why was the Book of Ruth written?

It was probably written as a personal story to remind the Jewish people how God cares for individuals.



HOLY BIBLE

Session 1

COMMISSIONED

When God commands us to do something, He will be with us and help us to obey Him.

JOSHUA 1:1-9

FIRST THOUGHTS

The word **commission** means “to send someone to do a job.” The person who gives the order or command has the power to choose and the power to help.

The International Mission Board (IMB) of the Southern Baptist Convention sends missionaries all over the world. Before the missionaries go, they participate in a commissioning service. During this service, the missionaries are challenged to obey God and be strong as they share Christ with the people in other countries. Christian brothers and sisters promise to support the missionaries and pray for them.

One summer the Southern Baptist Conference of the Deaf hosted a commissioning service for new IMB missionaries. God called the missionaries to teach Deaf people about Jesus around the world. God told these missionaries to go. They obeyed Him. In Matthew 28:19-20, Jesus told His disciples, “So go, and make followers of all people in the world. Baptize them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Teach them to obey everything that I have taught you, and I will be with you always, even

until the end of this age.” This is called the Great Commission. Jesus gave the disciples a job to do. The disciples would not be alone. Jesus promised to be with them. In the same way, He will be with us when we obey Him.

In the Book of Joshua we will learn that God commissioned Joshua to do His work. God promised to be with Joshua and give him success.

UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT

After Moses led the Jewish people out of Egypt, he chose twelve men to explore the promised land. Read the full story in Numbers 13:1–14:38. All of the men reported that the land was wonderful with plenty of food. Two of the men, Joshua and Caleb, told the Israelites God would help them take the land and defeat the people. But the other ten men said that the people in the land were too strong. The towns had thick walls. The Israelites listened to the ten men. They were afraid and did not want to go into the promised land. They did not trust God to give them victory. God punished the people because they did not obey Him. The people stayed in the wilderness for 40 years. All of the people that did not trust God died. Only Joshua and Caleb were still strong and able to go into the promised land. They believed and trusted God to give them the victory.

EXPLORE THE TEXT (JOSHUA 1:1-9)

1. A New Leader (Joshua 1:1-5)

VERSE 1

¹After Moses, the servant of the LORD, died, the LORD spoke to Joshua son of Nun, Moses' assistant.

While the Israelites were in the wilderness, God gave Moses a command. Moses did not obey so God did not allow Moses to go into the promised land. You can read about this in Numbers 20:10-12. God took Moses up a mountain and let him look at the promised land. Then Moses died on the mountain.

God chose Joshua to become the new leader for the Israelites. Joshua was Moses' helper for many years. Early in his life Joshua's name was Hoshea. *Hoshea* means “salvation.” Moses changed his name to Joshua. *Joshua* means “The Lord saves.” (See Numbers 13:6-8,16.) Joshua is a Hebrew name. In the Greek language the name Joshua is Jesus. Joshua led the Israelites into the promised land. Jesus leads His believers into salvation. Believers will enter the best promised land. They will enter heaven.

VERSE 2

²*The LORD said, “My servant Moses is dead. Now you and all these people go across the Jordan River into the land I am giving to the Israelites.”*

This must have been a frightening time for Joshua. Moses had led the Israelites for 40 years. What would happen after Moses was gone? God did not go easy with his message to Joshua. It was bold and clear. Moses was dead. But the mission of God was not done. Immediately God directly passed the job to Joshua.

VERSES 3-4

³*“I promised Moses I would give you this land, so I will give you every place you go in the land.”*

⁴*“All the land from the desert in the south to Lebanon in the north will be yours. All the land from the great river, the Euphrates, in the east, to the Mediterranean Sea in the west will be yours, too, including the land of the Hittites.”*

God told Joshua to lead the Israelites across the Jordan River into the promised land. God promised to give the Israelites their own land. It was the right time. Joshua was the right leader. God gave clear orders to Joshua and told him exactly which land to take. God described the land and told him the boundaries on the east, west, north, and south. Joshua needed to believe God and obey.

Deaf Christians need to learn God’s plan for their lives. God gives clear orders to us in the Bible. He tells us what He wants us to do. God also promises to be with us. We need to trust God and obey Him like Joshua did.

Read Matthew 28:19-20 again. What did Jesus tell the disciples to do?

What did Jesus promise them?

If you are a disciple, the command and promise are for you, too!

VERSE 5

⁵*“No one will be able to defeat you all your life. Just as I was with Moses, so I will be with you. I will not leave you or forget you.”*

When Moses led the Israelites out of Egypt, Joshua saw that God was with Moses. Joshua saw God make a way through the water of the Red Sea. Joshua walked on the dry ground across the Red Sea with the Israelites. He saw God give victory over the Egyptians. In the same way, God promised to be with Joshua and to give him victory over the people in the promised land.

How does God call people today?

What keeps people from obeying God?

Read Philippians 2:13. How does God help people obey Him?

2. A New Job (Joshua 1:6)

VERSE 6

⁶*“Joshua, be strong and brave! You must lead these people so they can take the land that I promised their fathers I would give them.”*

God encouraged Joshua to be strong and brave. Joshua may have been afraid because of the big responsibility God gave him. God told Joshua to take all the people across the Jordan River. This would not be an easy job. It was the rainy season and the river was deep and wide. It also had a strong current. There was another big challenge. There were many strong people living in the promised land. The Israelites would have to fight and take the land from these people. Joshua and the people needed to trust God. God already promised to be with Joshua and help him. Joshua only needed to obey. Joshua had a big job to do and needed strength from God.

The Bible has many examples of big jobs God gave people. The people could not do the job alone. They depended on God to help them. Before David fought Goliath, he said, “The Lord who saved me from a lion and a bear will save me from this Philistine” (1 Samuel 17:37). Before Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were thrown into the fire, they said, “If you throw us into the blazing furnace, the God we serve is able to save us from the furnace” (Daniel 3:16-18). Joseph trusted God to help him interpret dreams (Genesis 40:8).

What does God want people to do today?

What makes doing these things so hard?

How does God help people do these hard things?

You can trust God to help you do what He wants you to do.

DIG DEEPER: *The promised land*

The promised land is the country that God promised to Abraham in Genesis 12:7. God called Abraham to move from his home in Haran and led him to the land of Canaan. “The Lord appeared to Abram and said, ‘I will give this land to your descendants.’” God repeated His promise to give the land to the Israelites. He told Isaac (Genesis 26:3), Jacob (Genesis 28:13), and all of Israel (Exodus 6:8). About 600 years later the Israelites took the land. During that 600 years the Israelites grew into a large family. Some Bible teachers believe there were around two million Israelites when they left Egypt.

The promised land was also called “a land flowing with milk and honey” because the land was rich and many plants could grow there. The people there had plenty of food. When the Israelites took the land they had all the food they needed. God did not need to send manna anymore.

3. A New Trust (Joshua 1:7-9)

VERSE 7

⁷“Be strong and brave. Be sure to obey all the teachings My servant Moses gave you. If you follow them exactly, you will be successful in everything you do.”

In these verses we will see some wonderful promises from God. But verse 7 tells us clearly what must be done to have the promises of God. We should look at the important phrase, “Be sure to obey all the teachings my servant Moses gave you.” None of the promises would happen without following this command. God said, “If you follow them...” Joshua had to obey and so must we.

VERSES 8-9

⁸*“Always remember what is written in the Book of the Teachings. Study it day and night to be sure to obey everything that is written there. If you do this, you will be wise and successful in everything.”*

⁹*“Remember that I commanded you to be strong and brave. Don’t be afraid, because the LORD your God will be with you everywhere you go.”*

God told Joshua to be strong and brave again. This time Joshua needed to be strong in following God’s law. God also promised to give Joshua success. What does success mean to you? Does success mean that you are rich? Does success mean that you have many friends? Does success mean that you have an important job? In these Bible verses, we see that *success* means “to obey God and do what He tells us to do.” God told Joshua to take the land. He reminded Joshua that when he obeyed God’s teachings, he would have success in doing God’s plan. He would defeat the enemies and win the battles.

Read verse 8 again. How can we remember the things God teaches us? He said to study day and night. In Deuteronomy 11:19-21, God explained how to study and think about His teachings. He said, “Teach them well to your children, talking about them when you sit at home and walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up.” This message applies to us today. If we depend on God, study His Word, and follow His orders, we will be successful.

In verse 9, God again encouraged Joshua to be strong and brave. He also reminded Joshua that He would be with him. We can also be strong and brave because God is with us. Today, as Christians, we have the Holy Spirit in us. God is present with us all the time. We can have fellowship with God always.

Read Acts 1:8. What does it mean to be “strong and brave”?

How does the Holy Spirit help believers be strong and brave?

BIBLE SKILL: *Knowing the Bible*

Why is it important to study the Bible? God told Joshua to study and obey the Book of the Teachings so that he would be wise and successful. Read Psalm 19:7-11 to find more reasons to study the Bible. Draw lines to match the parts of the verses.

Verse 7: The teachings of the LORD ...make people happy.

The rules of the LORD ...light up the way.

Verse 8: The orders of the LORD ...are completely right.

Verse 7: The teachings of the LORD ...make people happy.

The rules of the LORD ...light up the way.

Verse 8: The orders of the LORD ...are completely right.

The commands of the LORD ...make plain people wise.

Verse 9: The judgments of the LORD ...give new strength.

IN MY CONTEXT

Bill, Mary, and their three children lived out in the country. While they were at church one Sunday, someone broke into their home. Six months later it happened again. The thieves stole several things from their home. They were thankful that they were not home when the thieves were there. Mary started to worry about her children. What if they were not safe? What if someone tried to hurt them? She became afraid someone would take them. She did not want the children to play outside. Finally she remembered that God does not want His people to be afraid. She looked for Bible verses to help. She found Proverbs 14:26. “Those who respect the LORD will have security, and their children will be protected.” She memorized the verse and thought of it often. This verse gave her much peace. She trusted God to protect her children.

What causes you to worry? _____

What causes you to be afraid? _____

You can find promises from God that will give you peace. Deaf Christians can trust God’s promises. He never fails.

Read the verses below. Write the promise from God.

John 3:16 _____

Romans 10:9 _____

John 14:27 _____

Proverbs 1:33 _____

Philippians 4:19 _____

Matthew 6:33 _____

Romans 8:28 _____

When you find a verse that helps you, write it down. Sign it many times. Share the verse with your family or your friends to help you remember it.

MEMORY VERSE

“No one will be able to defeat you all your life. Just as I was with Moses, so I will be with you. I will not leave you or forget you.”

—Joshua 1:5



Session 2

VICTORY

When we trust God and obey Him, we experience victory in our lives

JOSHUA 6:12-25

FIRST THOUGHTS

God speaks to His people today through the Bible. He gives clear direction to us just as He did during Joshua's time. We must trust God, believe that He is right, and obey Him. Joshua listened to God and obeyed Him. God gave Joshua and the Israelites victory. We have the same opportunity.

UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT

Last week, we learned how God chose Joshua to be the leader for the Israelites. Next, God prepared the Israelites to go to war and take over the promised land. The Israelites defeated the kings on the east side of the Jordan River and waited for the right time to cross the river into the promised land. Joshua sent two spies to look at the land and the city of Jericho. Rahab, a **prostitute**, lived in Jericho. She took care of the two men and hid them from the king of Jericho. Rahab told the men that everyone in the land was afraid of the Israelites. The people heard how God brought the Israelites through the Red Sea. They knew the Israelites took the land on the east side

of the Jordan River. Rahab had faith. She said, “The Lord your God rules the heavens above and the earth below!” (Joshua 2:11). The two spies promised Rahab they would save her and her family when the Israelites took Jericho. Read this story in Joshua 2. Joshua 3 tells how the Israelites crossed the Jordan River near Jericho. God stopped the flow of the river and the people walked across on dry ground. This was similar to when the Israelites left Egypt and crossed the Red Sea.

Next, Joshua **circumcised** all the men who were born after the Israelites left Egypt. This showed that the people had the right spirit to take the land. It showed obedience. After that, the Israelites stayed at their camp until the men were healed. Then the people celebrated the Passover Feast. This was another way to show obedience. It prepared the people spiritually. They remembered how God brought them out of Egypt. Finally, it was time to take the land. The commander of the Lord’s army appeared to Joshua and told him everything to do for the battle to come. Joshua obeyed.

EXPLORE THE TEXT (JOSHUA 6:12-25)

1. Patient Obedience (Joshua 6:12-14)

VERSE 12.

¹² *Early the next morning Joshua got up, and the priests carried the Ark of the LORD again.*

Joshua 3 tells the story of the Israelites crossing the Jordan River. The priests went first. They carried the Ark of the Lord into the river. Read about the Ark of the Lord (or **Ark of the Covenant**) in Exodus 25:10-22. When they stepped into the river, the water stopped flowing. The people were able to cross the river. The priests stayed in the middle of the river until everyone was across the river. When the priests walked out of the river, the water flowed again. The Ark of the Lord represented God to the people. When they saw the Ark, it reminded them that God was with them. At the walls of Jericho, the priests carried the Ark again. This showed that God led the people into battle.

VERSES 13-14.

¹³ *The seven priests carried the seven trumpets and marched in front of the Ark of the LORD, blowing their trumpets. Soldiers with weapons marched in front of them, and other soldiers walked behind the Ark of the LORD. All this time the priests were blowing their trumpets.*

¹⁴ *So on the second day they marched around the city one time and then went back to camp. They did this every day for six days.*

Remember that Rahab told the spies that the people in Jericho were afraid of the Israelites. Now, soldiers and priests walked around the city. They blew trumpets, not in a musical way but as a signal or warning.

The people of Jericho saw the soldiers marching. They heard the trumpets. How was this a warning to the people?

The Israelites may have felt strange walking around the city. They just walked one time around the city each day for six days. Maybe they did not understand why God wanted them to do this. But they obeyed everything that God through Joshua told them to do.

Do God's commands always make sense? YES NO.

How do the commands that we may not understand teach us to obey him all the time?

Sometimes we do not understand what God is doing. But when we obey we show that we trust God. After we obey, we may understand better. Also, when we obey, we experience a closer relationship with God.

2. Final Preparations (Joshua 6:15-19)

VERSES 15-19.

¹⁵ *On the seventh day they got up at dawn and marched around the city, just as they had on the days before. But on that day they marched around the city seven times.*

¹⁶ *The seventh time around, the priests blew their trumpets. Then Joshua gave the command: "Now, shout! The LORD has given you this city!"*

¹⁷ *"The city and everything in it are to be destroyed as an offering to the LORD. Only Rahab the Prostitute and everyone in her house should remain alive. They must not be killed, because Rahab hid the two spies we sent out."*

¹⁸ *"Don't take any of the things that are to be destroyed as an offering to the LORD. If you take them and bring them into our camp, you yourselves will be destroyed, and you will bring trouble to all of Israel."*

¹⁹ *"All the silver and gold and things made from bronze and iron belong to the LORD and must be saved for Him."*

On the seventh day the priests and soldiers marched around the city seven times. At the right time, Joshua gave orders to the soldiers to shout. He also told them that they must destroy the city and everything in it as an offering to the Lord. This may seem strange to destroy something as an offering. Many times in war soldiers kept valuable things they found or kept the enemy people as slaves. God wanted the Israelites to give everything to Him. This meant they needed to destroy all of it. Joshua warned them what would happen if they took things for themselves. The only people the Israelites did not kill were Rahab and her family. Joshua commanded that they save her because she helped the spies. They promised to protect her. Joshua also told the Israelites to save silver, gold, bronze, and iron things for the Lord.

What did Joshua say would happen if the people kept any of the things that belonged to the Lord?

How could the silver, gold, bronze, and iron things be used to serve God? (See Joshua 6:24b.)

KEY DOCTRINE: *War and Judgment*

Many Christians do not feel comfortable with the story of the Israelites killing men, women, children, and animals in Canaan. However, part of God's plan was to judge the Canaanites because of their sin. The Canaanites did not believe in God. They worshiped idols and did many sinful acts. Read Deuteronomy 18:9-12. These verses describe some of the terrible things that the people in Canaan did. That is one reason God commanded the Israelites to destroy the Canaanites.

We also need to understand that the land and everything in it did not belong to the Canaanites or the Israelites. It belongs to God. He decides what to do with the land. He decided to give the land to His chosen people. God promised the land to the Israelites for as long as they obeyed Him. If they did not destroy all the Canaanites and their idols, the Israelites could be tempted to worship idols. They could be tempted to follow the actions of the Canaanites. Read Exodus 34:15-17 to see God's warning to the Israelites. God wanted His people to be holy. God commanded that the Israelites give everything to God by destroying it.

3. God Gives Victory (Joshua 6:20-25)

VERSES 20-21.

²⁰ *When the priests blew the trumpets, the people shouted. At the sound of the trumpets and the people's shout, the walls fell, and everyone ran straight into the city. So the Israelites defeated that city.*

²¹ *They completely destroyed with the sword every living thing in the city—men and women, young and old, cattle, sheep, and donkeys.*

These verses record how the Israelites obeyed all the instructions from the Lord. They shouted and blew the trumpets. God knocked down the walls of the city. The soldiers were able to run into the city and destroy everything. God gave them the victory.

What did the people do?

What did God do?

Remember that God wants us to obey. He will give us victory.

VERSES 22-25.

²² Joshua said to the two men who had spied out the land, “Go into the Prostitute’s house. Bring her out and bring out those who are with her, because of the promise you made to her.”

²³ So the two men went into the house and brought out Rahab, her father, mother, brothers, and all those with her. They put all of her family in a safe place outside the camp of Israel.

²⁴ Then Israel burned the whole city and everything in it, but they did not burn the things made from silver, gold, bronze, and iron. These were saved for the LORD.

²⁵ Joshua saved Rahab the Prostitute, her family, and all who were with her, because Rahab had helped the men he had sent to spy out Jericho. Rahab still lives among the Israelites today.

In May, 1999, a huge tornado hit Moore, Oklahoma. Lucy, an elderly Christian woman, knew the tornado was coming. She took her Bible and her purse and went into a closet in the middle of her house. She wrapped a blanket around herself, sat on a folding chair, and waited for the tornado to go by. She heard the loud noise of the tornado. She felt the strong winds. When the tornado passed, rescuers checked Lucy’s home. It was totally destroyed except for the closet. It took three hours for rescuers to dig her out of her house but Lucy was fine. She knew God protected her.

God also protected Rahab and her family. Their home was built into the thick wall of the city. Even though the walls of the city all fell down, God saved Rahab and her family. The two spies found them and kept them safe while the Israelites burned the city. Rahab had faith in God. God saved her. Her life changed. She became a part of the Jewish community. Rahab became the mother of Boaz. She was a part of Jesus’ family. You can see Rahab’s name in His family history in Matthew 1:5.

Rahab’s life changed because of her faith. How does faith in God change a person?

Read 2 Corinthians 5:17. What happens to us when we belong to Christ?

BIBLE SKILL: *What Belongs to God?*

God wanted the Israelites to give Him everything in Jericho. It was a sacrifice to Him. What about us today? What should we give to Him? Read the verses below. Write what belongs to God.

Malachi 3:8-10

Romans 12:1-2

1 Samuel 15:22

Deuteronomy 6:5

Ask God what He wants from you. He will show you what to give to Him.

IN MY CONTEXT

Parents love their children. Parents want the best for them. They want their children to grow up to become responsible adults. Parents teach children to obey rules. When children obey the rules, parents feel the children can accept more responsibility. Parents will allow the children to do more things. The children love their parents. They trust that the parents want the best for them. The children want to make their parents happy. They obey their parents and enjoy a good relationship with them.

Compare the parent-child relationship with God's relationship with His children. God loves us. We love Him. He wants the best for us. We trust that God wants the best for us. He wants us to grow to become responsible Christians. He teaches us to obey Him. As we obey Him, He allows us to serve Him more. When we obey God, we show that we trust Him. Your parents may not have been good examples to you. God is the perfect Father. He knows exactly what is best for you. His ways are right.

How can you trust God?

How do you know He wants what is best for you?

How can you serve Him?

MEMORY VERSE

Then Israel burned the whole city and everything in it, but they did not burn the things made from silver, gold, bronze, and iron. These were saved for the LORD.

—Joshua 4:24



Session 3

KEEPING A PROMISE

God is always in control. He has a plan and purpose. He makes all things work toward His purposes.

JOSHUA 10:6-14

FIRST THOUGHTS

During the last two weeks we have learned that when God says He will do something, He will do it. God always tells the truth and we can trust Him. Today we will learn that it is also important for us to tell the truth and that we should live so that others can trust us.

UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT

Today's lesson is about how the Israelites helped the Gibeonites. The people of Gibeon lived in the promised land. The kings that lived west of the Jordan River heard that the Israelites had destroyed the cities of Jericho and Ai. They got together to plan a battle against the Israelites. But the people of Gibeon thought of a plan to trick the Israelites.

In Joshua 9, a group of people from Gibeon put on old clothes and old sandals. They packed dry and moldy bread. They took with them some old

cracked leather wine bags. Then they went to see Joshua. They lied to Joshua. The Gibeonites told the Israelites that they were from very far away. They showed them the old bread and wine bags and their old shoes and clothes. They said these things were worn out because of their long trip to see the Israelites. They asked for a peace agreement with the Israelites.

The Israelites knew they should not make a peace agreement with people in the promised land. God warned Moses in Exodus 34:12. God said, “Be careful that you don’t make an agreement with the people who live in the land where you are going, because it will bring you trouble.” However, the leaders believed the Gibeonites’ story. The leaders of Israel agreed to make peace with the Gibeonites. They made a promise in God’s name to keep the peace. The leaders made a big mistake. They did not ask the Lord what to do first. You can read the full story in Joshua 9.

EXPLORE THE TEXT (JOSHUA 10:6-14)

1. Remembering a Promise (Joshua 10:6)

VERSE 6.

⁶*The Gibeonites sent this message to Joshua in his camp at Gilgal: “Don’t let us, your servants, be destroyed. Come quickly and help us! Save us! All the Amorite kings from the mountains have joined their armies and are fighting against us.”*

The Gibeonites were clever. They tricked the Israelites into making a promise of peace with them. This meant the Israelites would protect them as allies. The Amorite kings were afraid because the Gibeonites lived close to them and had the peace agreement with the Israelites. They decided to come together against the people of Gibeon to destroy them. When the Gibeonites saw the danger, they remembered Joshua’s promise to protect them and sent the message asking for help.

Read Joshua 9:22-23. Joshua told the Gibeonites that they would become slaves. What kind of work did the Gibeonites do?

Read Joshua 9:24. Why did the Gibeonites trick the Israelites?

2. Staying True to His Word (Joshua 10:7-8)

VERSE 7

⁷*So Joshua marched out of Gilgal with his whole army, including his best fighting men.*

Do you think it is important to keep promises? Is it important to tell the truth? Joshua and the leaders in Israel made a promise to the Gibeonites. Even though the Gibeonites tricked the leaders, they still kept their promise. Their words were true. They quickly went to help fight against the five kings. God works in the same way. Of course, God does not make mistakes, and no one can trick Him. But when God makes a promise, He will always keep it. He always tells the truth.

Read Psalm 15:4 and Colossians 3:9. How does God feel about telling the truth and keeping promises?

Why is it important for us to tell the truth and keep our promises?

A Deaf church planned a pot-luck dinner for a Sunday after church. All the members signed up to bring meat, vegetables, desserts, and drinks. Jerry signed up to bring the paper plates and cups. That Sunday, Jerry decided to go visit some friends at the lake. When it was time for the church dinner there were no plates or cups. Everyone waited while one of the members drove to the store to buy some. Now some of the members feel they cannot depend on Jerry to do what he says.

This may seem like a simple thing, but it is important for Christians to practice doing what they say they will do. If we practice with small simple jobs, we will become better with the big jobs. People will be able to depend on us. They will trust us more. When they see Christians do right, perhaps they will trust God more too.

BIBLE SKILL: *Bible Search*

It is important to God that we tell the truth. As Christians we should show other people what God is like and tell them God doesn't lie.

Read the verses below. Write what you learn about lying or telling the truth.

Exodus 20:16 _____

Exodus 23:2 _____

Psalms 15:2-3 _____

Proverbs 6:16-17 _____

Matthew 5:33-37 _____

VERSE 8

⁸*The Lord said to Joshua, “Don’t be afraid of those armies, because I will hand them over to you. None of them will be able to stand against you.”*

The Bible does not tell us how Joshua felt about the peace agreement with the Gibeonites. He may have felt badly because he did not ask God about it before he made the promise. He may have been afraid that God was not pleased with him. He may have been afraid of the five kings and their armies. But God kept his promises to Joshua. He had told Joshua, “No one will be able to defeat you all your life” (Joshua 1:5). And God said, “The Lord your God will be with you everywhere you go” (Joshua 1:9). God again told Joshua not to be afraid. God promised to give Joshua the victory.

Read 1 John 1:9. What should we do when we sin against God?

What does God do for us?

3. God Steps In (Joshua 10:9-14)

VERSE 9

⁹*Joshua and his army marched all night from Gilgal for a surprise attack.*

War was very different during Biblical times. They didn't have big trucks or trains for travel. The soldiers had to walk about twenty miles to Gibeon. Then they had to be ready to fight when they arrived. Where would they find the strength? Isaiah 40:31 says, "But the people who trust the LORD will become strong again. They will rise up as an eagle in the sky; they will run and not need rest; they will walk and not become tired." Joshua and the Israelites trusted God to help them and He gave them, the strength they needed.

Do you sometimes feel too tired to do what God wants you to do? Maybe your body is tired or maybe your spirit is tired. Remember to trust in God and He will give you the strength to obey Him.

VERSE 10

¹⁰ The LORD confused those armies when Israel attacked, so Israel defeated them in a great victory at Gibeon. They chased them along the road going up to Beth Horon and killed men all the way to Azekah and Makkedah.

¹¹ As they chased the enemy down the Beth Horon Pass to Azekah, the LORD threw large hailstones on them from the sky and killed them. More people were killed by the hailstones than by the Israelites' swords.

¹² On the day that the LORD gave up the Amorites to the Israelites, Joshua stood before all the people of Israel and said to the LORD: "Sun, stand still over Gibeon. Moon, stand still over the Valley of Aijalon."

¹³ So the sun stood still, and the moon stopped until the people defeated their enemies. These words are written in the Book of Jashar. The sun stopped in the middle of the sky and waited to go down for a full day.

¹⁴ That has never happened at any time before that day or since. That was the day the LORD listened to a human being. Truly the LORD was fighting for Israel!

These verses tell us how God stepped in to fight for the Israelites. This didn't mean the Israelites could just sit down and do nothing. They worked hard. They fought and killed the enemy. But God worked His miracles also. When the Israelites attacked, God caused the enemy to be confused. The Hebrew word for confused means that they became afraid or panicked. Next, while the Israelites chased the enemy, God killed many of the enemy soldiers with hailstones.

Finally, Joshua asked God for more time to fight. God answered his prayer. What does it mean that "the sun stopped in the middle of the sky"? Some Bible students believe it means that God made the day stay cool so the army could fight longer. Others believe that God kept the sky dark while the army traveled to Gibeon so they could surprise the enemy. The important thing is that God showed His power over the sun and moon. God did another miracle for the Israelites. He gave them more time to fight the enemy. (See

Isaiah 38:7-8 for another example of God's power over the sun.)

Read the verses below. What is God's promise to the Israelites in each of the verses?

Exodus 14:13-14

Deuteronomy 3:21-22; 20:4

Joshua 10:42; 23:3,10

KEY DOCTRINE: *God is Sovereign*

God is Sovereign. This means that He is the greatest in power and has authority over all things. Nothing or no one controls God. He can do as He wants and no one can stop Him. We have read about His power in the Book of Joshua. God stopped the flow of the Jordan River so the people could walk across on dry ground. He caused the walls around Jericho to fall down and saved Rahab and her family. He killed the enemy with hailstones and made the sun and moon stay still! God said, "Remember that I am God, and there is no other God. I am God, and there is no one like Me. ... When I plan something, it happens. What I want to do, I will do" (Isaiah 46:9-10).

God could do all of His plan alone, but in His grace He includes His people in His plan. Ephesians 2:10 tells us, "God made us what we are. In Christ Jesus, God made us to do good works, which God planned in advance for us to live our lives doing." God instructed the Israelites to march around Jericho and at the right time they shouted. God caused the walls to come down. In today's lesson, Joshua had a battle plan, but clearly, God fought for the Israelites and gave them the victory.

We do not always understand the things that God does. We may question His plans and ways.

Read Isaiah 55:8-9. What does it say about God's ways and thoughts?

The verses below tell us more about God's power. Write what you learn from each verse.

Jeremiah 27:5

Daniel 4:34-35

Romans 8:28-30

Romans 9:20-21

1 Corinthians 8:6

It is good for us to remember always that "He is the blessed and only Ruler, the King of all kings and the Lord of all lords" (1 Timothy 6:15).

IN MY CONTEXT

How do you know that God is real? We have learned that God spoke to Joshua and told him what to do. Joshua obeyed God. He was truthful and kept his promises. He led the people to obey God and fight for the promised land. God also performed miracles that the people could see. The Israelites knew that God fought for them.

How do you see God working around you?

The Bible is God's Word to us. The Holy Spirit is in us to guide us also. We have Christian brothers and sisters to encourage us and teach us.

A few years ago a pastor came to our Deaf church. He challenged the members to think about the question, "How do you know God is real?" The Deaf members said: 1) they could feel Him in their lives, 2) they experienced a change in their lives after they became Christians, 3) they felt God's love through other people, and 4) they trusted the Bible. Several also remembered times in their lives when God clearly protected them or answered their prayers.

How do you know God is real?

Tell someone about your belief. Whom will you tell?

MEMORY VERSE

Be strong and brave. Be sure to obey all the teachings my servant Moses gave you. If you follow them exactly, you will be successful in everything you do.

—Joshua 1:7



Session

4

SAVIOR ANNOUNCED

God came into the world in human form. God the Father sent His Son to become the Savior.

LUKE 1:26-38

FIRST THOUGHTS

After four hundred years of silence, God came into the world as a human baby. His name was Jesus. His mother was a virgin. He was fully God and fully man. This is sometimes difficult to understand. We must remember that God can do anything!

UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT

For four hundred years, the people in Israel felt that the prophets were sleeping. They thought the Holy Spirit did not work in Israel anymore. They still studied the law and the prophets. They looked forward to the time of the Messiah, the Savior. In the New Testament, God began to speak to the people again.

Luke wrote the Gospel of Luke to tell people about Jesus. He began by telling the story of Zechariah and Elizabeth. Zechariah was a priest. He and

his wife were faithful to God. They were very old and had no children. One day an angel, Gabriel, appeared to Zechariah. The angel said Elizabeth would become pregnant and have a son. The son's name would be John. John would become a prophet with the spirit and power like Elijah. He would be a great man and help many people turn back to God. He would get people ready for the coming of Jesus, the Messiah.

Zechariah had a hard time believing what the angel said. Because Zechariah doubted, the angel told him he would not be able to speak until the baby was born. Elizabeth became pregnant just as the angel said. This was a miracle from God. God's next miracle was even greater.

EXPLORE THE TEXT (LUKE 1:26-38)

1. Gabriel Appears (Luke 1:26-29)

VERSES 26-27.

²⁶ *During Elizabeth's sixth month of pregnancy, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a town in Galilee,*

²⁷ *To a virgin. She was engaged to marry a man named Joseph from the family of David. Her name was Mary.*

God sent Gabriel to talk to Mary. Gabriel is the same angel who appeared to Zechariah. Mary was a virgin. This means that she was a young woman who never been with a man. Mary and Joseph were engaged. In biblical times an engagement was a legal agreement. It was like a contract. If the couple wanted to break the agreement, they must get a divorce.

Luke said Joseph was from the family of David. This is important information. Prophets wrote that the Savior would be from the family of David (2 Samuel 7:12-14 and Jeremiah 23:5-6). In our study of Joshua, we learned that God always does what He says. This is another example of God keeping His promise.

VERSES 28-29.

²⁸ *The angel came to her and said, "Greetings! The Lord has blessed you and is with you."*

²⁹ *But Mary was very startled by what the angel said and wondered what this greeting might mean.*

God chose Mary to be the mother of His Son. God is **Sovereign**. He can decide what He wants. He chose Mary because of His grace. She did not earn

the right to be the mother of Jesus. She was not perfect. Mary was humble and trusted God.

In the same way, God saves us because of His grace. We do not earn salvation; it is a gift from God.

What is grace?

2. The Message Given (Luke 1:30-33)

VERSES 30-31

³⁰ *The angel said to her, "Don't be afraid, Mary; God has shown you His grace.*

³¹ *Listen! You will become pregnant and give birth to a son, and you will name Him Jesus."*

There are other times in the Bible when angels appeared. The people were always surprised. Why was it important for the angels to tell people not to be afraid?

The angel had important news for Mary. She would become pregnant! It is possible Mary knew the prophecy in Isaiah. Isaiah 7:14 says, "The Lord Himself will give you a sign: The virgin will be pregnant. She will have a son, and she will name Him Immanuel." Maybe Mary understood what the angel's message meant. But this does not mean she knew how it could happen.

The name *Jesus* means "God saves." Do you remember another name with this meaning? Joshua is the Hebrew word for God saves. Joshua gave a picture of what Jesus would do. In the Old Testament God sent Joshua to lead the Israelites into the promised land. The Israelites were slaves in Egypt for a long time. God used Joshua to lead them to freedom and a new home. In the New Testament, God sent Jesus to lead His people into salvation. People in the past were slaves to sin, and people today are slaves to sin. Jesus set us free and will lead us into our new home, heaven.

VERSES 32-33

³² *He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give Him the throne of King David, His ancestor.*

³³ *He will rule over the people of Jacob forever, and His kingdom will never end."*

Verses 32 and 33 explain who Jesus is: 1. He will be great. 2. He will be the Son of God. 3. He is from the family of David and will rule as King. Samuel prophesied this in 2 Samuel 7:12-14 about the Messiah. 4. “He will rule over the people of Jacob.” This described the Messiah and His rule over Israel. 5. He will rule forever. Jesus will be King of all, for all time.

All the things the angel said fulfilled prophecy about the Messiah. He made it clear that Jesus would be the one for whom the Jews were waiting. They were waiting for the Messiah. Mary’s baby would answer all the prophecy.

What part of the angel’s message excites you the most? Explain.

BIBLE SKILL: *Look at Several Verses*

Jesus’ mother was human. She was a virgin. Jesus’ father was God. Jesus, then, was fully human and fully God. Read the list below of things that happened in Jesus’ life. Some of the examples show that Jesus did things that only God could do. Write God by those examples. Other examples show that Jesus was human. He experienced the same things that we do. Write Human by those examples.

- Jesus cried (John 11:35). _____
- Jesus healed a blind man (Mark 8:22-26). _____
- Jesus was tired (John 4:5-6). _____
- Satan tempted Jesus (Matthew 4:1-11). _____
- Jesus calmed the sea (Matthew 8:23-27). _____
- Jesus ate (Mark 2:16). _____
- Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead (John 11:38-44). _____
- Jesus rose from the dead (Acts 10:39-41). _____

3. Questions Answered (Luke 1:34-37)

VERSE 34

³⁴ *Mary said to the angel, “How will this happen since I am a virgin?”*

When Gabriel told Zechariah that Elizabeth would become pregnant, Zechariah asked, “How can I know that what you say is true?” (Luke 1:18). He did not believe the angel. Mary had a different response. She believed Gabriel, but she was curious. She wanted to know how she would become pregnant. She was a virgin. She had never been with a man. Maybe she thought she would get pregnant after she and Joseph married. She wanted to understand.

VERSE 35.

³⁵ *The angel said to Mary, “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will cover you. For this reason the baby will be holy and will be called the Son of God.”*

God had a wonderful plan. The birth of His Son would be different from any other birth. The angel explained that Mary would become pregnant from the power of God. The Holy Spirit would “come upon” Mary. Acts 1:8 tells how the Holy Spirit gives Christians power. This is a similar idea to how the Holy Spirit worked in Mary.

The angel explained how Mary’s baby would be holy. Jesus would be different from any other child. His Father would be God. Jesus would be the Son of God, the Messiah.

KEY DOCTRINE: *Holy*

The word holy is used in different ways in the Bible. Sometimes holy means “set apart.” Holy items, in this case, were things God used for a specific job or purpose. Holy can also mean “pure and without sin.” Jesus was holy in both ways. God set Jesus apart for a purpose. Jesus came into the world to save sinners (Matthew 1:21; 18:11). He had a special job. Jesus was also holy and good (Acts 3:14). He never sinned (2 Corinthians 5:21; Hebrews 4:15).

Read 1 Peter 1:15. What does God expect from His people?

What does a holy life look like?

VERSES 36-37

³⁶ *Now Elizabeth, your relative, is also pregnant with a son though she is very old. Everyone thought she could not have a baby, but she has been pregnant for six months.*

³⁷ *God can do anything!"*

The angel told Mary about her relative, Elizabeth. There was no Facebook or Twitter during biblical times. Mary did not know about Elizabeth's pregnancy. Gabriel gave Mary the news. It was a miracle. Elizabeth was very old and had no children. But now she was six months pregnant. The angel reminded Mary that God can do impossible things. God would do a bigger miracle with Mary.

Why was it important for Mary to know about Elizabeth?

How does knowing God is working in other people's lives encourage us?

4. Willing to Follow (1:38)

VERSE 38

³⁸ *Mary said, "I am the servant of the Lord. Let this happen to me as you say!" Then the angel went away.*

Mary did not worry about what people would say about her. She did not complain that this might ruin her marriage. She was engaged. When Joseph found out she was pregnant, he could have divorced her. He could have blamed her and said she had been with another man. But Mary trusted God. She was happy to serve the Lord. She was willing to follow God's plan. Mary

is a good model for us. We should be willing to do what God says. We should be ready to serve Him.

Why do we sometimes worry about how hard it might be to serve God?

What can we learn from Mary about serving God?

God was gracious to Mary. He let her meet people who supported her. They knew that God had worked in Mary's life. After the angel left, Mary went to visit her relative, Elizabeth. When Elizabeth heard Mary talk, the baby inside her jumped. The Holy Spirit filled Elizabeth. She said to Mary, "God has blessed you more than any other woman, and He has blessed the baby to which you will give birth. Why has this good thing happened to me, that the mother of my Lord comes to me? You are blessed because you believed that what the Lord said to you would really happen" (Luke 1:42-45).

Notice that Elizabeth called Mary the "mother of my Lord." Elizabeth knew that Mary's baby was the Son of God. She knew that Jesus was the Lord. Imagine how Mary felt for Elizabeth to say these words.

When Jesus was born, the shepherds came to worship Him. Later, the wise men came to see Jesus and brought gifts.

Read Luke 2:25-38. Who saw Jesus at the temple?

How did Mary and Joseph feel about this?

All of these people agreed that Jesus was the Son of God, the Messiah. Their support probably helped Mary and Joseph feel strong. They felt encouraged to raise their son.

IN MY CONTEXT

In Joshua and Luke we learned that God always does what He says. We can trust Him. His promises are always true. John 3:16 is a favorite verse for many people. It tells of God's love for all people. He loved us so much He sent Jesus to die on the cross in our place. Today we celebrate the gift of Jesus. Christmas is all about Jesus coming to the world to save people from sin. We were lost and dying in sin. We could not save ourselves. Jesus, the Messiah, our Savior, is the one way to a relationship with God. We only need to believe in Him. God will give us a life that lasts forever with Him.

How does God show His love to us?

What happens if we believe in Jesus?

Do you have a friend who does not know Jesus? YES NO.

Write the friend's name here.

Plan a time to visit your friend and tell him or her about God's love and His Son, Jesus. When will you go?

MEMORY VERSE

"He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give Him the throne of King David, his ancestor. He will rule over the people of Jacob forever, and His kingdom will never end."

—Luke 1:32-33



Session

5

SETTLED

Faithfulness is important to God. He will reward His people for being faithful. He expects us to continue in our faithfulness to Him.

JOSHUA 22:1-8

FIRST THOUGHTS

The tribes of Reuben, Gad, and Manasseh were faithful to the Israelites. They obeyed God. God rewarded them. It was time for them to go to their homes. God expected them to continue to obey.

UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT

Before the Israelites entered the promised land, they camped on the east side of the Jordan River. The people of three tribes wanted to stay on the east side. The people were from the tribes of Reuben, Gad, and the half-tribe of Manasseh. They had many animals. They wanted to build pens for their animals. They wanted to build cities to protect their families. Moses said the three tribes could have the land. The Israelites defeated two kings in Moab and took the land. But the men of the three tribes promised to cross the Jordan River and stay with the rest of the Israelites through the battles for

the promised land while their families stayed on the east side of the river. You can read this story in Numbers 32.

When it was time for the Israelites to cross the Jordan River, Joshua reminded the men of their promise. Joshua told the men from the three tribes that they must come with the Israelites. After the Israelites controlled the promised land, they would be able to go back to their families.

EXPLORE THE TEXT (JOSHUA 22:1-8)

1. A Promise Kept (Joshua 22:1-3)

VERSES 1-3.

¹Then Joshua called a meeting of all the people from the tribes of Reuben, Gad, and East Manasseh.

²He said to them, “You have done everything Moses, the LORD’s servant, told you to do. You have also obeyed all my commands.”

³“For a long time you have supported the other Israelites. You have been careful to obey the commands the LORD your God gave you.”

The Israelites were in the promised land. They defeated many of the people in the land. Joshua divided the land among all the tribes. The people were ready to settle in the land. Joshua 21:44-45 says, “The Lord gave them peace on all sides, as He had promised their ancestors. None of their enemies defeated them; the Lord handed all their enemies over to them. He kept every promise He had made to the Israelites; each one came true.” It was time for the people to go to their homes.

The men from the tribes of Reuben, Gad, and East Manasseh obeyed Moses and Joshua. Joshua praised them for doing what they promised. They stayed with the Israelites until all the tribes got their land. They probably missed their families. They had not seen them for a long time.

We do not know how long the men from the three tribes stayed with the Israelites. Some Bible teachers believe it may have been 14 years. That was a long time! The men were faithful. They obeyed God and Joshua.

What makes it difficult to keep a promise for a long time?

Why are some promises easier to keep than others?

In Luke 17:7-10 Jesus told a story about being a good servant. Jesus said, “When you have done everything you are told to do, you should say, ‘We are unworthy servants; we have only done the work we should do.’” This is true for all of God’s people. We should obey because it is the right thing to do.

We do not obey for a reward. However, we will experience a closer relationship with God when we obey. He will be pleased with us as Joshua was pleased with the men of the three tribes.

2. A Continued Responsibility (Joshua 22:4-5)

VERSES 4-5.

⁴*The LORD your God promised to give the Israelites peace, and He has kept his promise. Now you may go back to your homes, to the land that Moses, the LORD’s servant, gave you, on the east side of the Jordan River.”*

⁵*“But be careful to obey the teachings and laws Moses, the LORD’s servant, gave you: to love the LORD your God and obey His commands, to continue to follow Him and serve Him the very best you can.”*

God was the perfect model for the Israelites. He made a promise to give peace to them. Of course, God kept His promise. God wanted His people to do the same thing. They should keep their promise to follow God. They should continue to obey Him. God is faithful. He wants His people to be faithful.

The men from the three tribes were ready to go home. Joshua wanted them to remember God and His commands. Joshua challenged the men to obey God carefully in their own land. What was the reason for obedience? They were to love the Lord. Their love for God should be the reason behind their action. God does not want us to obey because we feel it is a duty. He wants us to obey because we love Him.

How are we to love Him? How are we to obey Him? Verse 5 uses the words the very best you can. Some Bible versions use the words with all your heart and all your soul. These are the same words Moses used in Deuteronomy 6:5. The words “all your heart and all your soul” gives a good picture. We are to love and serve God with all of our being, with all of our feelings, with all of ourselves.

If we love God with our heart and soul, will we think about Him on Sunday only? If we love God with our heart and soul, will we talk with Him only if we are in trouble? If we love God with our heart and soul, will we continue our habits of sin? The answer to all three questions is “NO.” If we love God with our heart and soul, He will influence every part of our lives. We will think of Him before we make decisions. We will talk with Him about all the important things in our lives. We will stop our habits of sin.

What does it mean to love God with all your heart and with all your soul?

How do you show God love?

How do you serve God with all your heart and with all your soul?

BIBLE SEARCH: *The Heart*

When the Bible talks about the person's heart, it is a picture word for the person's life. It includes the person's feelings, spiritual life, and thoughts. We make decisions every day. Our decisions show what is important to us. Our actions show what is in our hearts.

Read the verses below. Write what you learn about the heart.

Romans 8:27

1 Thessalonians 2:4

1 Timothy 1:5

1 Peter 1:22

Philippians 4:7

3. A Welcomed Blessing (Joshua 22:6-8)

VERSES 6-8.

⁶*Then Joshua said good-bye to them, and they left and went away to their homes.*

⁷*Moses had given the land of Bashan to East Manasseh. Joshua gave land on the west side of the Jordan River to West Manasseh. And he sent them to their homes and he blessed them.*

⁸*He said, "Go back to your homes and your riches. You have many animals, silver, gold, bronze, and iron, and many beautiful clothes. Also, you have taken many things from your enemies that you should divide among yourselves."*

Joshua told the men to go to their homes. Verse 7 says that Joshua blessed them. The Jewish people felt very strongly about blessings. They felt that the blessing had power to help them. The blessing from Joshua was special to them.

You may remember when the Israelites defeated Jericho, they destroyed everything as an offering to God. They only kept the silver, gold, bronze, and iron for the Lord. In later battles God allowed the Israelites to keep the wealth. Before the battle with Ai, God said, "You will do to Ai and its king what you did to Jericho and its king. Only this time you may take all the wealth and keep it for yourselves" (Joshua 8:2). The Israelites defeated many people in the promised land. The soldiers had much to take home. They had animals, clothes, gold, silver, brass, and iron. The soldiers worked hard for those things. Maybe they wanted to keep everything they took from the battles. Joshua told them to share with their tribes on the east side of the river. Moses commanded the same thing in Numbers 31:25-27.

God still wants His people to share. Read the verses below. Draw a line to match the verse to what we should share.

Luke 3:11

Share with the poor.

Acts 2:44

Share food and clothes.

Romans 12:13

Share everything.

Ephesians 4:28

Share with God's people who need help.

KEY DOCTRINE: *The Power of Words and Signs*

Joshua blessed the people of Reuben, Gad, and Manasseh. He said words to encourage them. He used positive words. The Bible teaches us how we should communicate. Our words/signs can help others or hurt them. How do you think God wants us to communicate?

Read Ephesians 4:29. What kind of words should we use with others?

James 3:1-12 also talks about our words. James said the tongue is hard to control. In sign language it is our hands that are hard to control. We say good and bad things with our hands. Our goal should be to use our hands to communicate good things, not bad.

Our words and signs have power, but God's words are more powerful. Isaiah 55:11 tells us that God's words make things happen. Everything God says will happen, does happen. In Genesis 1, God spoke and the world came into being. Psalm 33:9 says, "He spoke and it happened, He commanded and it appeared." In Matthew 24:35 Jesus said, "Earth and sky will be destroyed, but the words I have said will never be destroyed." Psalm 33:4 says, "God's word is true, and everything He does is right."

Can you trust what God says? YES NO.

Why or why not?

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An interesting thing happened after the people of Reuben, Gad, and Manasseh went to their home. They built an altar close to the Jordan River. The other Israelites heard about it. They became angry. They were ready to fight the people of Reuben, Gad, and Manasseh. They thought the people of the three tribes were turning away from God. They thought the three tribes stopped following Him. First, they decided to send some leaders to talk with the leaders of the three tribes. This was a wise thing to do. They talked before fighting. The people of Reuben, Gad, and Manasseh explained. They built the altar to remind everyone that they were part of Israel. They did not plan to burn sacrifices on it. They knew the only place to offer sacrifices was the altar at the Holy Tent. The altar they built was to show that they belonged to Israel. They named the altar “Proof That We Believe the Lord Is God” (Joshua 22:34).

This story is a good example for us. If we think our brothers or sisters have done something wrong, we should talk with them about it. Let them tell what happened. We don’t need to believe gossip. If we believe gossip we might be embarrassed later!

IN MY CONTEXT

Have you seen the words “mission statement” before? Companies and organizations use mission statements to describe their goals. A mission statement tells others the purpose of the company. Organizations make decisions based on their mission statement. The mission statement helps them to **focus** on what they should do. Matthew 22:37-38 could be a mission statement for Christians. Jesus says that the most important commands are to love God and to love other people.

This mission statement could help us make right decisions. When we are not sure what to do, we can ask ourselves, “Will my action show that I love God? Will my action show that I love other people?” If we remember Jesus’ words it will help us do right. If our goal is to love God, we will make decisions that fit with His plan. If our goal is to love others, we will help others. We will share God’s love with them. Keeping Jesus’ words in our minds will help us be faithful to Him. His words will influence everything we do in our lives.

What is your purpose in life?

What do you think about before you make decisions?

How do you make sure your decisions fit with God’s plan?

Pray and ask God to help you love Him more. Ask Him to help you make decisions that fit with His plan.

MEMORY VERSE

But be careful to obey the teachings and laws Moses, the LORD’s servant, gave you: to love the LORD your God and obey His commands, to continue to follow Him and serve Him the very best you can.

—Joshua 22:5



Session 6

CHALLENGED

It is good to remember what God has done for us. Christians need to think about Him. Christians need to decide each day to follow God and obey Him. All of these things will help us become more and more faithful to Him.

JOSHUA 24:14-28

FIRST THOUGHTS

Sometimes Christians are surprised when reading about people who worshiped idols. We wonder how the Israelites could worship gods made out of wood or stone. The Israelites saw God do wonderful miracles. How could they stray and worship other things? We have the same problem today. We forget the wonderful things that God has done for us. We become interested in other things. Today we will learn how to stay faithful.

UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT

The Israelites were settled in the promised land. Many years later Joshua became very old. He called the leaders of the Israelites together. He wanted to talk with them before he died. He reminded them of what God did for the Israelites. He reminded them how God fought for them, how God did what

He promised. Joshua also challenged the people to stay strong in their love for God. He challenged them to obey God faithfully. Then Joshua warned them of the dangers of not obeying.

In chapter 24, Joshua called the people together again. This seemed to be a larger group with leaders from each tribe. In the first 13 verses, Joshua spoke for God. God reviewed the history of the people. He told them about how He saved them from Egypt. He reminded them how He brought them across the Jordan River and fought for them to give them the promised land. The people needed to remember these things. They needed to be ready to renew their **commitment** to God.

EXPLORE THE TEXT (JOSHUA 24:14-28)

1. The Example Set (24:14-15)

VERSE 14.

¹⁴ *Then Joshua said to the people, “Now respect the LORD and serve Him fully and sincerely. Throw away the gods that your ancestors worshiped on the other side of the Euphrates River and in Egypt. Serve the LORD.”*

In the passage for today’s lesson, Joshua used the word *serve* 14 times. This is an important idea. In the English language *serve* has several meanings. In these verses, *serve* means “to respect and obey faithfully.” All people *serve* something or someone. Joshua challenged the people to make a decision. The Israelites must choose whom they would serve.

BIBLE SEARCH: *Serving God*

What does it mean to serve God? It means to respect Him and obey Him faithfully. Read the verses below and write what you learn about serving.

Romans 1:9 I serve with my whole heart by _____

Romans 12:1 Offer your lives as a _____

Romans 12:11 Do not be lazy but _____

Galatians 5:13 Serve each other with _____

2 Peter 3:11 So, what kind of people should you be? You should live _____ lives and _____ God.

1 Peter 1:13 Prepare your minds for service and have _____

How can we improve our service for God?

What can we do to encourage others as they serve God?

VERSE 15.

¹⁵ *“But if you don’t want to serve the LORD, you must choose for yourselves today whom you will serve. You may serve the gods that your ancestors worshiped when they lived on the other side of the Euphrates River, or you may serve the gods of the Amorites who lived in this land. As for me and my family, we will serve the LORD.”*

Joshua made a strong statement. He said, “We will serve the Lord.” Even if the other Israelites chose to serve other gods, Joshua stood strong. He would serve only God.

Abraham’s ancestors saw people worship the moon-god. The Israelites worshiped a golden calf when they left Egypt. Joshua and the Israelites knew those gods were not real. They knew that the Lord their God was the only God. But it seems the Israelites were tempted to worship the idols. Joshua wanted them to make a clear choice.

Do people still worship idols? YES NO.

What idols do people worship today?

Search your heart. Ask God to show you if you love something or someone more than Him.

2. The People Remember (Joshua 24:16-18)

Verses 16-18.

¹⁶ *Then the people answered, “We will never stop following the LORD to serve other gods!”*

¹⁷ *“It was the LORD our God who brought our ancestors out of Egypt. We were slaves in that land, but the LORD did great things for us there. He brought us out and protected us while we traveled through other lands.”*

¹⁸ *“Then He forced out all the people living in these lands, even the Amorites. So we will serve the Lord, because He is our God.”*

The people seemed surprised Joshua told them to choose God and serve Him. They answered boldly. They said they would always follow God. They remembered God’s work for them. They remembered God did miracles and protected them. They knew God gave the promised land to them. They believed God because of all He did for them. They promised to serve the Lord God.

Why was it important for Joshua to challenge the people?

Jenny thought her friend, Ally, stole her ring. When Jenny asked Ally about it, Ally was very surprised. She was shocked that Jenny would blame her. She said she didn’t do it. But later she told the truth. Ally did steal the ring.

Perhaps Joshua knew that some of the Israelites had idols in their homes. It was important for them to face the truth. They needed to be honest about serving God. Joshua made them think, and led them to make a **commitment**.

3. A Serious Warning (Joshua 24:19-20)

Verses 19-20.

¹⁹ *Then Joshua said, “You are not able to serve the LORD, because He is a holy God and a jealous God. If you turn against Him and sin, He will not forgive you.”*

²⁰ *“If you leave the LORD and serve other gods, He will send you great trouble. The LORD may have been good to you, but if you turn against Him, He will destroy you.”*

Joshua warned the people to think seriously about their decision. People today must think seriously also. Jesus explained the same idea in Luke 14:25-33. Jesus said if a person follows Him, that person must love Jesus more than anything or anyone else. Jesus must be more important than family members. Jesus encouraged people to count the cost of being a follower. Jesus suffered and died on the cross. He did this so we could have a relationship with Him. He made us free from our sin. Jesus leads us into a life that lasts forever. This is a serious matter. The decision is not a simple one like what to have for dinner. The decision will affect us forever.

Joshua said God is a jealous God. There are several other places in the Bible that say this also. Exodus 20:5 and Deuteronomy 4:24 are two examples. The Contemporary English Version of the Bible translates Joshua 24:19 this way, "The LORD is fearsome; He is the one true God, and I don't think you are able to worship and obey Him in the ways He demands. You would have to be completely faithful, and if you sin or **rebel**, He won't let you get away with it." God will not share first place in the hearts of His people. He hates for His people to worship other gods. He is the only God and He wants a strong relationship with His people.

Jesus also made it clear that Christians can serve only one master.

Read Matthew 6:24. Fill in the blanks.

No one can _____ two masters. The person will
_____ one master and _____ the other, or will
_____ one master and _____ to follow the
other. You cannot serve both _____ and _____.

KEY DOCTRINE: *Character of God*

In today's lesson we learned that God is a jealous God. Here are a few more characteristics of God.

God knows everything. Another word for this is Omniscient. 1 John 3:19-20 and Psalm 147:5 tell us that God knows everything.

Job 42:2 and Genesis 18:14 tell us that God can do anything. Another word for this idea is Omnipotent.

God is everywhere (Omnipresent). Psalm 139:1-7 describes this idea.

God is holy. He is perfect. This is in the Bible many times. Joshua 24:19 and Psalm 99:9 tell about His holiness.

God is love. 1 John 4:7-12 explains that God loves and He is love.

There is so much more to learn about who God is and what He is like. These characteristics that we learned today are enough to teach us that we should serve Him, and only Him.

4. A Public Decision (Joshua 24:21-28)

VERSES 21-23.

²¹ *But the people said to Joshua, “No! We will serve the LORD.”*

²² *Then Joshua said, “You are your own witnesses that you have chosen to serve the LORD.” The people said, “Yes, we are.”*

²³ *Then Joshua said, “Now throw away the gods that you have. Love the LORD, the God of Israel, with all your heart.”*

The people again promised to serve and obey God. So Joshua told them to throw out their gods. Where did they get the gods? When the Israelites settled in the promised land, they did not destroy or drive out all the people. Some of the people became servants like the Gibeonites. It seems that the Israelites let these people influence them. They accepted the gods the other people worshiped. The Israelites even had some gods in their homes. These gods were made from wood or metal. Joshua told the Israelites to throw them out.

After this, Joshua again commanded the Israelites to love God. Joshua knew people need a deep love for God. Deep love for God inspires His people to obey. 1 John 5:3 says, “Loving God means obeying His commands.”

Read James 4:4. What does it mean if a person loves the world?

How does what James said compare to what Joshua said?

Verses 24-28.

²⁴ *Then the people said to Joshua, “We will serve the LORD our God, and we will obey Him.”*

²⁵ On that day at Shechem Joshua made an agreement for the people. He made rules and laws for them to follow.

²⁶ Joshua wrote these things in the Book of the Teachings of God. Then he took a large stone and set it up under the oak tree near the LORD's Holy Tent.

²⁷ Joshua said to all the people, "See this stone! It will remind you of what we did today. It was here the LORD spoke to us today. It will remind you of what happened so you will not turn against your God."

²⁸ Then Joshua sent the people back to their land.

Again, the people promised to follow God. Joshua wanted the people to remember their promise. He set up a stone near the Holy Tent. The stone would remind the people of their promise to serve God. It is good to remember our promises and important events in our lives. In our churches today, new believers are baptized to show their decision to follow Christ. Some churches give new believers a certificate of baptism. Other churches give new believers a new Bible and write the date of the baptism in their Bible. These things help them remember their decision to follow Christ.

Write down what you remember about the day you decided to follow Christ.

Why is it important to share a decision to follow Christ with others?

It is important to have Christian brothers and sisters who have the same goal you have. As you follow Christ together you can encourage each other.

IN MY CONTEXT

There was a Deaf man who loved God. He was faithful. He taught the Bible to young Deaf men and women. He drove the church van to pick up people and bring them to church. He sat at the front of the church every Sunday during the worship service. Everyone enjoyed seeing his big smile. He was faithful to God and to his church. He was also faithful to his family. He worked hard to support them. He loved them very much. He was a wonderful example. He inspired other people to be faithful.

When He passed away, many people attended the funeral. His friends shared stories about his faithfulness to God and his family. After the funeral a young Deaf man signed, “My friend is gone. He was a great example to me. I want to be like him. I will be faithful. I will come to church and show my love for God.” That young man has been faithful since that time.

Think of someone you know who served God faithfully or is still serving faithfully. How has that person’s life of service helped you?

How can you follow that person’s example?

MEMORY VERSE

If you don’t want to serve the LORD, you must choose for yourselves today whom you will serve... As for me and my family, we will serve the Lord.”

—Joshua 24:15



Session 7

VALUE ALL

Jesus values all people

PROVERBS 24:11-12; MARK 10:46-49

FIRST THOUGHTS

This is the **Sanctity of Human Life** session for this quarter. These lessons help us understand what the Bible tells us about the value of each person's life. In some nations, if a baby is born deaf that baby is not allowed to live, or that baby does not have an opportunity to go to school. God loves all people, deaf or hearing, rich or poor, good or bad. If God values all people then so should we. Since God values life, we must value life.

UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT

The Book of Proverbs is a collection of many short wise statements. Many of those statements remind us of how God cares for every person. The verses from the Gospel of Mark tell about a time when Jesus showed His love for one person. The Gospels have many other examples of how Jesus cared for everyone.

EXPLORE THE TEXT (PROVERBS 24:11-12;

MARK 10:46-49)

1. A Call to Protect Life (Proverbs 24:11)

Much of the Book of Proverbs was written by King Solomon. God gave Solomon great wisdom. He gave much truth in only a few words.

VERSE 11.

¹¹ *Save those who are being led to their death; rescue those who are about to be killed.*

Solomon did not explain who was about to be killed. He may have meant people who were guilty of a crime. Or, he may have meant someone who was hurt by another person. The Hebrew language suggests that we must save them if it is possible for us to do it.

The message for us is that we must not neglect helping someone who needs us. Jesus illustrated this with the story we call “The Good Samaritan” (Luke 10:25-37). In that story, two Jewish religious leaders refused to help a man who had been robbed and left beside the road. But a man who was a Samaritan, not a Jew, stopped and gave the man some first aid. Then the Samaritan found someone to take care of the man.

Today, we often see people on the street with a home-made sign telling us they need money for food for their children. We know that some of these people are fakes. But when we feel the Holy Spirit urge us to help, we should do what we can.

BIBLE SKILL: *Comparing Bible Stories*

The Bible has other stories about people who helped a person when someone was trying to kill him or her. Read about how Reuben saved the life of his brother, Joseph in Genesis 37:1-31. Jeremiah’s life was saved because of a priest named Ahikam (Jeremiah 26:1-24). Jonathan, the son of King Saul, helped David to escape from the king (1 Samuel 20:1-42). God called the prophet Ezekiel to warn the people about their sin. God said, “Suppose I say to the wicked: ‘Wicked people, you will surely die,’ but you don’t speak to warn the wicked to stop doing evil.

Then they will die because they were sinners, but I will punish you for their deaths. But if you warn the wicked to stop doing evil and they do not stop, they will die because they were sinners. But you have saved your life" (Ezekiel 33:8-9).

Deaf people who are not Christians are in danger of eternal punishment. It is our duty to do all we can to help them find Jesus as their Savior. Paul wrote, "The Lord's servant must gently teach those who disagree. Then maybe God will let them change their minds so they can accept the truth. And they may wake up and escape from the trap of the devil, who catches them to do what he wants" (2 Timothy 2:25-26).

A Deaf man, Fred, loved Jesus. He wanted everyone to know Jesus, but Fred did not know how to do that. He asked his Deaf friends at church what they signed to a person to tell them how to be saved. Most of the group said they felt the same as Fred. They wanted to, but they did not know how.

If you were in that Bible study group, could you explain to them how to tell a person how to become a follower of Jesus? YES NO.

What would you say to explain how a person becomes a follower of Jesus?

Talk about this with your Bible study group this week.

Do you know of a person you can tell about Jesus?

That is also very exciting. Even if the person does not receive Jesus at that time, you planted a seed that the Holy Spirit can use.

2. A Warning Against Inaction (Proverbs 24:10,12)

VERSE 10.

¹⁰*If you give up when trouble comes, it shows that you are weak.*

The Hebrew word for trouble has the idea of testing our character and our willingness to continue to be faithful to God's commands. Trouble shows our real spiritual strength. Verse 5 in this chapter tells us, "Wise people have great power, and those with knowledge have great strength." We are weak when we have not grown spiritually and when we do not learn God's wisdom from His Word.

The prophet Isaiah wrote, "God gives strength to those who are tired and more power to those who are weak. Even children become tired and need to rest, and young people trip and fall. But the people who trust the LORD will become strong again. They will rise up as an eagle in the sky; they will run and not need rest; they will walk and not become tired" (Isaiah 40:29-31).

Stephen was one of the seven men chosen to become a deacon. He would not give up his faith and the religious leaders threw stones at him until he died (Acts 6:8-7:60). When we have difficult times, we need to be like Stephen and not give up.

Do you remember what Peter did when Jesus was crucified? He denied Jesus. He said he was not one of Jesus' disciples (John 18:16-27). If you were in Peter's place at that time, would you be faithful like Stephen or deny Jesus like Peter did?

VERSE 12.

¹²*If you say, "We don't know anything about this," God, who knows what's in your mind, will notice. He will reward each person for what he has done.*

We must not pretend we do not see someone in need. Maybe God can use us to save him. God knows our hearts and what we do. God will be our judge. It is always easy to make excuses when we do not want to do something. We can tell other people, "I forgot," and they will tell us it is OK, but God knows what we are thinking (Proverbs 16:2; 21:2). "I, the Lord, look into a person's heart and test the mind. So I can decide what each one deserves; I can give each one the right payment for what he does" (Jeremiah 17:10).

God looks into our hearts. He knows when we see someone who needs our help. The Holy Spirit will help us understand that person's need and how we can help. Satan will try to keep us from seeing the need or give us excuses for not helping.

This is Sanctity of Life Sunday. One important thought we have on this Sunday is the value of a baby even before the baby is born. If we know that God values unborn babies but we do nothing to protect these babies, are we guilty of acting like, "We don't know anything about this . . ."

What kind of excuses do people make for not helping other people with physical or spiritual needs? Write the word "yes" beside any

excuse that God will accept.

___ I am too busy.

___ I don't have enough money for my own needs.

___ I'm Deaf and that person is hearing. I can't help.

___ Someone else can do it better than I can.

___ I'm not sure I understand what this person needs.

3. An Example Set (Mark 10:46-49)

Read this same story in Matthew 20:29-34 and Luke 18:35-43. Matthew's story tells us there were two men. Mark remembered one man's name and the name of his father.

VERSES 46-47.

⁴⁶Then they came to the town of Jericho. As Jesus was leaving there with His followers and a great many people, a blind beggar named Bartimaeus son of Timaeus was sitting by the road. The city of Jericho is only about fifteen miles from Jerusalem. Jesus was on His way back to Jerusalem for the Passover. Many other people were on that road.

⁴⁷When he heard that Jesus from Nazareth was walking by, he began to shout, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!"

We do not know how Bartimaeus knew who Jesus was. Maybe he heard what the people said as they walked by him. Somehow he knew that Jesus was from the family line of King David. People sometimes called Jesus the Son of David.

Bartimaeus probably also knew that the Messiah would help blind people to see (Isaiah 35:4-5; Luke 4:16-19). Maybe Bartimaeus did not understand everything about the Messiah, but he understood enough to ask Jesus to heal him. So he yelled above the noise of the crowd so Jesus could hear him. His faith led him to act.

KEY DOCTRINE: *Jesus is the Son of David*

It is important to identify Jesus as the Son of David as well as the Son of God. The title "Son of David" is necessary to show Jesus was the Messiah expected by the Jews.

Matthew began his Gospel in this way: "This is the family history of Jesus Christ. He came from the family of David, and David came from the family of Abraham." (Matthew 1:1). This title is used in Matthew, Mark, and Luke, but not in John's Gospel.

Find these verses in your Bible and write the name of the person who called Jesus the Son of David.

Matthew 9:27 _____

Matthew 15:22 _____

Matthew 20:30-31 _____

Matthew 21:9 _____

Matthew 21:15 _____

Matthew 22:41-42 _____

VERSE 48

⁴⁸ *Many people warned the blind man to be quiet, but he shouted even more, "Son of David, have mercy on me!"*

Can you see this picture? Bartimaeus is only one man against many people. But he did not stop calling to Jesus. The people may have been afraid that a Roman soldier would hear the words *Son of David* and think the Jews were trying to oppose Rome.

VERSE 49

⁴⁹ *Jesus stopped and said, "Tell the man to come here." So they called the blind man, saying, "Cheer up! Get to your feet. Jesus is calling you."*

Look at the difference between Jesus and all the people. They told Bartimaeus to stop. Jesus asked him to come to Him. Verses 50-52 tell us that Jesus healed Bartimaeus and Bartimaeus became a follower of Jesus that day.

In a Deaf Bible study group, a visiting Deaf preacher asked how many Deaf people lived in that community. The Bible study leader said only ten

people lived in the community and all of them were in the group that day. “No other Deaf people live in this area,” she said. Then one member said, “I know of one Deaf boy that goes to the hearing high school, but he doesn’t sign.” Another said, “And we know about Mrs. Jones, but she is very old and not able to come to church.” Then another said, “And we all know that terrible Peggy. She has men visiting her every night.” The visiting Deaf preacher went around the community that afternoon and found over fifteen more Deaf people. The Bible study group did not include them because “they are not the kind of people we are.”

If Jesus valued the life of this one blind man, then we must also learn to value the life of every person.

Jesus is always our best example of how to act.

What are some examples of ways we can show others we value them?

IN MY CONTEXT

In your mind, picture the blind man beside the road and you know he needs help. What will you say to him? Will you tell him to be quiet, or will you gently take his hand and lead him to Jesus?

Think about your experiences this past week. Can you think of people who needed help? Make a list of four people you saw this week who had physical or spiritual needs. If you do not know their names, just write a few words to remind you who they are.

How can you pray for the people you listed?

How can God use you to help them?

What kind of help can we give people? Put an “x” beside the things you may be able to do to help someone this week.

- ___ Pray for them.
- ___ Tell them where they can get help.
- ___ Give them money or something that will help them.
- ___ Tell them about Jesus, or give them a Bible they can understand.
- ___ Invite them to your church.

MEMORY VERSE

If you give up when trouble comes, it shows that you are weak.

—Proverbs 24:10



Session 8

REBELLION'S CYCLE

When God's people **rebel** against Him, He will send His righteous judgment to help them **repent**.

JUDGES 2:11-19

FIRST THOUGHTS

When a child does not obey his parents, the parents try to help him learn by punishing him or by taking away some of his privileges. When God's people do not obey, He also does what is necessary to cause them to **repent** and turn to Him. Parents often do not understand why a child does not obey. They are sad when this happens. They are happy when the child learns to do what is right. God is also sad when His people do not obey Him. He is filled with joy when they **repent** and come back to Him.

UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT

Two weeks ago we completed our study of the Book of Joshua. Joshua met with the leaders and with all the people of Israel. They all promised Joshua and the Lord they would serve God faithfully. They kept that promise during the time Joshua and the older leaders lived. They faithfully served the Lord.

Our study today begins with the second chapter of the Book of Judges. In Judges 1:1–2:10, Joshua and the older men died and the Israelites forgot their promises. They began to worship idols instead of worshiping God. They did not love God as they did in the past. The Israelites turned away from the Lord. They did not stay true to their **commitment**. Judges 2:10 tells the whole story. “After those people had died, their children grew up and did not know the LORD or what He had done for Israel.” Joshua told the leaders to teach their children about the Lord. They failed to teach their children about the Lord’s work. Our study today tells what happened next.

The Book of Judges describes a time in the history of Israel that shows a cycle, with several things happening again and again. We can call it **rebellion’s cycle**. That Cycle is summarized in Judges 2:17-19: “They were not faithful to God but worshiped other gods instead. Their ancestors had obeyed the LORD’s commands, but they quickly turned away and did not obey. When their enemies hurt them, the Israelites cried for help. So the LORD felt sorry for them and sent judges to save them from their enemies. The LORD was with those judges all their lives. But when the judges died, the Israelites again sinned and worshiped other gods.”

EXPLORE THE TEXT (JUDGES 2:11-19)

1. Abandonment (Judges 2:11-13)

VERSES 11-12

¹¹ *So they did what the LORD said was wrong, and they worshiped the Baal idols.*

¹² *They quit following the LORD, the God of their ancestors who had brought them out of Egypt. They began to worship the gods of the people who lived around them, and that made the LORD angry.*

Noah’s son Ham settled in the area later called the promised land. The area was named for Noah’s grandson, Canaan. They were greatly influenced by Egypt. Some of the Canaanite people still lived in the land the Lord gave to the Israelites. The Canaanites kept their idols and continued to worship them. When the Israelites became neighbors and friends with the Canaanites, the Israelites began to worship idols and false gods.

Why did the Israelites turn away from God and start worshiping idols? Because the idols did not require them to live a pure life. Baal was the most important god of the Canaanites. **Ashtoreth** was the female goddess of sexuality. Worship of these and other gods often included sexual sins in their temples. The Israelites took the idols into their homes and worshiped them. In God’s eyes, they became spiritual adulterers and spiritual prostitutes because

they went away from the Lord they promised to love. They worshiped false gods.

VERSE 13

¹³ *The Israelites quit following the LORD and worshiped Baal and Ashtoreth.*

In Matthew 6:24 Jesus taught that we cannot serve two masters. This truth is clear in verse 13. The Israelites turned to the Canaanite god, Baal, and his female partner, Ashtoreth. But you will see at the same time they stopped following the Lord. They may have thought they could just add Baal to their worship of God. But it cannot happen. We are faithful to God, or we follow some other god.

Do you know of a family that was faithful to God in the past, but when they got something like satellite TV with hundreds of channels, they stayed home and watched movies and played video games? That is the same kind of idolatry the Israelites did. Or maybe you know a Deaf young person that grew up in the church and was faithful until he got a car. Then, he spent his time working with his car, or going places that displeased God, instead of being faithful to study God's Word with his Bible study group.

What are some things that get put ahead of God?

What actions should people take when they realize they are not putting God first?

2. Oppression (Judges 2:14-15)

VERSES 14-15.

¹⁴ *The LORD was angry with the people of Israel, so He handed them over to robbers who took their possessions. He let their enemies who lived around them defeat them; they could not protect themselves.*

¹⁵ *When the Israelites went out to fight, they always lost, because the LORD was not with them. The LORD had sworn to them this would happen. So the Israelites suffered very much.*

God used different experiences to discipline His people. The word *discipline* can mean two things. One is “to correct or to control.” It requires self-discipline to follow instructions or do certain things. Many people say they will go on a diet but they fail. Why? They do not have the discipline or self-control to limit their eating habits. A parent can discipline a child by teaching and training the child so the child knows what is right and what is wrong.

A second meaning of discipline is “punishment.” When we do something wrong, we expect to be disciplined for doing wrong. Parents discipline their children when they do not obey. Some parents send the child to his room or do not let him play his favorite games. They may take away a privilege, such as not let the child play with a favorite toy for a short time. They may not let an older child go visit with friends or go to some activity. Teenagers call this being grounded. Others give the child extra work to do. Good parents do this because they love their children and want them to grow up to be good people.

In these verses, God disciplined His people by painful experiences to show what it meant for them to turn from Him. God did these things because He loved them.

Sometimes, God did not do something to His people. Instead, He just removed His hand of protection and let their enemies treat them badly. God let the Israelites try to fight for themselves without His help. He let their enemies defeat them. He let robbers steal from them. They were unable to protect themselves.

The people knew what God wanted them to do. Before Joshua died, God told them what He would do if they turned away from Him and worshiped idols. He told them He would not help them. When their enemies attacked, they would lose battles.

Sometimes we do not obey God. We need to remember that we will receive His punishment at some time. It may not be immediately after we sin. Then, when God punishes us, we need to **repent** and turn back to Him and ask for His forgiveness. We show our faithfulness and loyalty to the Lord when we accept His discipline. We must learn from His **discipline** and then make changes in our lives and our thinking. God wants us to obey. He is pleased when His people turn back to Him. He never stops loving His people.

Joan discovered that she could chat with people on the Internet. She began to stay home instead of meeting with her Deaf Bible study group. She began to go to the Internet sites that talked about dating and sex. She met a man online, and after a few weeks of texting back and forth, she agreed to meet him. When she met him, she learned he was very mean. He tried to force her into his car but she escaped. Her arm was badly broken in the fight. She paid the price of pain and embarrassment for her sinful actions.

Why does God sometimes let us go our own way and allow us to face the results of our sin?

How does God use the results of sin to bring us back to Himself?

3. Repentance (Judges 2:16-19)

VERSE 16.

¹⁶ Then the LORD chose leaders called judges, who saved the Israelites from the robbers.

The work of the judges was more than what we usually think of a judge doing. They did, in fact, work as a judge, deciding cases and solving problems. But they were also military leaders. The Book of Judges tells much more about battles with enemies than about the judge helping people to solve a problem. They were not always national leaders. They often served only one or two tribes of Israelites.

KEY DOCTRINE: *God Calls Leaders to Help His People*

We can see the Book of Judges as an example of how God calls leaders when His people need help. The Book of Judges uses the word deliver often. It means “the judge saved the people from the attacks of their enemies.” Moses chose judges after the Israelites came out of Egypt. They were told to be fair when they judged the people. In the Book of Judges, the work of the judges was to lead the people away from idols and back to God. God chose the judges, so they did their work with God’s authority. Some of the judges were weak, but God used them to show His power.

VERSES 17-19.

¹⁷ But the Israelites did not listen to their judges. They were not faithful to God but worshiped other gods instead. Their ancestors had obeyed the LORD's commands, but they quickly turned away and did not obey.

¹⁸ When their enemies hurt them, the Israelites cried for help. So the LORD felt sorry for them and sent judges to save them from their enemies. The LORD was with those judges all their lives.

¹⁹ But when the judges died, the Israelites again sinned and worshiped other gods. They became worse than their ancestors. The Israelites were very stubborn and refused to change their evil ways.

These verses describe the **cycle of rebellion** during the time of the judges.

1. The Israelites did evil things against God.
2. God let their enemies punish them.
3. God called a judge, a leader, and the Holy Spirit gave the leader spiritual power.
4. The leader and the people defeated the enemy and they had peace.
5. For a while, Israel did right and God blessed them.
6. When the leader died, the people rebelled again.

BIBLE SKILL: *Comparing Bible Verses*

The cycle of rebellion continued for about three hundred fifty years. Six times the cycle started with the words, "The Israelites did what the LORD said was wrong." Find these verses in your Bible and read a few verses before and after each one. The story is almost the same each time. See if you can find the name of the judge in the verses that come after these:

Judges 3:7 _____

Judges 3:12 _____

Judges 4:1 _____

Judges 6:1 _____

Judges 10:6 _____

Judges 13:1 _____

God always had great love for His people and wanted to save them. He called faithful leaders (judges), and they were successful because they obeyed God. God continued to call His people to **repent** because of His love, not because they were good.

It is not enough to understand that this pattern of life was wrong for the Israelites. Today many of us follow a similar pattern in our own lives. Our pattern might look like this: We follow Jesus. Then we are tempted to sin. We do sin and stray away from following Jesus. This goes on for some time. Our lives become messed up. We ask God for help to get out of the mess and God helps. But then we start the cycle again.

What makes it so easy to fall into the same cycle as the Israelites?

What can a person do to stay out of the cycle?

IN MY CONTEXT

This lesson is very clear: God will punish His people if they turn away from Him. Why? Because only God is worthy of our worship. When believers turn away from God, they can expect His **discipline**. He may send some physical or other problem, or He may do nothing to prevent them from the bad things that come because of what they do. Because of His great love, God will give relief when His people **repent**.

In the Book of Judges, the people usually rebelled by worshiping idols. Today, an idol can be anything we see as more important to us than God.

List some of the things that people today seem to worship more than God.

In our study today, God punished the people of Israel as a group. He also punished each individual. Can you think of ways God might punish a group, like your Bible study group, if someone leads the group away from studying God's truth?

But God also punishes individuals. What are some ways you have seen God discipline a person?

How can your Bible study group help each other stay faithful to God? Discuss this with your group.

MEMORY VERSE

When their enemies hurt them, the Israelites cried for help. So the LORD felt sorry for them and sent judges to save them from their enemies. The LORD was with those judges all their lives.

—Judges 2:18



Session 9

WILLING SERVANTS

God uses faithful and willing servants to bring His people back to Him.

JUDGES 4:4-10,12-16

FIRST THOUGHTS

In this story, Deborah (the judge) was strong but Barak (the military leader) was weak. Barak finally agreed to obey God, and God gave his army the victory. God will use anyone who tries to obey Him.

UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT

Read Judges 2:20–4:3 to get the story between last week’s study and this lesson. The first judge was Othniel (Judges 3:7-11). Othniel married a daughter of Caleb after Othniel had a great military victory (Joshua 15:16-17). He was faithful and obeyed God. God used him to save the Israelites from their enemies, and they had peace for 40 years. After Othniel died, the Israelites turned from God again.

The second judge was Ehud (Judges 3:12–4:1). He is an interesting man. For some reason the writer of the Book of Judges thought it was important to tell us Ehud was a left handed man. Read how he tricked the enemy king in Judges 3:12-30. The people followed Ehud and returned to the Lord. They

had peace for 80 years. When Ehud died the Israelites turned away from God again. God let another king of Canaan, Jabin, punish Israel for 20 years. They may have become slaves to Jabin. Then the people cried out again for God to save them.

These lessons in the Book of Judges refer to many places in the promised land. Find a map of that area, and try to locate each place. It will help you see how the events developed in different parts of what would later become the nation of Israel.

EXPLORE THE TEXT (JUDGES 4:4-10,12-16)

1. God Commands (Judges 4:4-7)

VERSES 4-5.

⁴*A prophetess named Deborah, the wife of Lappidoth, was judge of Israel at that time.*

⁵*Deborah would sit under the Palm Tree of Deborah, which was between the cities of Ramah and Bethel, in the mountains of Ephraim. And the people of Israel would come to her to settle their arguments.*

The next judge was Deborah. She was also a prophetess. And she was commander of the Israelite army! She was the only judge who was a woman. God gave Deborah wisdom to help people solve their problems. He also spoke through her to the leaders of the Israelite army.

VERSES 6-7.

⁶*Deborah sent a message to Barak son of Abinoam. Barak lived in the city of Kedesh, which is in the area of Naphtali. Deborah said to Barak, “The LORD, the God of Israel, commands you: ‘Go and gather ten thousand men of Naphtali and Zebulun and lead them to Mount Tabor.’”*

⁷*“I will make Sisera, the commander of Jabin’s army, and his chariots, and his army meet you at the Kishon River. I will hand Sisera over to you.”*

These verses tell us everything we know about Barak. He lived in a city near the Sea of Galilee, about 100 miles north of where Deborah lived. It seems that Barak was not a commander in the army, but God called him to do a special job. God promised Barak would have victory. God said to get 10,000 men from two of the tribes of Israel and go to Mount Tabor. God did not promise Barak that his army would be successful. God only said, “I will give their commander, Sisera, to you.”

Mount Tabor was about 11 miles west of the Sea of Galilee. It is named

several times in the Bible. It is one of the two mountains that Bible teachers believe may have been where Jesus was transfigured. Below the mountain was an important crossroads.

Deborah's message to Barak was simple: "Go, and God will give Israel the victory." Barak needed to do what Abraham did. You may be familiar with the story of Abraham in Genesis 12. The long story can be told in just a few words. "God said go. Abraham went." That is a true example of faith.

A missionary serving Deaf people visited with the interpreter at her church. After the worship service, they went to a restaurant and ate with some of the Deaf people from the Bible study group. When lunch was over, the interpreter said, "We need to go to another town, about 30 miles away, and visit a Deaf lady that was in our Bible study group in the past." The missionary asked, "Have you made an appointment with her?" The interpreter said she had not contacted the lady, but felt they needed to visit her. The missionary wanted to tell her, "That is not how you should do it." But he trusted her faith, and when they got to that town, the Deaf lady was home. She was delighted to see them, and she wanted them to talk with the pastor of the church near her home. She wanted the church to start a Deaf ministry. All of this did happen, and later the pastor of that church became a pastor to the Deaf and later a missionary with the Deaf in another state. No, that might not be the "normal" way to do it. But it was God's way!

Have you ever felt God telling you to do something? YES NO.

What made you want to do it?

What made you concerned?

Write a few words about that experience and plan to share it with your Bible study group.

2. A Leader Is Weak (4:8-10)

VERSE 8.

⁸*Then Barak said to Deborah, "I will go if you will go with me, but if you won't go with me, I won't go."*

Barak said he would go if Deborah went with him. Maybe he felt God would do more if Deborah was there. Maybe he knew his faith was small and Deborah's faith was great. Maybe he had some fear.

VERSE 9.

⁹*"Of course I will go with you," Deborah answered, "but you will not get credit for the victory. The LORD will let a woman defeat Sisera." So Deborah went with Barak to Kedesh.*

Barak may not have been a coward, but he needed to be sure God was with him, and he knew God was with Deborah. His lack of faith in God cost him any praise for the victory.

VERSE 10.

¹⁰*At Kedesh, Barak called the people of Zebulun and Naphtali together. From them, he gathered ten thousand men to follow him, and Deborah went with him also.*

You can find the two tribes, Zebulun and Naphtali, on a map of the promised land. They are in the northern part of Israel, near the Sea of Galilee. Perhaps that is why God said to get men from those tribes. They lived in the area where Sisera was strongest. Ten thousand men was not a large army. And Barak probably had poor weapons compared to Sisera's army. But Barak had God on his side.

BIBLE SKILL: Read Other Bible Stories

Barak seemed to have weak faith. We all know more stories of weak faith than we know stories of great faith. Weak faith is the same as doubt. Doubt is not always sin, especially if we seek answers to our doubts and go ahead and act on what little faith we have. God is ready to answer our honest search for His truth. Read these stories about people who had faith, but sometimes needed some encouragement.

Abram had trouble accepting how God could make a great nation from only one man (Genesis 15:6-8). In our next study, Gideon asked God to give him some proof that God would lead him to victory (Judges 6:14-17).

John the Baptist asked Jesus if He was truly the Messiah (Matthew 11:2-3). Thomas had to see and touch Jesus to be sure (John 20:24-28). Moses had doubts about feeding the Israelites after they escaped from Egypt (Numbers 11:21-22). The only way to overcome doubt is to accept God's Word as truth.

How can today's Bible story help increase our faith in God?

Here are some suggestions to build your faith. The first suggestion is obvious—study your Bible. Next, don't wait until you have strong faith. Start using the faith you have now. Often, problems and difficult times challenge our faith. Accept the challenge (1 Peter 1:3-9). Talk with people that you know who are people of strong faith. Their experience will help you grow. Your faith will not grow if you have sin in your life. **Confess** your sin and obey what God leads you to do. And, don't forget to pray. Talking with the Lord will help you know Him better and trust Him more.

3. Victory Is Promised (Judges 4:12-14)

VERSES 12-13.

¹²When Sisera was told that Barak son of Abinoam had gone to Mount Tabor,

¹³Sisera gathered his nine hundred iron chariots and all the men with him, from Harosheth Haggoyim to the Kishon River.

The Kishon River is one of the largest in Palestine. It was near the base of Mount Tabor.

Sisera was surely experienced enough to know he did not need all of his chariots and soldiers to fight the little army of the Israelites. So, why did he take all of his army to the battle? See verse 7.

VERSE 14.

¹⁴Then Deborah said to Barak, "Get up! Today is the day the LORD will hand over Sisera. The LORD has already cleared the way for you." So Barak led ten thousand men down Mount Tabor.

Deborah's faith led her to say, "The LORD has already cleared the way."
These verses show the strong faith of Deborah. She announced God's victory before the battle started!

KEY DOCTRINE: *God Can Be Trusted*

Find these verses that tell us of God's promises. Draw a line from the Bible verse to the words that tell what God has promised.

1 Corinthians 10:13	God works in all things for good.
2 Corinthians 12:9	Eternal life.
John 10:27-28	Everyone who believes in Jesus will be saved.
John 3:16	His grace is enough for us.
Romans 8:28	Victory over temptation.

Have you had an experience when you trusted God and God gave you a spiritual victory? YES NO.

Write a few words about this to share with your Bible study group.

4. Victory Is Won (Judges 4:15-16)

VERSE 15.

¹⁵ *As Barak approached, the LORD confused Sisera and his army and chariots. The LORD defeated them with the sword, but Sisera left his chariot and ran away on foot.*

Do you think Sisera was afraid of Barak's army? No, of course not. His pride told him this would be just another easy victory. So, what happened? This

great army commander became confused. His soldiers became confused. The horses pulling the chariots became confused. It was as if the great army knew nothing about how to fight. Barak's army easily defeated them.

VERSE 16.

¹⁶ Barak and his men chased Sisera's chariots and army to Harosheth Haggoyim. With their swords they killed all of Sisera's men; not one of them was left alive.

You need to read the rest of this chapter to see what Deborah meant when she said God would give the victory to a woman. The woman was not Deborah. After this, the Israelites had peace for 40 years (Judges 5:31).

Also read chapter 5 for the beautiful song of Deborah. Our memory verse is taken from this song.

Over what things does God give spiritual victories?

Think about this for a few minutes and then write a few words to help you remember how God has given you these victories.

A favorite hymn of many Christians is "Victory in Jesus." The words of the chorus explain this victory:

"Oh, victory in Jesus, my Savior forever.

He sought me and he bought me with His redeeming blood.

He loved me 'ere I knew Him and all my love is due Him.

He plunged me to victory beneath the cleansing blood."

Let that be your song of victory this week as you walk in faith with Him.

IN MY CONTEXT

It is not always easy to see our weaknesses. David said, “God, examine me and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any bad thing in me. Lead me on the road to everlasting life” (Psalm 139:23-24).

Study this “spiritual check-list” and ask the Lord to help you grow in faith and in your service to Him. Place a check-mark beside the things that you feel are OK in your life, or are getting stronger. Place an “X” beside the things that need improvement.

___ I am kind to my family and I pray for them.

___ I serve faithfully in my church.

___ I do not complain.

___ I do not fill my mind with movies, television programs, magazines, or books that do not honor God.

___ I do not get angry easily.

___ I do not gossip.

___ I do not worry about things. I try to trust God in everything.

___ I give God the 10% tithe that He commands.

___ I pray for my church, pastor, leaders, and missionaries.

___ I put God first in everything—pleasure, job, my own plans, habits, friendships, family.

___ I spend more time with God’s Word than I do with the TV or the Internet.

___ I trust God with my finances.

___ I try to share the Good News of Christ with others.

MEMORY VERSE

“Listen, kings. Pay attention, rulers! I myself will sing to the LORD. I will make music to the LORD, the God of Israel.”

—Judges 5:3



Session 10

TIMID WARRIOR

God shapes the lives of believers, and they grow spiritually by serving God.

JUDGES 6:11-16,25-32

FIRST THOUGHTS

Why are we slow to obey God? Maybe we are **timid** (shy) and do not have confidence in our ability to do something. But we should trust in God's ability! Or, maybe we want to be humble and not let others see what we do. But true humility leads to obedience. Or, maybe we do not have enough faith. But God will increase our faith if we do what He calls us to do. We truly have no excuse that God will accept.

God often uses weak and imperfect people to bring about His purposes. Believers grow in faith by obeying God. God is able to defend Himself and His followers.

UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT

Read Judges 6:1-10 to understand the story between last week's Bible verses and this week's. Because the Israelites did not drive out everyone in the promised land like God told them to do, they often were at war with the

nations around them. One of their biggest enemies was the people called the Midianites. They were descendants of Abraham's son by his second wife, Keturah. There were too many Midianites to count. They did not own any land but moved through the other nations with their families and animals looking for food. The Midianites were strong and Israel was weak. The Midianites went through Israel and destroyed their crops and everything they owned. When the Midianites burned their fields, the Israelites could not feed their animals or themselves. They were starving. Why did God let this happen? God's people turned from Him to idols again. So, again the Israelites cried out to God to help them. This time God chose Gideon to be the judge and leader to bring His people back to serving Him.

EXPLORE THE TEXT (JUDGES 6:11-16,25-32)

1. Unsure and Untested (Judges 6:11-16)

VERSE 11.

¹¹ *The angel of the LORD came and sat down under the oak tree at Ophrah that belonged to Joash, one of the Abiezrite people. Gideon, Joash's son, was separating some wheat from the chaff in a winepress to keep the wheat from the Midianites.*

God called Gideon to be His great warrior judge, but Gideon was not sure about that call. He asked honest questions about God's power and ability to use him to defeat the Midianites. God promised to be with Gideon and said Gideon would have victory.

Because the Midianites destroyed all the wheat and other grains, Gideon took his wheat to a **wine press** to prepare it for use. The wine press was a big hole in the ground, very deep. It was an easy place to hide from the Midianites.

God sent an angel to talk with Gideon. The words *angel of the Lord* are used several times in the Bible.

KEY DOCTRINE: *The Angel of the Lord*

In many verses in the Old Testament, the words the angel of the Lord, the Lord, and God mean the same thing. In some other verses a difference is made between the Lord and the angel. The angel of the Lord came to Hagar after she left Abraham's home (Genesis 16:7-14).

Another time, the angel of the Lord killed 185,000 Assyrian soldiers in their camp and saved the city of Jerusalem from destruction (2 Kings 19:35). The angel of the Lord called Moses (Exodus 3:1-4) and stopped Abraham from sacrificing Isaac (Genesis 22:11-18). In today's verses, the angel of the Lord spoke to Gideon. Many Bible teachers believe the angel of the Lord is God the Son who came as the Messiah. The New Testament does not tell of the angel of the Lord after the Messiah came.

VERSE 12.

¹² *The angel of the LORD appeared to Gideon and said, "The LORD is with you, mighty warrior!"*

Gideon thought of himself as a farmer. The angel called him a mighty warrior. Gideon did not seem to understand that he was mighty only because the Lord was with him.

VERSE 13.

¹³ *Then Gideon said, "Sir, if the LORD is with us, why are we having so much trouble? Where are the miracles our ancestors told us He did when the LORD brought them out of Egypt? But now He has left us and has handed us over to the Midianites."*

Gideon was not sure what the angel was talking about. If God was with them, then why were they so hungry and suffering from the bad things the Midianites did to them. Gideon wanted to know why God did not do some miracles like He did when the Israelites were slaves in Egypt.

VERSE 14.

¹⁴ *The LORD turned to Gideon and said, "Go with your strength and save Israel from the Midianites. I am the one who is sending you."*

Gideon knew God was speaking to him. The Lord told Gideon he was strong enough to fight. Gideon needed to stop thinking about his own weaknesses.

The Lord was fighting for him. He must **focus** on the Lord. We can follow the Lord's will in our lives by focusing on the Lord's power and **presence**. We must not focus on our weakness.

VERSE 15.

¹⁵ *But Gideon answered, "LORD, how can I save Israel? My family group is the weakest in Manasseh, and I am the least important member of my family."*

Gideon still did not agree with the Lord. He began to give excuses why he could not lead the battle. He said the reason he could not fight was because his family was not an important family of his tribe, the tribe of Manasseh. He said he was from the weakest family in the tribe. He said he was the weakest man in a weak family.

VERSE 16.

¹⁶ *The LORD answered him, "I will be with you. It will seem as if the Midianites you are fighting are only one man."*

The Lord amazed Gideon with His answer. Remember the Midianites were a large nation. The Lord told Gideon all of those Midianites would seem like they were only one man when he went out to fight them.

BIBLE SKILL: *Compare Other Bible Stories*

Paul wrote, "Brothers and sisters, look at what you were when God called you. Not many of you were wise in the way the world judges wisdom. Not many of you had great influence. Not many of you came from important families. But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise, and He chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong. He chose what the world thinks is unimportant and what the world looks down on and thinks is nothing in order to destroy what the world thinks is important. God did this so that no one can brag in His Presence (1 Corinthians 1:26-29).

Use your Bible to find these verses and write the name of the person God called:

Genesis 12:1 _____

Genesis 28:13 _____

Genesis 39:2 _____

Exodus 3:1 _____

Esther 4:13-15 _____

Matthew 9:9 _____

Acts 9:1-5 _____

God does not wait for us to be completely able to do something. God first called Gideon to do something simple. Later, he became a great leader. When we go to the Southern Baptist Conference of the Deaf, we often see young Deaf people just beginning to find out that God can use them. A few years later, they are college students, and then they are adults. They continue to serve and lead. They did not begin as leaders. They began as servants.

Have you asked the Lord, "How can I do that? I am Deaf. I am nobody." God answers, "You can't, but I can."

2. A First Step (Judges 6:25-27)

VERSE 25.

²⁵ *That same night the LORD said to Gideon, "Take the bull that belongs to your father and a second bull seven years old. Pull down your father's altar to Baal, and cut down the Asherah idol beside it."*

Gideon's father worshiped the god Baal and the goddess Asherah. The first thing Gideon had to do was to get rid of the sinful things around him.

VERSE 26.

²⁶ *"Then build an altar to the LORD your God with its stones in the right order on*

this high ground. Kill and burn a second bull on this altar, using the wood from the Asherah idol.”

The next thing Gideon had to do was replace the sinful things with **godly** things.

VERSE 27.

²⁷ So Gideon got ten of his servants and did what the LORD had told him to do. But Gideon was afraid that his family and the men of the city might see him, so he did it at night, not in the daytime.

Gideon obeyed, but he did not have enough faith to do this in the day time. He took his servants and did what God wanted him to do, but he did it in secret, at night.

The first step for a Deaf person to be used by God is to be available. Allen was a wonderful Christian man. He was a leader in the Deaf ministry of his church. He was active in the state association of the Deaf. A church in another town asked him to come and lead a Bible study for them for a few weeks. He did that. Then they asked him to preach for them each week. He said, “I am not a preacher.” But he was willing to try. He continued to be the pastor of that small Deaf group for many years. He began his ministry with one small step.

Are you willing to take your first step toward serving God? If your Bible study group asks you to do something small, you need to answer quickly, “Yes!”

How does a small first step lead to bigger steps of service?

3. A Father’s Defense (Judges 6:28-32)

VERSES 28-32.

²⁸ When the men of the city got up the next morning, they saw that the altar for Baal had been destroyed and that the Asherah idol beside it had been cut down! They also saw the altar Gideon had built and the second bull that had been sacrificed on it.

²⁹ The men of the city asked each other, “Who did this?” After they asked many questions, someone told them, “Gideon son of Joash did this.”

³⁰ So they said to Joash, “Bring your son out. He has pulled down the altar of Baal and

cut down the Asherah idol beside it. He must die!”

³¹ But Joash said to the angry crowd around him, “Are you going to take Baal’s side? Are you going to defend him? Anyone who takes Baal’s side will be killed by morning! If Baal is a god, let him fight for himself. It’s his altar that has been pulled down.”

³² So on that day Gideon got the name Jerub-Baal, which means, “Let Baal fight against him,” because Gideon pulled down Baal’s altar.

The men of the town saw what Gideon did. They told his father to bring Gideon to them. They wanted to kill him because he destroyed the altar of Baal. Gideon’s father, Joash, must have known of Gideon’s faith in God. Perhaps he remembered what he had learned as a child about the true God. Joash showed some courage when he told the men to let Baal defend himself.

Gideon’s father had started to worship idols, but when Gideon stood up for God, his father knew the Lord was leading and he supported what his son was doing. Read the rest of this chapter and also chapters 7 and 8 for the rest of this interesting story of how God used Gideon to lead the people. They wanted to make him king, but he refused.

Are you a good follower when someone else is leading? YES NO.

A good leader is also a good follower when someone else leads.

In what ways can you lead others to action?

How can you make sure God leads you before you lead others.

IN MY CONTEXT

The theme of this Bible study is God's call. God calls all His people to do something for Him and His church. It may be something really big, or it may be something simple. Often we think of God's call as something big, like becoming a pastor or missionary. It may be something simple, like helping someone with a problem.

Here are some ideas to help you know if God is calling you:

Do you study your Bible faithfully? YES NO.

God often speaks to us while we read His Word (Psalm 1:1-3; Luke 24:32).

Do you have a burden to see lost Deaf people follow Jesus? YES NO.

Jesus had a great burden for the people in Jerusalem (Luke 13:33-34).

Do you pray and ask God to use you? YES NO.

Ask God to use you for His glory. If you need help, God will help you (James 1:5).

Do you worship with other believers regularly? YES NO.

We often feel God speak to us while we are in a worship service (Acts 13:2).

Do you want to surrender all you have to God? YES NO. (Luke 14:26-27, 33).

MEMORY VERSE

The LORD answered him, "I will be with you. It will seem as if the Midianites you are fighting are only one man."

—Judges 6:16



SAMSON: POWERFUL, BUT WEAK

God keeps His promises to us. He also remembers His warnings to us.

JUDGES 16:4-6,13-20

FIRST THOUGHTS

The story of Samson is the same as the story of the lives of many people. Often, someone makes a strong **commitment** to God and is faithful for a period of time, maybe a few months or many years. And then that person falls into sin because of spiritual weakness. They did not mean to, but it happened any way. It may be related to money, alcohol, or sex. It may be because of pride. Whatever it is, it often ruins that person's witness for Christ and discourages many who had confidence in him.

UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT

Read chapters 10-12 to understand the things that happened between the time of Gideon and Samson. You will read about several other judges. Most of them have a story that goes like this—they became judge, they served for a

number of years, they died, and then they were buried. After several judges, Samson became the judge. His story is in Judges 13-16.

Our study for today is in chapter 16. As you read about Samson, look for the right things that he did and the wrong things he did. Sometimes he was faithful to God. Other times he was not faithful. Is that a picture of your life? You want to do the right things, but you often do the wrong things? Paul said he had the same problem. "I have learned this rule: When I want to do good, evil is there with me" (Romans 7:21). Read Romans 7:14-25 for more of what Paul said about this.

Chapter 13 tells of the birth of Samson and the promise his mother made. "The woman gave birth to a boy and named him Samson. He grew, and the Lord blessed him" (Judges 13:24).

EXPLORE THE TEXT (JUDGES 16:4-6,13-20)

Read Judges 14:1–16:3. These verses tell about some of Samson's actions. Several times these verses tell us, "The Spirit of the LORD entered Samson and gave him great power" (Judges 14:19; 15:14). But Samson's actions show he was playing around with his God-given gift. Samson was physically strong but spiritually weak.

When he was physically strong, he killed a lion with his bare hands. He killed 30 Philistines by himself. He broke the ropes he was tied in. He killed 1,000 Philistines using the jawbone of a donkey. He escaped from enemy traps. He tore down the gates of the city. Much of the time he did not use his talent to honor God. He did it to show off his strength.

When he was spiritually weak, he disobeyed the Lord. He had a weakness for evil women. He disobeyed the Lord and his parents, too. He tricked people. He allowed himself to become very angry. At times he was cruel. He had a sexual relationship with a **prostitute**. The worst thing he did was to break every part of his **Nazirite Vow**.

1. Please Tell Me (Judges 16:4-6)

VERSES 4-5.

⁴*After this, Samson fell in love with a woman named Delilah, who lived in the Valley of Sorek.*

⁵*The Philistine rulers went to Delilah and said, "Find out what makes Samson so strong. Trick him into telling you how we can overpower him and capture him and tie him up. If you do this, each one of us will give you twenty-eight pounds of silver."*

At this time, the Philistines controlled Israel. The Philistines were long-time enemies of Israel, but often the Israelites turned from God to worship Philistine idols.

Delilah made a business deal with the Philistine leaders to find Samson's source of strength. Today, 28 pounds of silver is worth \$5,000 to \$6,000.

BIBLE SKILL: *Bible Background*

The Philistines are named in most of the books of the Old Testament. Abraham's family lived in the land of the Philistines (Genesis 21:34).

The Philistines envied Isaac's large number of sheep and cattle so they stopped up Isaac's wells to keep his animals from having enough water (Genesis 26:12-18).

When Samuel was leading the Israelites, the Philistines stole the Ark of God from Israel (1 Samuel 4:10-11).

King Saul fought with the Philistines (1 Samuel 14:1-22).

Later, David killed the Philistine giant, Goliath (1 Samuel 17:1-51), and fought with the Philistines after he became king (2 Samuel 5:17-25).

Other battles with the Philistines are reported in 1 and 2 Kings, 1 and 2 Chronicles, and in the writings of some of the prophets.

Look up Philistines in a Bible dictionary to find out more about these people.

What was Samson's secret? Read Judges 13:1-5. Samson's mother taught him to follow the promise called the **Nazirite Vow**.

The word *Nazirite* means "holy or belonging to the Lord" (Numbers 6:1-21). Samson was a Nazirite. His mother did not drink wine during her pregnancy (Judges 13:2-13). John the Baptist was possibly a Nazirite also, because of his way of life and dress.

You can see the whole picture of a Nazirite in the Numbers 6 passage. Here are some of the parts of this promise to God.

1. Nazirites did not eat or drink any part of the grape.
2. They did not cut their hair.

3. They did not go near a dead body.
4. They stayed fully consecrated to the Lord.

You will notice from the Numbers passage that for most people, the Nazirite vow was only for a short period of time. Samson's whole life was under this vow.

VERSE 6.

⁶*So Delilah said to Samson, "Tell me why you are so strong. How can someone tie you up and capture you?"*

Verses 6-12 report how Samson lied to Delilah twice about what gave him his strength. Samson gave her false information and then escaped from the Philistines when they attacked him.

It is easy to look at the story of Samson and see that he was foolish in his relationship with Delilah. We may think, *How could Samson be so blind?* However, many people reading this lesson make the same kind of mistakes. Here is an example that is easy to see. Drugs promise pleasure. People who use drugs go back to a lie and back to pain every time they use them, just like Samson did with Delilah. Alcohol abuse is much the same way.

How important is it for a person to know his or her weaknesses when it comes to temptation?

2. If You Love Me (Judges 16:13-15)

VERSES 13-15.

¹³*Then Delilah said to Samson, "Again you have made a fool of me. You lied to me. Tell me how someone can tie you up." He said, "Using the loom, weave the seven braids of my hair into the cloth, and tighten it with a pin. Then I will be as weak as any other man." While Samson slept, Delilah wove the seven braids of his hair into the cloth.*

¹⁴*Then she fastened it with a pin. Again she said to him, "Samson, the Philistines are here!" Samson woke up and pulled out the pin and the loom with the cloth.*

¹⁵*Then Delilah said to him, "How can you say, 'I love you,' when you don't even trust me? This is the third time you have made a fool of me. You haven't told me the secret of your great strength."*

This was the third time Samson gave false information to her. Delilah used these words that have been used many times to hurt someone: “If you love me...”

This is often the way temptation develops. It is offered, refused, offered, refused, until at last we give in to it. David wrote, “Happy are those who don’t listen to the wicked, who don’t go where sinners go, who don’t do what evil people do” (Psalm 1:1). The best way to avoid temptation is to stay away from places where the temptation is always present.

How does Satan continue to present the same temptations again and again?

He never gives up. We must always be alert to recognize temptation.

How can we resist Satan when he continues to tempt us?

3. The Philistines Are Here (Judges 16:16-20)

VERSE 16.

¹⁶*She kept bothering Samson about his secret day after day until he felt he was going to die!*

Samson was torn between two strong emotions. One was his lust for Delilah. The other was his fear that he would lose his power if he told her the truth. This is such a common experience for a person caught up in sin. He wants to stop the sin, but he cannot find the spiritual strength to do it.

VERSE 17.

¹⁷*So he told her everything. He said, “I have never had my hair cut, because I have been set apart to God as a **Nazirite** since I was born. If someone shaved my head, I would lose my strength and be as weak as any other man.”*

Samson probably broke all of his Nazarite promises. The only one he kept was to let his hair grow.

VERSES 18-19.

¹⁸ *When Delilah saw that he had told her everything sincerely, she sent a message to the Philistine rulers. She said, "Come back one more time, because he has told me everything." So the Philistine rulers came back to Delilah and brought the silver with them.*

¹⁹ *Delilah got Samson to sleep, lying in her lap. Then she called in a man to shave off the seven braids of Samson's hair. In this way she began to make him weak, and his strength left him.*

Samson finally gave up and told Delilah the secret of his strength—his uncut hair. Delilah called a man to come shave Samson's hair. Samson was probably in a very deep sleep. Samson did not feel the man shaving his head. After he shaved Samson's head, he tied Samson up.

VERSE 20.

²⁰ *Then she said, "Samson, the Philistines are here!" He woke up and thought, "I'll leave as I did before and shake myself free." But he did not know that the LORD had left him.*

He awoke as the Philistine leaders arrived. He thought he would escape as in the past, but he did not realize that the Spirit of God had left him.

The story of Samson is very sad because he lost his strength. It is even sadder because the Lord left him and he did not know it. He was not spiritually alive enough to feel the Lord leaving him. He thought he could break the ropes. He did not know he had become weak.

KEY DOCTRINE: *The Holy Spirit*

It is very important to understand that the Spirit of the Lord in the Old Testament and the Holy Spirit in the New Testament is the same Spirit. The difference is in how the Spirit worked. The Holy Spirit was present in the Old Testament, but He worked in a different way from His work in the New Testament. In Old Testament times, the Spirit of the Lord came to one person for a special purpose. If that person failed the Lord and did not repent, the Spirit left him. If the person repented and was sorry, the Spirit returned to him.

Many verses tell us about the Spirit of the Lord leaving someone. (Read 1 Samuel 16:14; and Psalm 51:10-13.) In the New Testament, the Holy Spirit came to believers the minute they were saved. We know from the New Testament, the Holy Spirit never leaves us. No power can take the Holy Spirit away from us. We are always secure in our relations with the Lord. He does not leave us.

We must be sensitive to the leading of the Holy Spirit. If we are insensitive, the Lord may choose not to work through us.

Read the rest of chapter 16 to understand what happened to Samson because of his sin. When the Philistines captured Samson, they made him blind. The Philistines mocked him. Some time later, they brought him to a large group of people to show him off. They were in a large building with 3,000 people on the roof. All the Philistine leaders were there. Samson cried out to the Lord to come back to him. He cried out for mercy and strength. Samson stood between two posts supporting the whole building. He prayed the Lord would let him kill the Philistines. He killed more Philistines than in his whole life. He died with them.

Samson finally understood it was the Lord who gave him strength. At last Samson depended on the Lord to do His purpose through him.

Why do you think the Lord always seems to work through people who are not perfect?

What lessons are in that for us?

Write one way that you know God wants to use you today.

We succeed in doing His work when we have faith in Him.

IN MY CONTEXT

Find these verses in your Bible and draw a line to the words that show what each verse says about temptation.

1 Corinthians 10:12	Pray to avoid temptation.
Genesis 3:1-7	God doesn't tempt us.
Genesis 39:6-15	Run from temptation.
Hebrews 2:18	How temptation began.
James 1:13-15	Jesus' response to temptation.
Matthew 26:41	Jesus understands.
Matthew 4:1-11	Be careful.

God has promised a way out of temptation. Underline the promises God gives in this verse. "The only temptation that has come to you is that which everyone has. But you can trust God, who will not permit you to be tempted more than you can stand. But when you are tempted, He will also give you a way to escape so that you will be able to stand it" (1 Corinthians 10:13).

What about you? What are some ways God helps you escape temptation? Do you talk with God about the temptations you face and ask Him to help you resist them? YES NO.

Read Philippians 4:8 and fill in the blanks. "Think about the things that are _____ and worthy of _____. Think about the things that are _____ and honorable and right and _____ and beautiful and _____."

Write a few words about some godly things that you enjoy thinking about. _____

Write a few words about situations that make it difficult for you to keep your thoughts clean? _____

MEMORY VERSE

At that time Israel did not have a king, so everyone did what seemed right.

—Judges 17:6



Session 12

FAITH THROUGH TRIALS

God can use life's tragedies to bring about His purposes.

RUTH 1:6-18

FIRST THOUGHTS

The lesson today is about faith. Naomi showed her faith in God to provide for her family. Ruth showed her faith in Naomi.

UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT

In the lessons of the past few weeks, we learned about the sins of the Israelites during the time of the judges. We learned how they turned their backs on the Lord, and He let them suffer defeat in battles. He also let their crops fail and many people starved.

The Book of Ruth is a story about a family during the time of the judges. Israel had a time when the people did not have enough food. This may be one of the times that God let other nations defeat Israel and destroy their crops, or a time when God did not let it rain in Israel because of their sin. Ruth 1:1-5 tells the story of a man named Elimelech and his wife, Naomi. Because they did not have enough food in Bethlehem, they took their two sons and moved about 100 miles to Moab, a Gentile town, where they had plenty of food.

While Naomi and Elimelech lived in Moab, their two sons grew up and married Moabite women. One was named Orpah and the other was named Ruth. They were in Moab for about 10 years and during that time, Elimelech and both of his sons died. Neither of the sons had children. Naomi and her daughters-in-law were widows.

Most people think of the Book of Ruth as a love story, but it is more than that. The story of Ruth gives us a great example of unselfish **commitment** to family members.

EXPLORE THE TEXT (RUTH 1:6-18)

1. A Desperate Return (Ruth 1:6-10)

VERSES 6-7.

⁶*While Naomi was in Moab, she heard that the LORD had come to help His people and had given them food again. So she and her daughters-in-law got ready to leave Moab and return home.*

⁷*Naomi and her daughters-in-law left the place where they had lived and started back to the land of Judah.*

The custom in that time was to go part way with someone who was traveling. It is possible the two young women went with Naomi as far as the border of Judah. They would have traveled with many other people because it was not safe for women to travel alone. Perhaps some of the relatives of the young women went with them, and so Orpah and Ruth could return with them.

VERSE 8.

⁸*But Naomi said to her two daughters-in-law, "Go back home, each of you to your own mother's house. May the LORD be as kind to you as you have been to me and my sons who are now dead."*

Note that Naomi said to return to their mother's house, not to their father's house. The custom was for a widowed young woman to return to live with her mother. Both of these young women had chosen to live with Naomi rather than their own mothers.

VERSE 9.

⁹*"May the LORD give you another happy home and a new husband." When Naomi kissed the women good-bye, they began to cry out loud.*

In today's world we often hear the words "What's in it for me?" People are not willing to give unselfishly to their family. We see that attitude in the way some people treat their family members. We see it in the growing divorce rate. People are not committed to each other. The Lord wants His people to be unselfish and put the needs of their family first. He wants His children always to show their **commitment** through loving words and actions.

Naomi felt it was best for her to return to Bethlehem because she had family there. She also felt her daughters-in-law should stay in Moab. They were young enough to remarry and have a family there. Naomi was very unselfish.

VERSE 10.

¹⁰ *They said to her, "No, we want to go with you to your people."*

Both Ruth and Orpah told Naomi they wanted to go with her. This shows how much they loved Naomi. She was a Jew. They were Gentiles. But they loved each other very much.

KEY DOCTRINE: *Marriage*

One interesting part of this story about Ruth is that Naomi and her husband let their sons marry Gentile women. God's command about marriage to a Gentile was clear. "Do not marry any of them (Gentiles), or let your daughters marry their sons, or let your sons marry their daughters. (Deuteronomy 7:3). This was because they were to be separate and the new spouses could lead them to worship other false gods. Ezra prayed for the Israelites because of their sins, including marriage to Gentiles (Ezra 9:1-6). Deuteronomy 21:10-14 explains how a Gentile woman could convert to become Jewish. Yet, the story in the Book of Ruth suggests Naomi was faithful in her worship of God. It is another example of how God will bless our righteousness, even though we sin, if we seek Him. God used this for His plan for Ruth to be an ancestor of Jesus.

Why is it important for our families to see us be faithful?

How does trying to keep family relationships strong help the cause of Jesus?

2. A Bitter Plea (Ruth 1:11-14)

VERSES 11-14

¹¹ But Naomi said, “My daughters, return to your own homes. Why do you want to go with me? I cannot give birth to more sons to give you new husbands;

¹² “Go back, my daughters, to your own homes. I am too old to have another husband. Even if I told myself, ‘I still have hope’ and had another husband tonight, and even if I had more sons,

¹³ Should you wait until they were grown into men? Should you live for so many years without husbands? Don’t do that, my daughters. My life is much too sad for you to share, because the LORD has been against me!”

¹⁴ The women cried together out loud again. Then Orpah kissed her mother-in-law Naomi good-bye, but Ruth held on to her tightly.

We can be sure the women spoke their true feelings. They had lived together for several years. They spoke with genuine love for each other.

Naomi told her daughters-in-law how she felt. She loved them and she wanted them to be with her, but she also wanted the best for them. She knew it was better if they did not stay with her. When she told them to go back to their own people she showed them how much she loved them. She wanted them to be happy. She ignored her own situation. She was willing to sacrifice her own happiness for their happiness.

The Old Testament has rules about taking care of families if the father and husband died. If a husband died and left no sons, it was the responsibility of the man’s brother to marry his brother’s **widow**. The children they had together would become children of the dead husband.

Naomi explained she did not have a husband to take care of them. If Naomi did find a husband and a miracle happened, she could have sons. But even so, her daughters-in-law could not wait for the sons to grow up and marry them. All of this seems odd to us but it was common thinking in their culture.

At first both Ruth and Orpah said they wanted to go with Naomi back to her homeland. Orpah decided she would go back to her mother’s home and

find a husband to take care of her and give her children. Ruth refused to leave Naomi.

We cannot criticize Orpah for her decision to stay in Moab. It was not an easy decision.

Believers show love by doing the best things for their family members. We need to find the best way to show our love. Some people think it means working hard to have enough money. Others think it is having a nice house. We need to think of the emotional needs of our family as well as their material needs.

Make a list of all your family members from your grandparents to your youngest great grandchild. Add these names to your prayer list. Each time you pray, thank God for all your family. Ask God to bless them in all they do. If some do not know Jesus as Savior, pray for their salvation.

How does the example of parents and grandparents help or hurt future generations?

How does our faithfulness help others in our families?

3. A Lifelong Promise (Ruth 1:15-18)

VERSES 15-16.

¹⁵ *Naomi said to Ruth, "Look, your sister-in-law is going back to her own people and her own gods. Go back with her."*

¹⁶ *But Ruth said, "Don't beg me to leave you or to stop following you. Where you go, I will go. Where you live, I will live. Your people will be my people, and your God will be my God."*

Bible teachers see this as a true statement of believing in God. Ruth watched Naomi for many years. She knew about Naomi's God and she wanted to share in worshiping Him.

VERSE 17.

¹⁷ *"And where you die, I will die, and there I will be buried. I ask the LORD to punish me terribly if I do not keep this promise: Not even death will separate us."*

After Orpah left, Ruth still held on to Naomi and refused to leave her. The next words she said are often quoted today.

Maybe you have been to weddings and the bride and groom said these verses. Ruth was not talking to a husband. She was talking to her mother-in-law. She spoke very strongly and truthfully.

First she told Naomi to stop arguing with her. She had decided to follow Naomi wherever she went. Ruth had never seen the promised land. She did not know anything about the land and the Israelites. She only knew she wanted to go with Naomi.

Next, Ruth told Naomi her people would become Ruth's people. In those days people did not know a lot about each other. Ruth probably knew some things about the family life of the Israelites because her dead husband was an Israelite. She did not know what it was like to live in a different land. It did not matter to Ruth. She said she wanted to give up everything she knew.

Ruth told Naomi she would give up her gods. She firmly stated Naomi's God would be her God. She used the Hebrew word for God, *Yahweh*. The word is usually translated as "the Lord." She accepted Him as the one true God.

Ruth's statements to Naomi showed Ruth's complete **commitment** to her. In the last statement Ruth promised to stay with Naomi until they died. Then she said she wanted to be buried in the same place Naomi was buried. And finally she asked the Lord to punish her if she did not keep her promises.

Believers show their love for their families by telling them and others about their commitment.

VERSE 18.

¹⁸ *When Naomi saw that Ruth had firmly made up her mind to go with her, she stopped arguing with her.*

BIBLE SKILL: Bible Dictionary

Look up the names and places in a Bible dictionary. Draw a line to connect words on the left to the correct words on the right.

- | | |
|--------------|----------------------|
| 1. Bethlehem | Left Naomi. |
| 2. Boaz | Stayed with Naomi. |
| 3. Moab | Mother-in-law. |
| 4. Naomi | Naomi's home town. |
| 5. Orpah | Naomi's relative. |
| 6. Ruth | Ruth's home country. |

Read the rest of this chapter to understand the rest of the story. They left Moab and went to Bethlehem. They arrived in Bethlehem at the beginning of the time to harvest barley. That leads into next week's lesson.

How can God change something that is sad into something good?

How have you seen God do this?

Take a few minutes now to call a friend by VP and tell them what good thing God has done for you.

If we let Him, God will give us a blessing in a time when we are hurting very much.

IN MY CONTEXT

We often think our family members know we love them. We don't always tell them or show them we love them.

Do you regularly tell your family members you love them? YES NO.

Do you show you love them by your actions? YES NO.

If you are not regularly telling members of your family you love them, start saying you love them at least once a day. It may be a little uncomfortable at first. Make sure they know you are committed to them and will never leave them without your love. Pray every day God for God to bless them.

How can you improve your relationship with someone in your family or in your church that you do not get along with very well?

Pray for that person and ask God to show you how you can build a good relationship with that person.

How can you help a family member who is hurting physically, emotionally, or spiritually?

Try to find a way this week to help them find comfort in difficulties through the relationships God places in their lives. Help them know we can trust God in hard times.

MEMORY VERSE

But Ruth said, "Don't beg me to leave you or to stop following you.

Where you go, I will go. Where you live, I will live. Your people will be my people, and your God will be my God."

—Ruth 1:16



Session 13

REDEEMED AND SECURE

God can surprise us with the people He chooses to bring about His purposes.

RUTH 3:8-13; 4:13-17

FIRST THOUGHTS

This story is in our Bible as a picture of God redeeming His people when they **Repent** from their sin and turn back to Him. This was a common experience for the Israelites. It identified the person who saved his relative as their kinsman redeemer.

KEY DOCTRINE: *Kinsman Redeemer*

This is an example of another Israelite custom. When Ruth went to Boaz and asked him to cover her with his cloak, she was asking him to become the “kinsman redeemer” for her and Naomi. This may seem strange to us. The Law of Moses said that if a poor person was forced to sell part of his property or himself into slavery, his nearest

of “kin” or family member could step in and “buy back” what his relative was forced to sell (Leviticus 25:24-49). The kinsman redeemer was usually a rich person who freed the debtor by paying the ransom price. If a person became a slave, the redeemer purchased his freedom. When a person had too much debt, the kinsman stepped in to redeem his homestead and let the family live. If a family member died and had no son, the kinsman married the widow. She could then have a son so her dead husband’s name could be remembered (Deuteronomy 25:5; Genesis 38:8).

Because Ruth adopted Judaism as her religion, she had a legal claim on Boaz. He became her redeemer. That word means to “buy back again.” The land belonged to Elimelech, Naomi’s husband. It seems like he sold it when he went to Moab. Now, Ruth asked Boaz to buy it back from that owner. Because Boaz was not the nearest relative, he had to get a release from that “near relative,” possibly a nephew of Elimelech.

The Law listed four things about the kinsman redeemer: He must be a close relative, he must have the ability to do it, and he must be willing to do it. The redemption was fulfilled when the price was paid in full.

Jesus was called our Kinsman Redeemer because He paid in full the price for our sin.

UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT

Read the last verse of chapter 1 and all of chapter 2 for the story of Ruth’s experiences between last week’s lesson and this lesson.

Naomi and Ruth left Moab and went to Bethlehem. It was the time of gathering wheat when they arrived at Bethlehem. Naomi sent Ruth to gather grain in the fields of a relative named Boaz. It was a custom to leave grain for poor people when a field was harvested. Ruth and Boaz met while Ruth was gathering wheat in his field. Boaz was very kind to Ruth. Naomi was a very wise woman and gave good advice to Ruth. Ruth did not know all the Jewish customs, but Naomi did.

We all have responsibilities. At times we want to refuse to complete them. Today many people decide to ignore their responsibilities. The overall attitude of ignoring responsibility is sin. The Lord expects His people to show responsibility in the things we do and the choices we make. God expects His people to show **commitment** in their relationships to Him and other people. Boaz knew his responsibility and he was faithful to do it.

EXPLORE THE TEXT (RUTH 3:8-13; 4:13-17)

1. Inquiry (Ruth 3:8-9)

VERSES 8-9.

⁸*About midnight Boaz was startled and rolled over. There was a woman lying near his feet!*

⁹*Boaz asked, “Who are you?” She said, “I am Ruth, your servant girl. Spread your cover over me, because you are a relative who is supposed to take care of me.”*

Boaz was sleeping on the **threshing floor** beside his grain to protect it from robbers. According to the Israelite custom, Ruth went there and lay at his feet.

This could look like a sinful act by Ruth, but it was part of a Jewish custom. Boaz immediately understood that she was asking him to do something special and very important.

BIBLE SKILL: *Read Related Stories*

Read these brief stories about the Threshing floor.

The Threshing floor was a large flat circle where workers separated the wheat from the rest of the plant. It was made of stone or wood or dirt. These floors are named in the Bible several times. Because they were large and open, they were often used as a meeting place.

When Jacob died, Joseph stayed for seven days at the threshing-floor of Atad to show his sorrow (Genesis 50:1-11).

Often several threshing floors were built near each other and this made a good place for traveling groups to stop. The hard, level floors were better for their tents than the stony ground around them.

David bought a Threshing floor from Araunah to build an altar to show he was repenting for his sin (2 Samuel 24:18-25).

This became the place where Solomon later built the temple (2 Chronicles 3:1-2).

Because of the danger of someone stealing grain, the threshing floors were always guarded when the grain was on them. Someone slept on the floor beside the grain, as in our lesson this week (Ruth 3:7).

Ruth told Boaz she was his servant girl. This told Boaz that Ruth knew he was supposed to take care of her. Some Bible translations use the words **shelter** me to mean take care of a person. Ruth asked Boaz to cover her. In the Old Testament times one person showed they would take care of another person by putting their cloak or coat over them.

Why is it sometimes difficult to ask someone to do something for us, even when we know they should do it?

If we know God is leading us to do something, we do not need to be shy. Perhaps you feel God leading you to go on a mission trip but you do not have enough money. If God is leading, then you do not need to feel shy about asking your Christian brothers and sisters to help. Let God speak to them and encourage them to do what God leads them to do.

What have you learned from Ruth about following God's leading?

2. Interest (Ruth 3:10-13)

VERSE 10.

¹⁰Then Boaz said, "The LORD bless you, my daughter. This act of kindness is greater than the kindness you showed to Naomi in the beginning. You didn't look for a young man to marry, either rich or poor."

Boaz understood Ruth was asking him to marry her. People in Israel had a law called the **Levirate Law**. The law explained how a family must take care of other family members. It was very important for a Hebrew family to keep their land in their own family. Land was given to sons when the father died. If a man died with no sons his close relatives had the responsibility to take care of his **widow** and marry her. When she had a son, her dead husband's land and property would go to that son in the dead husband's name. The property did not belong to the husband's relative.

Boaz was probably about the same age as Ruth's dead father-in-law, Elimelech. He became her **kinsman-redeemer**. A redeemer pays the price for another person so they can be free. When Jesus paid for our sins on the cross to save us, He redeemed us to make us free. Many Bible teachers use the Old Testament idea of kinsman-redeemed to help us understand what Jesus did to **redeem** us.

Boaz praised Ruth for taking care of Naomi, her mother-in-law. The whole town knew about her kindness and faithfulness to Naomi. He praised her for choosing him and not choosing a younger, richer man. He decided to be the person to redeem Elimelech's family.

VERSES 11-12.

¹¹ *"Now, my daughter, don't be afraid. I will do everything you ask, because all the people in our town know you are a good woman."*

¹² *"It is true that I am a relative who is to take care of you, but you have a closer relative than I."*

Boaz agreed he was a relative, but they had a problem. Naomi had a closer relative. That meant Boaz must talk to the closer relative before he took Naomi and Ruth into his family. The closer relative could choose to **Redeem** Elimelech's land if he wanted to. If he redeemed the land he must also take care of Naomi and Ruth.

VERSE 13.

¹³ *"Stay here tonight, and in the morning we will see if he will take care of you. If he decides to take care of you, that is fine. But if he refuses, I will take care of you myself, as surely as the LORD lives. So stay here until morning."*

Boaz acted honestly and decided to talk to the relative. He did not try to cheat that relative to get family property from him. He explained to Ruth he would talk to the man the next day. He would give the man the choice to say yes or no.

Deaf believers can show our commitment to accept our responsibilities. We have a responsibility to take care of the physical and spiritual needs of our families. Do you agree or disagree? Explain.

3. Inheritance (Ruth 4:13-17)

Read Ruth 3:14–4:12 so you understand what happened. Boaz talked with the other relative, and the other relative said Boaz could take care of Ruth and Naomi. The way this was done is interesting. It shows how business was done in those days.

VERSE 13.

¹³ *So Boaz took Ruth home as his wife and had sexual relations with her. The LORD let her become pregnant, and she gave birth to a son.*

In the life of the Israelites it was very important to have male children to continue the family name. Boaz agreed to take Ruth as his wife so she could have children. Those children would have the name of their own father and grandfather. He committed himself to be sure Elimelech's family name did not disappear.

VERSES 14-16.

¹⁴ *The women told Naomi, "Praise the LORD who gave you this grandson. May he become famous in Israel."*

¹⁵ *"He will give you new life and will take care of you in your old age because of your daughter-in-law who loves you. She is better for you than seven sons, because she has given birth to your grandson."*

¹⁶ *Naomi took the boy, held him in her arms, and cared for him.*

The Israelites knew it was the Lord who blessed them with children. They were joyful and grateful for all the children. They had great sorrow if a family could not have children.

VERSE 17.

¹⁷ *The neighbors gave the boy his name, saying, "This boy was born for Naomi." They named him Obed. Obed was the father of Jesse, and Jesse was the father of David.*

When the baby was born, the women put him in Naomi's arms. They said the baby was for her. Elimelech's family name would continue. The child was her grandson.

The parents did not name the child. The women of the town gave him his name. They named him Obed.

In Matthew 1:5, we see the name of Obed listed. It says Boaz and Ruth were his parents. It is important to read in Matthew the next names mentioned in the Book of Ruth. Obed was the father of Jesse. Jesse was the father of King David. The list goes on to tell about the generations from Obed to Jesus. Jesus was from the family of Ruth and Boaz. Ruth and Boaz lived in Bethlehem. Hundreds of years later Jesus was born in Bethlehem.

Boaz, Naomi, and Ruth had a secure future. The greatest part of their secure future was because the family name continued. They were blessed to be listed in the family of Jesus. He is the Son of God. Mary was His mother. She was married to Joseph. The family line continued.

These blessings came because Ruth and Boaz acted in a responsible way. When believers accept the spiritual responsibilities God gives them, they have a secure future. How do we know our responsibility? We learn from God's Word. The Holy Spirit will guide us.

The story of Ruth is a picture of our inheritance as a child of God. How can we thank God for being your redeemer?

Write a short prayer of thanks to God. For an example of a written "Thank You" prayer, read Ephesians 1:15-19a.

IN MY CONTEXT

In our busy lives it is easy to forget about our commitment to our families. We have many pressures of work and activities.

List the spiritual responsibilities given to you by God.

What needs to change in your schedule so you can do the things you listed?

Who is another person you can call on to make sure you fulfill your responsibilities?

Perhaps you have never thought about your God-given responsibilities. Talk with your Bible study group. Discuss the things you think you need to do to act in a responsible way. When you all agree, write them down, and ask each person to sign the paper. Group members need to remind each other about their **commitment**.

This is the last session in this quarter. Next week we will begin a study of Matthew, starting with chapter 14. Read Matthew 14 to prepare for this next study.

MEMORY VERSE

Naomi told her daughter-in-law, “The LORD bless him! He continues to be kind to us—both the living and the dead!” Then Naomi told Ruth, “Boaz is one of our close relatives, one who should take care of us.”

—Ruth 2:20

WORD LIST

Adulterer — A married person who has sex with someone other than his or her spouse

Abandon — To leave alone, to not care about.

Anakites — A tribe of giants living in Canaan when the Israelites went in.

Ark of the Lord, Ark of the Covenant — A box that held the Ten Commandments and other things. See Exodus 25:10-22.

Ashtoreth — An idol worshiped by the Canaanites.

Baal — An idol worshiped by the Canaanites.

Circumcised — To cut the foreskin from a male's genitals.

Commission — To send someone to do a job.

Commitment — Promising to stay faithful.

Confess, confession — To tell God and others we have sinned.

Consequences — Result of an action.

Covet — To want something someone else has.

Cycle — A circle of events.

Dedicate — Set aside for the Lord.

Deliver — To free.

Discipline — To correct or to punish for doing wrong.

Express — To show.

Famine — A time when crops do not grow and people have no food.

Focus — To pay attention.

Glean — To gather the loose grain from the fields.

Godly — Pleasing to God, obeying God.

Harmony of the Gospels — A book that tries to put all four of the Gospels, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John into one story.

Kinsman-redeemer — A Hebrew word that means to take care of family members.

Levirate Law — Hebrew law about taking care of family members.

Nomads — People who do not own land. They move around in the desert and live in tents.

Nazirite — A special Vow to the Lord to live in a certain way.

Oath — A strong promise made in God's name.

Omnipresent — To be present at all places at the same time.

Omnipotent — To have all power.

┌
Omniscient — To know all things.

Presence — Nearness. God's Presence means God is with us.

Prostitute — a person who earns money from sex.

Ransom — To buy someone or something back. The same as "Redeem."

Rebel, rebellion — To turn away from God.

Redeem — To buy someone or something back. The same as "Ransom."

Repent — To feel sorry and change our behavior or attitudes.

Sanctity of human life — To think about human life as holy and to be protected.

Shelter — Protection.

Sovereign — having power over all things.

Threshing floor — A place where the grain was shaken from the stems of wheat.

Timid — Shy.

Vow — A strong promise made in God's name.

Widow — A woman whose husband has died.

Wine press — A pit where wine was made from grapes.

Time Line: Joshua; Judges; Ruth

1500 B.C.	1450 B.C.	1425 B.C.	1400 B.C.
1529-1409? Aaron 1526-1406 Moses 1500 First alphabet developed in Egypt 1500 Olmecs settle on the Gulf Coast of Mexico 1500 New kingdom of Egypt	1490?-1380? Joshua 1446 Bronze hand mirrors taken from Egypt by Hebrew women 1446 The exodus and defeat of Pharaoh at the Red Sea 1445 Exploration of Canaan by the 12 spies	1406 Events in Deuteronomy 1406-1380? Events in Joshua 1406 Miraculous crossing of the Jordan River 1406 Destruction of Jericho	1360?-1300? Deborah 1385? Division of the land into 12 allotments
1300 B.C.	1200 B.C.	1100 B.C.	1000 B.C.
1250?-1175? Gideon 1320? Deborah and Barak defeat the Canaanites	1200?-1150? Jephthah 1380?-1060? Events in Judges 1200? Gideon defeats Midianites and Amalekites	1175?-1125? Ruth 1120?-1060? Samson 1105-1025 Samuel 1170? Jephthah defeats Ammonites and Philistines 1140? Events in Ruth	1080-1010 Saul 1050-970 David 1080? Samson defeats Philistines 1060? Samson destroys Philistine temple

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Adapted from the HCSB Study Bible (Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 2010), 340-341, 386-387, 430-431.



LEADER GUIDE

fance the land, which I swear unto their fathers to give them.

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

8 'This book of the law shall not depart from thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest do according to all that is written therein: then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success. 9 'Have not I commanded thee, saying, Be strong, and be of a good courage; be not dismayed, for the Lord thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest.

10 I have set thee over the Jordan.

11 Then Josh' ua commanded the officers of the people, saying,

12 Pass through the ford, and command

the people to cross the Jordan. And when the people were crossed, Joshua said unto the people, The Lord hath brought you out of Egypt into this good land. And Joshua said unto the people, The Lord hath brought you out of Egypt into this good land. And Joshua said unto the people, The Lord hath brought you out of Egypt into this good land.

Joshua: Judges; Ruth



TEACHING HINTS

If you want to keep your Bible study interesting, it will be good to teach in different ways. There are ideas for teaching in the leader guide.

STORY & DISCUSSION

Before your class meeting:

- Read the story in the Bible.
- Practice signing the story several times so that you can share the story without looking at the Bible.
- Sign the story to a friend or family member. This will help you become comfortable with the story.

During class:

- Sign the story to the members.
- Ask for a volunteer to sign the story again (as much as he or she can remember). When he or she is finished, let other members add parts of the story that were missing.
- Sign the story one more time. Next ask the following questions:

What emotions did you find in the story? (Try to get each person to answer.) Members may feel puzzled and wonder why things happened in the story. They may feel happy or sad about the story. It is good for them to share openly.

What did you learn about God, Jesus, or the Holy Spirit in the story? You may need to help the group to focus on this question. It is important for them to notice how God works.

How can you obey God? How can you use this in your life?

When God teaches us something, we should always obey Him. After discussing the lesson, members should focus on what God wants them to do. Try to get each person to share how he or she will follow God during the week.

LECTURE

Read the Scripture for the session and the information in the personal study guide and the leader guide. Look at the outline for the session. Practice explaining the points of the outline. This will help you to talk about the lesson without “reading” to the group. When you meet with the group, write the outline on the board. If there are names that you will talk about

often, write those names on the board also. You can point to those instead of fingerspelling each time. Teach the session and explain the points on the outline. Be sure to let the members of the group ask questions at any time. Use the questions in each section, adding to the questions included in the teacher helps.

GROUP WORK

Divide the class into small groups of three or four. Give each group one section of the lesson to discuss. You can go to each group to help them if they have questions. After 5-10 minutes, bring the groups back together. Let each group share what they learned from their part of the session.

Another idea for small groups: give them a question to discuss. Each group may have the same question or different questions. Then let them share their answers with the rest of the class.

DRAMA

Ask some members of the group to act out the story in the session. You will need to plan ahead so that the members will have at least a week to prepare and practice. When your group meets, ask the “actors” to present the story to the group. Discuss what they learned from the story.

BIBLE ACTIVITIES

Enlist a volunteer to complete the Bible Skill Activity for that week and share what he or she learned. Invite him or her to share with the group as a part of the discussion about the appropriate passage section

Session 1

COMMISSIONED

JOSHUA 1:1-9

PLAN AHEAD

- ❑ Pray for the people in your group. Pray that they will know that God has a plan for their lives.
- ❑ Ask _____ (someone in the group) to study the Introduction to the Book of Joshua and summarize it for the group.
- ❑ Locate the promised land and the Jordan River where the Israelites were camped in this session, on the map included on the inside back cover. You can show the geography of the promised land and the cities and nations close by that are named in the Book of Joshua.

FOCUS ATTENTION

Write each of these words on a slip of paper and place them in random order on a table: Abraham—Egypt—40 years in the wilderness (desert)—Isaac—Jacob—Joseph—spies into Canaan—the Exodus. Ask the group to work together to put them in chronological order. Encourage brief discussion about each of these people or events. All of that is background as Joshua leads the people into the promised land. From Abraham to Joshua is about 500 years.

EXPLORE THE TEXT (JOSHUA 1:1-9)

1. A New Leader (Joshua 1:1-5)

Discuss the meaning and appropriate signs for the title of this session: Commissioned. Note that when God commissions someone to do a task, He will be with the person. God will help the person to obey. After the death of Moses, God commissioned Joshua to lead the Israelites into the promised land. God promised success to Joshua and His presence with Joshua just as He had been with Moses.

Emphasize God gave the land to His people. Compare the giving of the land to God giving His Son and salvation.

Encourage discussion of God's presence. As Christians, we have the promise of God's presence in Matthew 28:19-20.

2. A New Job (Joshua 1:6)

Invite someone to sign verses 5-6. Emphasize the need to connect verses 5 and 6. Joshua could be brave because God was with him. Every time Joshua had a victory, he could come back to this promise. Joshua had been Moses' assistant. Now he was the leader.

God told Joshua to be strong and courageous in taking on the job of distributing the land the Israelites were about to possess.

Discuss: *What was Joshua's source of his strength and courage?* (See verses 5-6)

3. A New Trust (Joshua 1:7-9)

God also told Joshua to be strong and courageous in following God's law as Israel's new leader. God reminded Joshua that he would find success through obedience. Joshua's military success depended upon his obedience to God's law.

Ask: *What books of the Bible did Joshua have?* (Genesis through Deuteronomy, written by Moses.)

Invite someone to sign Deuteronomy 6:4-9. Joshua probably followed this plan as he prepared to lead God's people.

Discuss: Is this still a good plan for knowing God's Word?

SUMMARIZE AND CHALLENGE

Lead your group to share their notes about the promises of God from "In My Context" (page 15) of this book.

Encourage discussion of how to know God's leadership.

We can trust God to keep His promises. God's **presence** is a source of strength and courage when facing life's challenges. Believers are to trust God and His Word in all areas of their lives.

Session 2

VICTORY

JOSHUA 6:12-25

PLAN AHEAD

- ❑ Pray for the people in your group. Pray that they will believe God can do anything.
- ❑ Locate Jericho, the Jordan River, Mt. Nebo, Jerusalem, and the Dead Sea on the map included on the inside back cover.
- ❑ Ask someone to use the information below (Focus Attention) and other resources to tell about the city of Jericho.

FOCUS ATTENTION

Briefly review chapters 1-5 for the background to today's lesson. Use "Understand the Context" in the personal study guide.

Historians believe Jericho is one of the oldest cities in the world. It was established about 9,000 B.C. The twelve spies went into Canaan near Jericho (Joshua 2:1). It was the first city captured by Joshua. Jericho is located between Mount Nebo in the east, the central mountains to the west, and the Dead Sea to the south. Jericho was an important trading center in the New Testament. It was 15 miles from Jerusalem and the place where Jesus healed a blind man (Mark 10:46). It may have been the home of Zacchaeus (Luke 19:1-10).

EXPLORE THE TEXT (JOSHUA 6:12-25)

1. Patient Obedience (Joshua 6:12-14)

Following God's command, Joshua led the priests in marching around the city of Jericho, escorting the Ark of the Lord. They did this once a day for six days.

Ask: *Why did God ask the Israelites to do this?* Encourage discussion. (To test their faith, to see if the people were willing to follow Joshua, to test their patience to wait on God to lead, to show God's power to both the Israelites and the people inside Jericho.)

Ask: *Why did they take the Ark of the Lord with them?* (To show God's **presence**.)

The number seven appears several times in this story. Ask: *What makes the number seven so important?* (Complete, perfect. Here it showed God's plan is perfect.). Ask someone to sign Jeremiah 29:11 about God's plan.

Invite someone to sign Romans 8:31 and someone else to sign Matthew 28:20. Ask: *Are these promises true for us today? Explain.*

2. Final Preparations (Joshua 6:15-19)

Enlist someone ahead of time to study the story of Rahab in Joshua 2:1-24 and sign it for the class. Emphasize that the house of Rahab was built into the wall and that God protected her by not allowing that part of the wall to collapse.

Discuss: *What is the significance of the story of Rahab?* (Ancestor of Jesus. Her faith led to her family's safety.)

3. God Gives Victory (Joshua 6:20-25)

Invite someone to sign verses 22-23 and also verse 25. At first Rahab lived outside the camp (verse 23) then she lived in the camp (verse 25). This shows Rahab became a follower of the Israelite's God.

Invite someone to sign Hebrews 11:30. Ask: *What really caused the wall to fall?* (The faith of God's people.)

Invite someone to sign verse 21. Ask: *Why did God ask the Israelites to kill all the innocent people?* (Because this was judgment on the sins of the people of Jericho. This is true for all the Canaanites.)

SUMMARIZE AND CHALLENGE

Guide your group to share their response to the questions from "In My Context" (page 23).

Encourage discussion of the difficulty in obeying God in faith when we do not understand why God wants us to do it.

Session 3

KEEPING A PROMISE

JOSHUA 10:6-14

PLAN AHEAD

- ❑ Pray for the people in your group. Pray that they will depend on God's promises.
- ❑ Locate on the map on the inside back cover: Gibeon, Gilgal, Beth Horon, Azekah, and Makkedah. Also locate these cities whose people attacked Gibeon in Joshua 10:5: Jerusalem, Hebron, Jarmuth, Lachish, and Eglon. Note this is one of the first references to Jerusalem. Earlier Bible references to Salem may be the same city.

FOCUS ATTENTION

Use "Understanding the Context" in the personal study guide and other resources to summarize Joshua 7-9. Explain how the Gibeonites lied to Joshua and made an agreement that led to the events of today's lesson. When the Gibeonites were attacked, they remembered that Joshua and the Israelites promised to protect them. They called on Joshua to rescue them.

EXPLORE THE TEXT (JOSHUA 10:6-14)

1. Remembering a Promise (Joshua 10:6)

Use "Understanding the Context" in the personal study guide and other resources to summarize Joshua 7-9. Explain how the Gibeonites lied to Joshua and made an agreement that led to the events of today's lesson. When the Gibeonites were attacked, they remembered that Joshua and the Israelites promised to protect them. They called on Joshua to rescue them.

The town of Gibeon was in an area of vineyards, about eight miles northwest of Jerusalem. Later, King Saul's family lived in Gibeon (1 Chronicles 9:35-39). After Saul's death, his general, Abner, and David's general, Joab, met

at Gibeon (2 Samuel 2:12-17). Gibeon was one of the regular places of worship before Solomon built the temple in Jerusalem (1 Chronicles 21:29). “King Solomon went to Gibeon to offer a sacrifice, because it was the most important place of worship” (1 Kings 3:4-5). Later, Jerusalem became the center of worship.

Discuss: *Why is it important for us to keep our promises today, even when we regret that we made the promise?*

2. Staying True to His Word (Joshua 10:7-8)

Joshua and God both stayed true to their promises. Joshua led his army toward Gibeon. God assured Joshua of victory and calmed his fears. When the Gibeonites first came to Joshua (9:1-27), Joshua acted without talking with God and made an agreement with them. God could have refused to help because Joshua did not obey. Instead, God honored Joshua’s promise. Joshua made mistakes. He acted a few times without talking with God first. He was not perfect, but like David, God knew his heart. Joshua was a man that God considered faithful.

Ask: *From your Bible study, do you remember other men and women who were very faithful to God?* (After several responses, call attention to the list in Hebrews 11.)

Discuss: *How do you hope your family and friends remember you?* Emphasize responses that focus on being faithful to God.

3. God Steps In (Joshua 10:9-14)

Ask: *In what ways did God help Joshua in this battle?* (Verse 10, God confused the enemy and gave Joshua’s army the victory; verse 11, God sent hail; verse 13, God stopped the sun from setting.)

Discuss: *Do you remember a time in your life when you felt God “stepped in” to help you in a special way?*

SUMMARIZE AND CHALLENGE

Encourage discussion of how God always keeps His promises, even when His people are not always faithful to Him.

Lead your group to share their responses to the first two questions under “In My Context” (page 31).

Close with this reminder: *When God’s people face an impossible situation, God often works through others to give His people strength and assistance. God expects His followers to keep their commitments. God works on behalf of His people to give them victory.*

Session 4

SAVIOR ANNOUNCED

LUKE 1:26-38

PLAN AHEAD

- ☐ Pray for the people in your group. Pray that they will be willing to serve when God asks them.
- ☐ Locate on the map on the inside back cover: Nazareth, Bethlehem, and Jerusalem. These are the places named often in telling the Christmas story.
- ☐ Use Matthew 1 to show the name Rahab (verse 5) from the recent lesson about Jacob. Also in verse 5, note the names Boaz and Ruth. We will study about them later this quarter.
- ☐ Find a “**Harmony of the Gospels**” and copy the verses that tell about the birth of Jesus.

FOCUS ATTENTION

Briefly introduce Luke. He was not one of the twelve apostles. Of the four Gospel writers, only John and Matthew were apostles. Ask someone to sign Luke 1:1-4. Luke identifies himself as a historian. His Gospel is not about what he saw, but what many other people saw and told or wrote about Jesus. Later, Luke was with Paul. In the Book of Acts, the first verse identifies Luke as the author. It is interesting to note that in Acts 16:11 he changes from “they” to “we.” This suggests Luke joined Paul at that time. Paul names Luke in Philemon 1:24, Colossians 4:14 (where Paul identifies Luke as a doctor), and 2 Timothy 4:11.

EXPLORE THE TEXT (LUKE 1:26-38)

Help the class understand that what we know as the Christmas story was told by Matthew and Luke, but each one had a different emphasis. Show them the passages from Matthew and Luke.

1. Gabriel Appears (Luke 1:26-29)

Gabriel was sent from God to **deliver** a message to Mary. He said the Lord blessed Mary and was with her (verse 28).

Gabriel was one of the heavenly messengers who brought God's special message to an individual. He appeared to Daniel to explain the king's dream and the meaning of the dream (Daniel 8:15-27; 9:20-27). He appeared to Zachariah to tell him about his son, John the Baptist (Luke 1:8-20). In today's lesson, Gabriel appeared to Mary (verse 26).

Discuss: *Do you believe angels are active in our world today? Why or why not?*

2. The Message Given (Luke 1:30-33)

Explain that the name Jesus (Greek) is the same as Joshua (Hebrew). God used Joshua to give Israel the promised land as a permanent home. Jesus came to give us a heavenly home. This was a common Jewish name. It means "Yahweh Saves." Matthew wrote that the angel said, "You will name him Jesus because He will save his people from their sins" (Matthew 1:21).

Discuss: *Does God speak to people like us today? How? (Bible, Holy Spirit within us, other believers.)*

3. Questions Answered (Luke 1:34-37)

Mary's first question was, "How?" How could she give birth since she was a virgin?

Discuss: *What other questions do you think Mary thought?*

4. Willing to Follow (Luke 1:38)

How did Mary answer the angel? (See verse 38. The word *servant* can also mean "slave." She said, "I am God's slave."

Mary placed herself under God's authority as a slave. She was willing to follow God's plan.

Discuss: *What should we say when God asks us to do something? (The answer is, "Yes!")*

SUMMARIZE AND CHALLENGE

Encourage discussion of how we can trust God to keep His promises. Only Jesus can give salvation to people.

Guide your group to share their responses to the questions from "In My Context" (page 36). List on the board names of lost Deaf people in your community. Have a special prayer for them and for your group to be bold in witnessing to them.

Session 5

SETTLED

JOSHUA 22:1-8

PLAN AHEAD

- ❑ Pray for the people in your group. Pray that they will learn the importance of keeping their word.
- ❑ Find a map showing the division of the promised land among the twelve tribes. Show the three tribes on the east side of the Jordan River.
- ❑ Ask someone ahead of time to study the information below (Focus Attention) and other resources and tell about the twelve tribes.

FOCUS ATTENTION

Where did the twelve tribes get their names? Eleven sons of Jacob (the Levites did not own land) and two sons of Joseph.

The twelve tribes of Israel came from the twelve sons of Jacob. They are Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, Dan, Naphtali, Gad, Asher, Issachar, Zebulun, Joseph, and Benjamin (Genesis 35:23-26; Exodus 1:1-4; 1 Chronicles 2:1-2). When the tribes settled in Canaan, Levi's descendants did not receive a territory for themselves. They were priests and had several cities in different parts of Israel. Jacob adopted Joseph's two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh. They took the place of Joseph and Levi. The Levites did not receive land in Canaan (Numbers 18: 23-24). The other tribes gave a tithe to the Levites. They had a claim on the gifts of the people at feast times (Deuteronomy 14:27-29). They assisted the priests and had other responsibilities. They acted as musicians (1 Chronicles 15:16).

What was the promise the three tribes made to the other tribes as they crossed the Jordan River? (See Joshua 1:12-18). These men were the soldiers. Their families were already in their new homes. The soldiers may have been away from their families for several years.

EXPLORE THE TEXT (JOSHUA 22:1-8)

1. A Promise Kept (Joshua 22:1-3)

These three tribes were praised for keeping their promise to help the rest of the Israelites secure their allotted portions of the promised land.

Discuss: Sometimes these promises cost us money or time.

2. A Continued Responsibility (Joshua 22:4-5)

Ask: *What did Joshua tell the three tribes to do when they returned to their homes on the east side of the Jordan River?* (Verse 5. Continue to love, obey, follow, and serve God.)

Ask: *Were these three tribes free to do whatever they wanted?* (No, they still had to obey God in all things.)

Discuss: Why is it important for God's people to always remember to obey God?

3. A Welcomed Blessing (Joshua 22:6-8)

God provides for His people. When the Israelites left Egypt, they had been slaves, but they had gained many sheep and other animals. What else did God do to provide for His people? (See Exodus 12:35-36). Now, as they defeated the people in the promised land, God let them keep much more.

Lead the group to complete the activity about sharing on page 44. Discuss how your group can share with Deaf people in your community who are in need.

SUMMARIZE AND CHALLENGE

This lesson is about making decisions and keeping promises. Believers must remain faithful to God, regardless of what happens in their lives.

Lead your group to share their responses to the questions under "In My Context" (page 47).

Session 6

CHALLENGED

JOSHUA 24:14-28

PLAN AHEAD

- ❑ Pray that the people in your group will make a decision to follow Jesus.
- ❑ On the map on the inside back cover, locate Shechem and show its location in relation to Jerusalem and other important cities.

FOCUS ATTENTION

All of the nations around Israel and Judah had idols. David wrote of the foolishness of worshiping idols: “They have mouths, but they cannot speak. They have eyes, but they cannot see. They have ears, but they cannot hear (Psalm 115:5-6). God clearly commanded that we not worship idols (Exodus 20:4). The Israelites often adopted the gods and idols of their neighbors. God repeatedly told the Israelites to stay away from the idols of the Egyptians and Canaanites. Joshua challenged the Israelites to remain faithful to God, worshiping only Him.

EXPLORE THE TEXT (JOSHUA 24:14-28)

1. The Example Set (Joshua 24:14-15)

Invite someone to sign verse 15. The last part is well-known. Joshua declared that regardless of the choice made by the Israelites, his family would serve God alone.

Discuss: *Are you willing to make the same promise that Joshua made?*

2. The People Remember (Joshua 24:16-18)

The Israelites recalled God’s deliverance from Egypt and how He cared for them on the journey. They remembered how He gave them the promised land to encourage them to stay faithful to Him.

Discuss: *Do you think the Israelites were serious when they made their promise to God? Did they really mean it? Do we sometimes make a promise to God and then fail to keep our promise?*

3. A Serious Warning (Joshua 24:19-20)

Joshua said it would be difficult to stay faithful to God. He told the people to count the cost of worshiping and serving God.

Encourage discussion of how difficult it is for us to stay faithful.

Discuss: *What things take our attention away from God? How can we help each other to be more faithful to God in our Deaf Bible Study group?*

4. A Public Decision (Joshua 24:21-28)

After the people declared their decision to follow God with all their heart, Joshua directed them to rid themselves of all idols. The people committed to worship God alone, and Joshua created a marker as a testimony of their promise. Ask the group to find other markers that Joshua built (Joshua 4:5-9; 4:20-24; 7:26; 8:29; and 8:30-33). Why were these markers important? (To help the people remember, just as we have monuments and historical markers many places in our nation.)

Other translations have “Book of the Law” instead of “Book of Teachings.” These are the books Moses wrote—Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. These scrolls were kept in the **Ark of the Lord** so they could be taken out and read (Deuteronomy 31:24-26). See also Exodus 24:1-8. Joshua continued to write as the Holy Spirit inspired him. The leaders of the tribes probably had a copy for their use also. In the original, it made a large scroll on which the laws of God were written.

Note that verses 28-31 tell of the death of Joshua and how his influence continued for many years.

Discuss: *What are some “markers” we have in our homes, or in our church, to remind us of God’s presence and our responsibility to Him?*

SUMMARIZE AND CHALLENGE

Encourage discussion of people whose lives and teachings influenced the people in your group to be faithful. Guide the group to share their responses to the questions on page 55.

Session 7

VALUE ALL

PROVERBS 24:11-12; MARK 10:46-49

PLAN AHEAD

- ❑ Pray for the people in your group. Pray that they will understand that all life is precious to God.
- ❑ Resources: Find organizations in your city that help pregnant women and children. Check out "<http://www.erlc.com>" for information and articles related to protecting life.
- ❑ Story: Read the story of Jesus healing the blind man and practice signing the story so that you can sign it for the group. You could also ask a person in your group to sign the story.

FOCUS ATTENTION

How did **Sanctity of Human Life** Sunday start? Ronald Reagan made a presidential proclamation that January 22, 1984, would be National Sanctity of Human Life Sunday. That day was the 11th anniversary of Roe v. Wade, the law that made abortion legal in the United States. Many Christians keep the third Sunday of January as Sanctity of Human Life Sunday each year to remember that all human life is important to God.

EXPLORE THE TEXT

(PROVERBS 24:10-12; MARK 10:46-49)

1. A Call to Protect Life (Proverbs 24:11)

Invite a person in your group to sign the verse. Discuss what people Solomon could have meant. Emphasize that unborn children cannot

defend themselves. Ask: *What kinds of things can we do to protect the unborn children?* Share the resources you found related to helping pregnant mothers and their children.

Discuss: *In the United States it is legal to have an abortion. Does this mean that abortion is OK? Can you think of other things that are legal but do not please God?*

2. A Warning Against Inaction (Proverbs 24:10,12)

Invite a person in your group to sign the verses. Also invite someone else to sign Galatians 6:9. Discuss what these verses mean. Proverbs 24:10 and Galatians 6:9 encourage believers to keep doing good things. We should not give up. Proverbs 24:12 reminds us that God knows our hearts. Invite someone to also sign Matthew 16:24.

Discuss: Ask members if they have seen people on the road with homemade signs saying “Will work for food.” Ask: *Do we pretend we do not see them? How do we know if they are fake or really need help? What about others who need help? What kinds of excuses do we use to avoid helping?*

3. An Example Set (Mark 10:46-49)

Sign the story from Mark 10 or ask a volunteer to sign it. Discuss Jesus’ actions with Bartimaeus. Ask: *How do we know Jesus cared for him?* Allow members to share other Bible stories that show Jesus’ love and concern for others. Examples could include the following: Jesus healing the Deaf man (Mark 7:31-37), raising the **widow**’s son from the dead (Luke 7:11-15), allowing the children to come to Him (Matthew 19:14).

Discussion: *How can we follow Jesus’ example?*

SUMMARIZE AND CHALLENGE

The most important way we can help others is with their spiritual needs. Deaf people need to know about Jesus and salvation. Lead members to share their answers from “In My Context” (page 63). Encourage members to make a plan to help the people they know with spiritual and physical needs. Take time in class to pray for the people mentioned. Pray for organizations that help people with food and **shelter**. Ask God for wisdom and boldness to share Christ with others.

It is possible that this session will cause some Christians to feel guilty. There may be a person in your group who had an abortion. Perhaps others have ignored people in need. Remind your group that God forgives us and cleans our hearts and lives (1 John 1:9). We can have a new start.

Session 8

REBELLION'S CYCLE

JUDGES 2:11-19

PLAN AHEAD

- ❑ Pray for people in your group. Pray they will recognize any rebellion against God that is in their hearts.
- ❑ Review the introduction to the Book of Judges.
- ❑ Review the **cycle of rebellion** listed in the Repentance section of the session. Be prepared to explain the cycle in the introduction to the session.

FOCUS ATTENTION

Introduce the concept of the cycle of rebellion. Use the description in the lesson under Repentance.

EXPLORE THE TEXT

1. Abandonment (Judges 2:11-13)

Ask: *What does it mean to abandon something?* We usually sign *left* (as in forgetting something, leaving behind) or *ignore* to communicate this concept. We sometimes hear stories about a parent abandoning a child. The parent stops taking care of the child, and he/she doesn't show love to the child anymore. The Israelites had this attitude to God. They paid more attention to other things. They began to worship idols. We just finished our study of the Book of Joshua two weeks ago. Remember that the people promised they would worship only God. They forgot their promise.

Discuss: *Do we have idols in our world today? Are there things that we give more attention to than we give to God?*

2. Oppression (Judges 2:14-15)

When the people rebelled, God disciplined them. Discuss the ways that God disciplines His people. Emphasize that He disciplines us because He loves us and wants the best for us.

Sign Judges 2:15. The Lord told the people the bad things that would happen. In Deuteronomy 28, God listed blessings for obeying Him. He also warned them about disobeying. Invite a person in your group to sign Deuteronomy 28:15 and 25. Invite another to sign Joshua 24:20. Yes, God warned the people that sin would lead to trouble.

Discuss: *How do people suffer because of their own sin? Do their troubles help them to look back to God? Explain.*

3. Repentance (Judges 2:16-19)

Explain the concept of repentance. Some people think that **repent** means “to be sorry about something they did wrong.” But it is more than just being sorry. Sometimes we are just sorry because we got caught or got in trouble. True repentance means “to change our minds about our actions.” We truly understand that we are wrong in our sin. We agree with God that we are wrong. We change our mind and change our actions.

When the Israelites cried out to God for help, He answered their prayers. He chose a judge to help them. Explain what judge means in this case. The judges had a different role than what we think of judges doing today. The people changed; they repented and followed God again until that judge died.

Discuss: *What is real repentance? How can you tell if you have a heart of repentance?*

SUMMARIZE AND CHALLENGE

Explain that God as our Father disciplines His children. Ask someone to sign Hebrews 12:6-11. Explain that God’s **discipline** is always right. He disciplines us because we are His children. If there are parents in your group, ask them to explain why they discipline or punish their children.

Lead the group to respond to the questions under “In My Context” (page 71).

Session 9

WILLING SERVANTS

JUDGES 4:4-10,12-16

PLAN AHEAD

- ❑ Pray for your group. If you know of special needs they have, pray for the individual needs.
- ❑ Find a map of Israel that shows where the different tribes settled. Note the locations of the tribes of Zebulun and Naphtali.
- ❑ Practice signing the story of Deborah and Barak so you can sign it without looking at the book. Include Judges 4:3 because it explains that Sisera's army bothered the Israelites for 20 years. The Israelites cried out for help.

FOCUS ATTENTION

There were three judges in Israel before today's lesson. Their stories are in chapter 3 of Judges. Remind the group about the **cycle of rebellion**. Briefly tell the story of Othniel (Judges 3:7-11) and Ehud (Judges 3:12-4:1). These stories are summarized in "Understand the Context" in the personal study guide. Note that the people turned away from God when Othniel and Ehud died.

EXPLORE THE TEXT (JUDGES 4:4-10,12-16)

Sign the story of today's lesson for the group. This will give them a full picture of the events and help with the discussion.

1. God Commands (Judges 4:4-7)

After you have signed the story, call for the group to recall what happened first in the story. Emphasize that Deborah was the only woman to be a judge. She was also a prophetess.

Discuss: *What was Deborah's message to Barak?* (That God commanded him to take 10,000 men from Naphtali and Zebulun to fight Sisera's army. God would lead Sisera's army to the river and hand them over to Barak.)

2. A Leader Is Weak (Judges 4:8-10)

Discuss: *How did Barak respond to Deborah? Why did he want her to go with him?* (He was afraid, he didn't trust God.) Deborah said that Barak would not get the credit. What did she mean by that? (He would not get the glory or praise for defeating Sisera.) Show on a map where the people of Zebulun and Naphtali lived. They helped in the battle because they were the closest.

3. Victory Is Promised (Judges 4:12-14)

Discuss: *How many fighting men did Israel have?* (10,000) *What made Sisera's army so scary?* (The Bible doesn't have a number of men but he had an army. He also had 900 iron chariots.) *What did God promise to Barak?* (He would hand over Sisera to Barak and clear the way.)

4. Victory Is Won (Judges 4:15-16)

Discuss: *What happened when Barak and the army came close to Sisera's army?* (The Lord defeated Sisera's army and Sisera ran away. Read verses 17-21 to see what happened to Sisera.)

How does knowing God fought for the Israelites help God's people today?

SUMMARIZE AND CHALLENGE

Lead the group to record their responses to the activity under "In My Context" (page 79). Encourage the activity as a way to see actions they need to do better.

Share this story: Bob felt God encourage him to go visit a Deaf woman. He had never met her before but someone told him about her. Bob didn't call first or make an appointment. He just went to her house. He rang her doorbell. She came to the door and signed, "I have been waiting for someone to come tell me about Jesus." Bob told the woman about Jesus and how He died for her sins. She believed in Jesus and became a follower.

We miss blessings if we do not obey God. Pray together that as individuals and as a group we will obey when God leads.

Session 10

TIMID WARRIOR

JUDGES 6:11-16,25-32

PLAN AHEAD

- ❑ Pray for the people in your group. Ask God to give them strength and wisdom to follow Him when He calls.
- ❑ Prepare pieces of paper with Bible references to use in the group exercise. Group 1—Genesis 12:1-4; Group 2—Exodus 3:10-13; 4:1,10,13; Group 3—Esther 4:13-16. Each paper should also have these questions: 1. What did God want this person to do? 2. How did the person respond? 3. Do you think their response was good? Why or why not?

FOCUS ATTENTION

Remind the group that God told the Israelites to drive out all the people who lived in the promised land. The Israelites did not get rid of all the people so they often fought these people. The people worshiped idols and influenced the Israelites to worship idols, too. The Midianites were enemies of the Israelites. The Midianites destroyed Israel's crops and animals. The Israelites had no food and became very poor. Finally the Israelites cried out to the Lord again.

EXPLORE THE TEXT (JUDGES 6:11-16,25-32)

1. Unsure and Untested (Judges 6:11-16)

Gideon worked with the wheat in a wine press. A **wine press** was a deep hole in the ground, and it helped to hide the wheat from the Midianites. This is where the Angel of the Lord appeared to Gideon. The angel called Gideon a warrior.

Discuss: *Did Gideon think of himself as a warrior? How did he describe himself (verse 15)? What did God promise Gideon?*

2. A First Step (Judges 6:25-27)

The first thing the Lord told Gideon to do was remove the altar and idols that belonged to his father. Second, He told Gideon to build an altar to the Lord and sacrifice a bull. Gideon removed the evil things and replaced them with **godly** things. Ask: *Why did he do this during the night?*

As we follow God we must remove sin from our lives and replace our sinful activities with godly activities. We must remove our idols and worship only God.

Discuss: What things could be removed? What good things could we add to our lives?

3. A Father's Defense (Judges 6:28-32)

Gideon's father, Joash, worshiped other gods. But when Gideon destroyed the altar to Baal and the idols, Joash defended his son. The men of the town wanted to kill Gideon, but Joash told them to let Baal fight for himself.

Discuss: *Why do you think Joash defended his son, Gideon?*

Create three groups. Give each group one of the assignments you prepared. Allow them time to complete the assignment. When they are finished, call the groups back together. Direct each group to tell about their verses and their answers to the questions.

Group 1 will report about Abraham. God told him to leave his home and Abraham quickly obeyed.

Group 2 will report about Moses. Moses asked God several questions. He finally asked God to send someone else. But Moses finally obeyed.

Group 3 will report about Esther. She asked that the people fast and pray for her. She was even willing to die.

SUMMARIZE AND CHALLENGE

God can use all people. We just need to be ready and obey. Gideon did not plan to be a warrior but God used him in a powerful way. Gideon led the Israelites to defeat the Midianites.

Direct the group to complete the activity under "In My Context" (page 87). Pray together that God would use each individual and the group to bless others.

Session 11

SAMSON: POWERFUL, BUT WEAK

JUDGES 16:4-6,13-20

PLAN AHEAD

- ☐ Pray for the people in your group. Pray that they will understand that as Christians they have the Holy Spirit living in them.
- ☐ Practice signing the story in Judges 16:4-20 so that you can share the story in class without looking at the book. This will give the group a full picture of the story and help with discussion.
- ☐ Ask _____ to study the “Key Doctrine” for the session to share with the group.

FOCUS ATTENTION

Again the Israelites sinned against God. God allowed the Philistines to rule over Israel. Then he chose a man to be the next judge. His name was Samson. The Angel of the Lord told Samson’s mother that she would become pregnant and have a son. Her son would be a Nazirite. This means that God set him apart for a special task.

Numbers 6 tells us about the Nazirite vows. A Nazirite could not drink any wine or grape juice. The Nazirite could not eat grapes or raisins. They could not cut their hair. They also could not touch a dead body.

EXPLORE THE TEXT (JUDGES 16:4-6,13-20)

Samson was physically very strong. Judges 13-15 has several stories about Samson and his strength. But he was also very weak. He was tempted to do wrong. Many people know the story of Samson and Delilah. Samson fell in love with a Philistine woman. Sign the story for the class.

1. Please Tell Me (Judges 16:4-6)

Samson caused trouble for the Philistines. They wanted to capture him so they asked Delilah for help. Call for the group to explain how Samson tricked Delilah the first time. (He told her that if someone tied him with seven bowstrings he would become weak.)

Discuss: *Why didn't Samson tell Delilah his secret?* (Perhaps he didn't trust her, or maybe he had fun teasing her.)

2. If You Love Me (Judges 16:13-15)

Delilah kept bothering Samson to tell her his secret. She even said that if Samson really loved her, he would trust her. Temptation is like that. Sometimes it keeps bothering us until we become tired and give up.

Discuss: *What are some things we can do to help us resist temptation? How can we support each other?* Encourage the people in your group to help each other by being accountable to each other. When one feels tempted, he or she could call another on video phone or text to ask for prayer.

3. The Philistines Are Here (Judges 16:16-20)

Verse 20 says that Samson did not know that the Lord had left him. Call for _____ to share the information from “Key Doctrine” about the Holy Spirit. Invite volunteers to sign 1 Corinthians 6:19; John 10:27-29; and Romans 8:38-39.

Discuss: *How do we know that the Holy Spirit lives in us?*

SUMMARIZE AND CHALLENGE

Samson became close to Delilah, a woman who did not believe in God. Their relationship led Samson to do wrong things. When we become too close to the world, Satan has more opportunity to tempt us to do wrong. When temptations come to us, we will show whom we really love. We will show love for God when we resist temptation.

Discuss: *As Christians, how can we avoid temptation?* Read 1 Corinthians 10:13 together as a class.

Session 12

FAITH THROUGH TRIALS

RUTH 1:6-18

PLAN AHEAD

- ☐ Pray for the people in your group. Pray that they will learn to trust God during difficult times.
- ☐ Review the introduction to the Book of Ruth.
- ☐ Ask _____ to give a summary of the context of the story. This is in “Understand the Context” in the personal study guide.
- ☐ Using the map on the inside back cover, note the location of Bethlehem and Moab.

FOCUS ATTENTION

Have the volunteer sign an introduction to the session for today from “Understand the Context.” Show the locations of Bethlehem and Moab on the map.

Explain that life was difficult for widows. God warned His people to be good to widows (Exodus 22:22), and the New Testament church took care of widows. They chose seven men to help serve widows (Acts 6:1-6). James 1:27 says that caring for widows and orphans is a sign of true religion.

EXPLORE THE TEXT (RUTH 1:6-18)

1. A Desperate Return (Ruth 1:6-10)

Naomi heard the good news that God provided food in Israel again. She decided to move back home. Naomi’s two daughters-in-law traveled with her part of the way. Then Naomi encouraged them to go back to their homes. This showed that Naomi was not selfish. She cared about her daughters-in-

law more than herself. She wanted them to be happy even if that meant she would be all alone.

Discuss: *What does it mean to be selfish? Give some examples. What does it mean to be selfless? Give some examples.*

2. A Bitter Plea (Ruth 1:11-14)

Explain that in the Old Testament there was a rule regarding what to do if a husband died and had no children (Deuteronomy 25:5-6). Naomi told her daughters-in-law that she could not have more sons, and that if she did, they would not be able to wait for the sons to grow up to marry them. She encouraged them to go on home. Orpah agreed to go back home but Naomi stayed.

Note Ruth 1:13. Naomi says that her life is too sad to share. She felt that the Lord was against her.

Discuss: *What could make a person feel God was against him or her? How can hard times teach us to trust God more?*

Ask members if they remember the story of Job. Remind them how Job suffered but still trusted God.

3. A Living Promise (Ruth 1:15-18)

Ruth made a beautiful promise to Naomi. Sign Ruth 1:16-17. Remember that Ruth was a Moabite. The people of Moab did not worship the true God. But Ruth promised to worship Naomi's God.

Discuss: *How do you think Ruth learned about God? What kind of example was Naomi to Ruth?*

SUMMARIZE AND CHALLENGE

Many people today make promises. Then when it becomes difficult they break their promises. Ruth showed that it is possible to keep a promise even when it is difficult. She didn't know if life would be good or bad in Israel. But she was still faithful to Naomi.

Review the questions from "In My Context" (page 103). Discuss these with the group. Encourage the people in your group to be selfless with their family members and to think of ways to be faithful to them.

Discuss: *How can you show family members that you care for them? How can you show that their needs are more important than your needs?*

Session 13

REDEEMED AND SECURE

RUTH 3:8-13; 4:13-17

PLAN AHEAD

- ❑ Pray for the people in your group. Pray that they will understand that God brings good things out of suffering.
- ❑ Ask _____ to explain the concept of *kinsman redeemer* from the “Key Doctrine” in the personal study guide.
- ❑ Practice signing the story from Ruth 3:1-13 so that you can sign the story to the class without looking at the book.

FOCUS ATTENTION

Call for the volunteer to explain the concept of *kinsman redeemer*. This concept is an important part of the story you will sign. In the New Century Version of the Bible this concept is interpreted “a relative who is supposed to take care of me” (Ruth 3:9). This is a clear way to sign the concept for the story.

EXPLORE THE TEXT (RUTH 3:8-13; 4:13-17)

Introduce the story. Explain that God made a plan for helping poor people. Leviticus 23:22 says, “When you harvest your crops on your land, do not harvest all the way to the corners of your field. If grain falls onto the ground, don’t gather it up. Leave it for poor people and foreigners in your country. I am the LORD your God.” When poor people gathered the grain, it was called gleaning. Ruth met Boaz while she was gleaning in his field. Now sign the story in Ruth 3:1-13.

1. Inquiry (Ruth 3:8-9)

Discuss: *What do you think about Ruth’s actions?* Emphasize that Ruth seemed to trust her mother-in-law, Naomi. She also trusted God to take care of her.

2. Interest (Ruth 3:10-13)

Boaz wanted to take care of Ruth and Naomi but there was a relative who was closer to them than him. He was honest and prepared to tell the other relative about this first. Boaz promised to take care of them if the other relative refused. Boaz acted in a responsible way.

Discuss: What responsibilities do we have for our families? Should we be responsible for their physical needs? Should we help with spiritual needs? Explain.

3. Inheritance (Ruth 4:13-17)

Allow volunteers to share the end of the story. Then sign Ruth 4:13-17. Remind the group that in last week's session, Naomi and Ruth only had each other. They did not have a family to take care of them. Naomi felt that God was against her. It was difficult for her to imagine that God had a plan for her. Now she had a family and a son to carry on Elimelech's family name.

Direct the class to read Matthew 1:5. Note that Ruth's son, Obed, was King David's grandfather. Obed is in the family line of Jesus.

Discuss: How did God bring about good in Naomi's life? How can God take a bad situation and make it good?

SUMMARIZE AND CHALLENGE

Bill and Rose were married for 35 years. They were faithful to their Deaf church. They helped drive the church van to bring Deaf children to church on Sundays. Bill taught Sunday School and Rose was the secretary for the group. They both showed a good Christian example to the Deaf community. One day Bill died suddenly from a heart attack. Rose has been a **widow** for 20 years. She doesn't drive so members of the Deaf church take her to church and to do her shopping. The church has an opportunity to serve God by helping her. She is still faithful to God and a blessing to the church, and they are a blessing to her. Does your Deaf group take care of people in your group when they need help? What can you do for others?

Guide the group to review the activity under "In My Context" (page 111). Highlight information about the next study.

—Joshua 1:7

The Judges of Israel



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Joshua; Judges; Ruth

God is moving. It is undeniable when we look into the Old Testament books of Joshua, Judges, and Ruth. Any thoughts that God is a disconnected deity floating aimlessly somewhere in the heavens is simply not what the Bible teaches. Instead, these books of the Bible tell us that God is active. He is involved in the lives of His people. In this study, you will see that God has a plan and He fulfills His promises. You will learn that God uses the most unexpected of people to do extraordinary feats of power and grace. You will be encouraged that even in your darkest hour, God is moving on your behalf. You will be inspired to follow Him in faith.



Let the Word dwell in you.

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19 And of every liv
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20 Of fowls after t
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6:17 Only after He co
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all-destroying flood in t
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covered the entire glob
this (2 Pet. 2:5; 3:6). Th
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also tackle questions
ured to flood the enti
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18 The term "covenan
ment between the pa