"All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness."
2 Timothy 3:16

YEAR 1 BOOK 4

General Assembly of the True Jesus Church

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Junior 2 Year 1 Book 4

God's Chosen People

G.A of the True Jesus Church U.S.A

YEAR 1 BOOK 4

JUNIOR 2

Teacher's Guide

THEME:

God's Chosen People

The Righteous Heart

Summer Quarter:
June, July, August

My hope is built on nothing less than Jesus' blood and righteousness. I dare not trust the sweetest frame, but wholly lean on Jesus' name.

When He shall come with trumpet sound. Oh, may I then in Him be found; dressed in His righteousness alone, faultless to stand before the throne.
(Edward Mote)

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YEAR 1 BOOK 4

JUNIOR 2

Teacher's Guide

THEME:

God's Chosen People

THEMES

God's Chosen People

Unit 1: Out of Egypt into Canaan

After an arduous struggle against the Pharaoh, with God showing His magnificent prowess against the Egyptians, the Israelites finally left the land of bondage. Out in the wilderness, they went through many ups and downs of faith before finally arriving at the banks of the Jordan, with the promised land right before them. In this unit, the students will study about the features of the promised land (Holy Land) and the first wars the Israelites had to fight to secure the land. As with other past experiences, it is through obedience to God's commandments and total reliance on God that victories can be wrought. This should be the take-home message for the students. The beautiful land of Canaan was promised to the Israelites by God. From the terrain and climate, we can see that indeed, the providence of God is marvelous. The leadership of Joshua and his unwavering faith towards God is worthy of emphasis to the students. The battle of Jericho and the battle at Ai are two contrasting examples that illustrate the importance of unquestioning obedience to God's commandments.

Unit 2: The Kingdom of Israel Established

The choices we make in life can have far-reaching effects on our future and even future generations. It is important therefore to carefully consider all our decisions. God had direct sovereign rule over the Israelites, but they chose to be ruled by a king instead. As it turns out, and as the prophet Samuel forewarned them, they went through much suffering under kings who were wicked. With some kings, the whole nation was even brought to idol-worshiping before the sight of God.

In these lessons, the students will study the works and lives of some prophets and kings. An overarching pattern can be seen: Those who obey God prosper. Whenever the people turn away from God, they put their own lives and security in jeopardy. From the lives of the good kings who failed (like David) and the deeds of the evil kings, the students should understand the importance of a consistent life of enduring in God's words.

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WELCOME TO THE J2 CURRICULUM

This Teacher's Guide has been designed to help the teachers plan the class and become more effective in the teaching ministry.

Because of the impact of God's word, it is our prayer that we see our students understand and apply the Bible to their lives. Our ultimate goal of this curriculum is to see lives transformed. Here you'll find the materials you will need to teach the unchanging truth of God's word.

This Curriculum Includes:

Sample

LESSON TITLE

Getting Your Spiritual Life in Shape

LISTED SCRIPTURES

Eph 6:13 –18; Ex 33:17 – 23; 34:28 – 33; Num 12:6 – 8

LESSON AIM

1) To examine the important elements of spiritual growth
2) To discover how to win the battle between the spirit and the flesh
3) To implement a plan to get the students' spiritual lives in shape by using specific goals

MEMORY VERSE

"That you may become blameless and harmless, children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world" (Phil 2:15) (NKJV)

BIBLE READING FOR THE WEEK

Eph 1-2

All of these sabbath lessons are built on:

1. (Not listed in the Student Workbook) **BIBLE BACKGROUND**
Extra resource related to the lesson for the students and teachers to know.

2. **WARM UP**
Something to capture their focus to get them started.

3. **BIBLE STUDY**
Lead your students in discovering the timeless truth of God's word through inductive Bible study.
(Student Worksheet is only in outline form)

4. **CHECK FOR UNDERSTANDING**
Find out if the students comprehend the information that is being presented. Teachers can check for understanding in different ways. One way is to ask them questions related to what they've just learned.

5. **LIFE APPLICATION**
Help each student apply God's word to his/her life as the Holy Spirit leads him/her. Encourage students to come up with a plan of action to practice what they've learned. How are they going to implement their plans? When are they going to apply it?

6. **REFLECTION AND PRAYER**
Ask them to share with you what sticks in their mind after the lesson, before the concluding prayer.

A Reminder!

Unit goals and teacher devotional are listed before each unit. Bible reading for the week and the memory verse are listed in each lesson. Be sure to read through each lesson before you plan and teach your class.

Understanding Your Teens

It is important to teach teens in order to equip them with a strong foundation of good, solid faith. This generation that we are working with is searching for answers to truth. Although they may have many ups and downs in their lives or lack spiritual depth, they do want to know who makes a real difference in the real world.

Teens live in a time when believing in God is considered ridiculous. They also live in a world that is in constant violation of God's laws. Some of the results of this are health epidemics, environmental devastation and domestic violence. Therefore, they are faced with important decisions each and every day. What they decide can ultimately affect their values, faith, education, choice in friends, occupation, marriage, and church-life. In addition to these complexities, teens may be struggling with peer pressure, fashion expectations, substance abuse issues, family/relationship problems as well as issues of identity and self-concept. In other words, they are rocked with change, whether spiritual, emotional, social or physical.

Teens need something or someone to rely on, anything that they can look up to as their standard. Our job, then, is to lead our teens to see a powerful God in this ever-changing world. Surprisingly, teens want to be "spiritual," despite all the hype around them. Therefore, they need to hear personal testimonies, Bible truths, how God's love has touched the lives of other people and what kind of hopes we all have despite living in an often senseless world. The question we need to answer as we teach is, "How can we affirm their faith in a God who loves and cares for them like no other?"

Teens' Desires (1)

1. Love and Acceptance

Teens have a great need for acceptance by their peers, and they care about what others think of them. They are worried about how others perceive them physically (attractiveness: too tall, too short, too fat, too thin, the notion of sex) and mentally (intelligence: being too smart or dumb). They also look to peers, teachers, sports figures and media personalities as role models. Therefore, the way teachers express their faith and belief will be a positive witness for them.

2. Relationship with God/Finding Faith

At this age, teens will no longer come to church simply because their parents tell them to. They should be beginning to develop their own relationships with Jesus Christ. Although their reasoning skills will cause them to question what part God and the Bible play in their lives, it is important for teachers to continue to challenge them to make time for prayer and devotional life outside of the classroom and church so that they will be able to establish their own faith. Their spiritual goal is to find meaning and purpose in their lives through Jesus Christ.

3. Personal Experiences With God

Up till this point in their lives, teens probably have yet to have many personal experiences with God. Their devotional life has likely consisted of attending church services, going to classes and praying before going to bed. While this regularity is good, it is not enough. Now is the time to encourage them to pray consistently so that they may realize the roles God is playing in their lives. Share with them personal testimonies that will touch their hearts. Soon, they will begin to see God as a personal friend, comforter and advisor.

Teens' Desires (2)

4. Purpose in Life/True Fulfillment
Teens want to know who they are. At this crucial age, they are beginning to ask themselves, "What is my purpose in life?" and "What does it all mean?" A teenager needs to see himself as a separate and a worthwhile person in order to attain a successful transition into adulthood. Their drive for independence is strong and they feel a need to prove themselves as capable individuals. Some parents may have a difficult time letting go and end up being over-controlling because they find this "growing up" threatening. As a result, the teenager may end up rebelling. As teachers, we need to show support and encouragement, and provide helpful advice. We also need to affirm their talents and abilities to let them know their self-worth. Teenagers do respect parents and adults who show consistency and structure. As they make their own decisions and learn from their mistakes, it will allow them to find their own identities and seek out what it is they believe in. When they are able to do so, they can also become faithful to their beliefs and values.

5. Purity and Holiness
Perhaps because of their young age and their lack of experience in the real world, teens often feel they can overcome anything if they try hard enough. "I can handle it," they might think. "It may have happened to them, but it won't happen to me!" In one sense, it is great to have confidence. However, when they are faced with real temptations, they may also be unprepared to deal with the issues with a clear head. While we don't need to bombard them with stories of people who have failed to remain pure and holy, we do need to let them understand the reality and difficulties. Challenge them to think about what is important to them and encourage them to stand firm in what they believe.

How Do I Effectively Communicate With My Students?

1. Greet every student at every class session
A friendly and sincere greeting communicates undivided attention. "How's it going?" expresses genuine concern. "It's great to see you" can transform anyone's day. Your greeting may take only 30-40 seconds, but your students will deeply feel that you really care.

2. Send an occasional card/email or pick up the phone to find out how someone is doing
Saying, "I was wondering how you were doing," will make a big difference in someone's life. An investment of four or five minutes and the price of a postage stamp can literally make a teenager's day come alive.

3. Open your home for fellowship or special events
Our greatest memories result from serving the Lord together through fellowship and special services or events. Every fellowship or meeting will provide a new opportunity to "reach out and touch someone."

4. Pray with them
Teens need to know that their teachers are constantly praying for them. Even though they may be very busy with their daily chores, always remind them that praying together at a certain time is the only way to draw wisdom and strength from God.

MY.STUDENTS@TJC.ORG

In this 21st century, 99% of the youth communicate via email every day! With the help of the internet, many people have found a great way to keep in touch with those they normally wouldn't be able to talk to and with those who live far away.

As an RE teacher, using email to reach out to our students is a wonderful way to **build relationships**. Since you know your students already, send out an email that goes a little deeper than greetings and praise. Perhaps you could ask your students a thought-provoking question about what goes on in the world, about what he or she believes in, about relationships within their families, or maybe begin with a gentle question about their relationship with God.

The truth is, your students love to find email in their boxes even though you and your students don't really talk frequently. At the very least, consider sending your students an occasional encouraging email or e-card to let them know that they are in your thoughts or to wish them well on a test or sporting event. You can even make your student's day with a quick note of praise or a written pat on the back.

In order to reach out to your students effectively through email, keep your message brief—two or three short paragraphs is sufficient. And believe it or not, sometimes only a sentence is required. Living in this fast-paced society, not many of us want to scroll through a book-length email. Also, it is very vital to respond to messages within a day or two. Your students look to you for support and guidance. You will easily lose their confidence in you if a week goes by with no feedback.

Last but not least, try to use a gentle tone in your email. Let them know that you are always there, especially when you notice that one of your students is sick or simply feeling low spiritually. Quote Scripture sparingly and use liberal doses of humor. Teens do not respond well to teachers who always condemn. **Be there, and be an example.**

Email is a great door to communicating with your students. May God help us strengthen the faith of our students and nurture understanding with God's word.

HOW CAN I GET THEM MOTIVATED & TO STAY INTERESTED?

You can involve...

1. a game or debate
2. a video clip
3. brainstorming sessions
4. a poster
5. interesting questions and news stories
6. a touching testimony or hymn
7. quiet time for them to reflect
8. arts and crafts

When you deliver your lesson, it can be through...

1. lecture style
2. an in-depth Bible study
3. a skit
4. a meaningful and relevant video

Teachers can check for understanding by...

1. asking the students to share what they have learned
2. asking questions about the Bible study
3. asking the students to come up with a good moral for the lesson
4. asking which one of the characters they would have wanted to be had they been a part of the scene
5. asking the students to apply the Bible study and to make relevant connections to their own lives

Memory Verse Contest

Do you know that working on **memory verses** together in class can provide excellent teachable moments about the word of God? Most people think that J2 class students already know many of the verses in the Bible. However, that's not necessarily true. Therefore, we as RE teachers should emphasize this part of the lesson more than others. Why? Because memorizing the Scriptures can help students **resist temptations** and **build a stronger faith.**

Make sure that it's something that involves the **both** of you. Think about challenging your students to memorize the memory verse with you each week. Maybe you could suggest that both you and the students recite all 13 verses by the end of the quarter. This is a great way to motivate your students. Perhaps you could challenge your students to a contest. Make it a real challenge and see who can memorize the most verses by a certain time. If everyone wins, take your students out for ice cream or even out to lunch.

Since you need to recite the memory verse from week to week, you can spend more time talking about it with your students. Let the word of God impact them in their daily lives and be a part of their lives too. After a period of time, you will definitely see the lives of your students flourish just as God intended. The key point is that if your students see that you are serious about memorizing Scripture yourself, they will see that it is a **vital way of growing more like Jesus Christ**. May God strengthen our hands as we continue to serve Him.

Bible Reading For This Quarter

1. Num 13, 14; Deut 12, 28
2. Deut 6, 7, 8, 9
3. Josh; Deut 4, 19
4. Judges, Ruth
5. 1 Sam
6. 2 Sam 1, 6, 22
7. 1 Kgs 8, 12, 16–19
8. 2 Kgs
9. 2 Chron 2, 3, 19
10. Ez 3, 9, 10
11. Neh 1, 4, 13
12. Esth 4, 6, 8

Memory Verses For June, July and August

1. "If the Lord delights in us, then He will bring us into this land and give it to us, 'a land which flows with milk and honey.' " (Num 14:8)
2. "For you are a holy people to the Lord your God; the Lord your God has chosen you for Himself, a special treasure above all the peoples on the face of the earth." (Deut 7:6)
3. "This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate in it day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it." (Josh 1:8)
4. "Entreat me not to leave you or to turn back from following after you; for wherever you go, I will go; and wherever you lodge, I will lodge; your people shall be my people, your God shall be my God." (Ruth 1:16)
5. "Has the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed than the fat of rams." (1 Sam 15:22)
6. "God is my strength and power, and He makes my way perfect. He makes my feet like the feet of deer, and sets me on my high places." (2 Sam 22:33, 34)
7. "Behold, heaven and the heaven of heavens cannot contain You. How much less this temple which I have built." (1 Kgs 8:27)
8. "Blessed is the man who fears the Lord, who delights greatly in His commandments." (Ps 112:1)
9. "The Lord is with you while you are with Him. If you seek Him, He will be found by you; but if you forsake Him, He will forsake you." (2 Chron 15:2)
10. "This is the word of the Lord to Zerubbabel: 'Not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit,' says the Lord of hosts." (Zech 4:6)
11. "For if I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear. But certainly God has heard me; He has attended to the voice of my prayer" (Ps 66:18, 19)
12. "Yet who knows whether you have come to the kingdom for such a time as this?" (Esth 4:14)

Out of Egypt into Canaan

unit 1

Goals

After an arduous struggle against the Pharaoh, with God showing His magnificent prowess against the Egyptians, the Israelites finally left the land of bondage. Out in the wilderness, they went through many ups and downs of faith before finally arriving at the banks of the Jordan, with the promised land right before them. In this unit, the students will study about the features of the promised land (Holy Land) and the first wars the Israelites had to fight to secure the land. As with other past experiences, it is through obedience to God's commandments and total reliance on God that victories can be wrought. This should be the take-home message for the students. The beautiful land of Canaan was promised to the Israelites by God. From the terrain and climate, we can see that indeed, the providence of God is marvelous. The leadership of Joshua and his unwavering faith towards God are worthy of emphasis to the students. The battle of Jericho and the battle at Ai are two contrasting examples that illustrate the importance of unquestioning obedience to God's commandments.

Teacher Devotional

Although the Israelites knew the commandments of God well, history has shown us that knowing is not the same as being able to carry out the task. Hence, we see how the Israelites repeatedly sinned against God, generation after generation. This should be a good warning to today's Christians. Even if we have been through years of religious education in church, there is no guarantee that we will be able to apply our religious knowledge to our daily lives. When real temptations arise, many fall. It is therefore crucial that we set strict boundaries for ourselves as to what we can and cannot do, as Christians who want to adhere to the words of God. Once we give in and say "yes" to sin, we will find ourselves yielding more and more easily thereafter. We need to draw clear lines and say "no" to sin right from the beginning, lest we fall into the same fate as the Israelites who turned away from God time and again.

Obedience to God's Commands

"This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate in it day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success." (Josh 1:8)

Lesson 1

Introduction to the Holy Land

Listed Scriptures

Numbers 13, 14; Deuteronomy 12, 28

Lesson Aim

1) To acquire an overview of the geography and significance of the Holy Land to the Israelite nation
2) To understand the purpose and expectations of God in bringing the Israelites into the Holy Land
3) To understand God's love and mercy for the Israelites in bringing them into the Holy Land

Memory Verse

"If the Lord delights in us, then He will bring us into this land and give it to us, 'a land which flows with milk and honey.' " (Num 14:8)

Bible Reading For This Week *(for students and teachers)*

Numbers 13, 14; Deuteronomy 12, 28

BIBLE BACKGROUND

This quarter, we will cover the history books from Joshua to Esther. We will begin where the Pentateuch left off with Israel on the east bank of the Jordan, cover the partial conquests of the territories of Canaan and the period of the kings, and finally end with the return to rebuild the holy city and its wall after 70 years of exile. A large part of the history of the Israelites evolved through their journeys and settling in the land of Canaan. It is necessary therefore to have an overarching concept of the geography of the promised land.

The land promised by God to the Israelites – the land flowing with milk and honey (Ex 3:8) – has a few different names in the Bible. It is most commonly known as the land of Canaan. As this is a land promised by God to the Israelites, it is sometimes known as the "land of Israel" (Mt 2:20). After the exile, the majority of those who

returned were those of the tribe of Judah and hence, the land is also called Judea. After the Israelites settled in that land, the northern-most city was Dan and the southern-most city was Beersheba. This explains why this piece of land is sometimes referred to as "from Dan to Beersheba" (1 Kgs 4:25; 2 Sam 3:10). During the time of the Roman Empire, this land was counted as part of the province of Syria, and was sometimes simply referred to as Syria (Lk 2:2).

Here is a list of some of the more well-known cities in Canaan before the time of the Israelite conquest:

Northern cities: Dan, Hazor, Acco, Beth-Shan, Jezreel
Cities in the mid-lands: Samaria, Shechem, Joppa
Southern cities: Jerusalem, Bethel, Hebron, Beersheba
Cities east of the River: Golan, Rabbah (in Ammon, present-day Amman), Heshbon

W A R M U P

Have you ever dreamed of going to a place where things would be very different from where you now live, where you believe that things will be even better than what you are now experiencing? What type of a place is that?

How does God feature in this dream of yours? What do you think your relationship with God will be like over there? How would you keep God's commandment or live out His teachings in the new place?

B I B L E S T U D Y

Physical Geography of the Promised Land

A. Coastal Plains

The coast of Canaan covered the southern half of the eastern border of the Mediterranean Sea. Its length was about 150 miles from north to south, and its width about 50 miles from east to west. It is a ribbon of fertile land between the desert land and the sea. At the south, there is the Plain of Philistia. This is the biggest plain in the land, and this was the dwelling place of the Philistines. It was allocated to the tribes of Judah and Simeon.

Moving up northward along the coast, there sits the Plain of Sharon. This is a lush plain where flowers grow (Song 2:1). It was allocated to Dan and the half-tribe of Manasseh.

Further up north is the Plain of Acco, which sits north of Mount Carmel. It is close to Lebanon and was originally inhabited by the Phoenicians (Sidons) and Hittites. It was allocated to the tribe of Asher.

There is also the Plain of Jezreel east of Mount Carmel. It was allocated to the tribe of Issachar. Parts of the inheritance of the half-tribe of Manasseh sits on the Plain of Jezreel too.

B. Central Mountains

In the region of Galilee, there are Mount Tabor and the hill of Moreh. The climate is temperate, with plentiful rainfall, making it ideal for crop cultivation. This was the region allocated to the tribe of Naphtali.

The region of Ephraim/Samaria lies east of the Plain of Sharon. The climate is similar to that of the region of Galilee. Many civilizations existed there long before the Israelites came. The Perrizites and the Hivites dwelled there before the land was allocated to the tribes of Manasseh, Issachar and Ephraim.

The region of Judea lies east of the Plain of Philistia and south of the region of Ephraim. Rainfall is relatively scarce here, and the land is only suitable for nomadic grazing.

Between the Plain of Philistia and the region of Judea lies the hilly region of Shephelah. It is a very important passageway in the south of the Holy Land. It was allocated to the tribe of Judah.

Lying south of the region of Judea is Negeb, a desert land. This place was scarcely populated. The Amalekites lived there before the land was allocated to Simeon.

C. The Jordan River

This is the major river in ancient Palestine, linking the two major inland lakes, the Sea of Galilee and the Dead Sea (also known as Salt Sea). The principal source of the Jordan is the precipitation on Mount Hermon and the three springs near Tel Dan, Banias and Hasbaya. In antiquity, some of the headwaters of the Jordan River flowed through the Huleh Valley, a lake until modern times, which is some 985 ft higher than the Sea of Galilee. This rapid drop in elevation, which continues farther south, probably explains the river's name, which means "to go down" in Hebrew. The river is joined by its main tributary, the Yarmuk, at the south. Another tributary from the east, the Jabbok, joins it further south. The river is narrow and easy to cross though the current is often swift.

Due to the intense heat of the Rift Valley and the availability of moisture from the Jordan along its riverbanks, much of the vegetation there has the characteristics of a tropical jungle. One plant that grows freely there is the papyrus.

D. East of the River

This was actually not part of the land promised to the Israelites by God. But, the tribes of Reuben, Gad and Manasseh asked to have it and it was allocated to them. Some of the more geographically salient places include:

a. The Highlands of Bashan: Bashan lies east of the Sea of Galilee, and south of Mount Hermon. It consists of mainly tropical forests and grasslands. It is famous for its cattle (Ps 22:12). It is where the present-day Golan Heights is situated.
b. Gilead: Gilead lies south of Bashan, east of the Jordan. It is famous for its oak trees and herds. The Amorites lived on this land. At one time, the Ammonites occupied the land too. It was later allocated to the tribe of Gad.
c. Moab: Moab lies east of the Jordan. The climate is warmer and drier than in Gilead. The land is only suitable for nomadic grazing. The Edomites lived here before it was allocated to the tribe of Reuben. Mount Nebo, where Moses ascended and died, is located here (Deut 32:48).

Teaching Tips

While it is too ambitious to expect the students to be able to remember all the names and details of the territories in the Holy Land, it is important nevertheless to create as conducive a lesson as possible for the students to be able to remember the important places. One suggestion is to divide the class into groups of two or three to work together. From interaction with fellow classmates, the potential boredom in studying about geographical details can be taken away.

For the Bible Study section, have the students search for and identify the places on the map given as they read about them.

Check for Understanding

1. Have a blank map of the Holy Land for the students to fill in the names of the territories, either individually or in groups.

2. Prepare "sticker cards" with names of the following places and quiz the students on the location of the places (order randomized):
   - Plain of Sharon
   - Plain of Philistia
   - Sea of Galilee
   - Salt Sea/Dead Sea
   - Region of Judea
   - Negeb
   - Samaria (Ephraim)
   - Bashan
   - Gilead
   - Moab

Life Application

God's Deliverance

The Israelites experienced constant physical, mental and emotional anguish during their days in Egypt. Not only were they ostracized as a group of the underclass, they were subjected to hard labor, doing impossible tasks such as making bricks without straw (Ex 5). It was under such hard circumstances that the Israelites cried out to God, and God delivered them (Ex 3:7, 8). God wanted to bring them out of bondage into a land flowing with milk and honey. Out of Egypt, into Canaan - the deliverance of God behind the exodus is a great demonstration of God's great love for them.

In a way, we can see that our lives almost parallel the history of the Israelites. Some of us might have led lives without God. After knowing God and His salvation, our lives took a 180 degree turn for the better. Some of us might have been born into Christian families. Still, there were times when we were far from God. Yet, God never forsook us. He remembered our cries when we were in anguish. He delivered us. He is always saving us from our "bondage" and bringing us to better situations, almost like one "flowing with milk and honey."

Write down some of your personal experiences with God that parallel the deliverance of God for the Israelites. What type of "Egyptian bondage" were you in? What kind of "land flowing with milk and honey" were you delivered into? After writing it down, share your experiences with your classmates. Below are guidelines for you:

Personal experiences of God's deliverance

You can talk about physical deliverance such as being saved from a car accident. You can also talk about emotional and spiritual experiences such as deliverance from anxiety, worry or sadness.

Deliverance from "Egyptian bondage"

Egypt is often likened to the secular world that entices Christians with many pleasures of this life. Talk about some of the present-day Egyptian bondage that you see around you. You may also want to talk about those that you are currently struggling with, such as the lure of TV, parties, Internet games and chat rooms.

Land flowing with milk and honey

If we walk closely with the Lord Jesus Christ, we can experience "heaven on earth." Talk about some of your experiences of "heaven on earth" or "land flowing with milk and honey," where you felt very close to God and could savor the sweetness of the closeness with Him.

Reflection & Prayer

In Genesis 13:14, the Lord God first promised the land of Canaan to Abraham (then called Abram). Many generations later, Abraham's descendants finally came to the banks of the Jordan, ready to enter the land of Canaan to possess the land. One could almost hear the words of God resounding one more time: "Lift your eyes now and look from the place where you are – northward, southward, eastward and westward; for all the land which you see I give to you and your descendants forever" (Gen 13:14, 15). Imagine yourself to be one of the Israelites, standing by the River Jordan, ready to enter the land. What does the promise of God about this land mean to you? What are the feelings going through your mind? What would your prayer be to God at this time?

In Isaiah 54:2, 3, God says, "Enlarge the place of your tent, and let them stretch out the curtains of your dwellings ... for you shall expand to the right and to the left, and your descendants will inherit the nations." This can also be applied to the context of preaching the gospel. Where preaching the gospel is concerned, how do you think this promise of God serves as an encouragement to you? How can you put it into practice?

Lesson 2

The Chosen Israelites

Listed Scriptures

Deuteronomy 6, 7, 8, 9

Lesson Aim

1) That the students may understand what a special privilege it is to be among the chosen ones of God
2) That the students may understand and be able to talk about how they should lead their lives as special people of God on this earthly journey

Memory Verse

"For you are a holy people to the Lord your God; the Lord your God has chosen you for Himself, a special treasure above all the peoples on the face of the earth." (Deut 7:6)

Bible Reading For This Week *(for students and teachers)*

Deuteronomy 6, 7, 8, 9

Bible Background

Archaeological excavations at Palestinian sites provide information about the material culture of biblical times and also allow for some timeline correlation. The Exodus (about 1290 B.C.) coincided with the Late Bronze Age (1500–1200 B.C.). The conquest of Canaan is commonly dated as occurring between 1250 and 1200 B.C., and the period of the Judges continued from 1200 to 1020 B.C. This was the period of the Iron Age (1200–1000 B.C.).

It may seem tedious to learn about the daily lives of the Israelites of this period, especially when the details appear to be mere dry monotonous historical records. As teachers, it is important that we understand the significance of these apparently "minor" details of history. A comprehensive picture of one people, and their relationship with God, requires knowledge of how daily living was carried out. Without

these details, the Israelites would appear to be a mythological people, whose life events happen in a historical and cultural vacuum. It would then be hard to identify with them, whether in their obedience to God or their difficulties and disobedience. If necessary, teachers should explain this significance to the students.

Warm Up

We have studied and heard about how the Israelites were a special people of God, separated from the rest of the peoples of their time. In terms of their religious and moral codes, how do you think they were different from the others? In terms of the daily aspects of living, do you think they differed from the other peoples of their time? In what ways were they likely similar, and in what ways were they different?

Today, we're going to learn about the lives of the Israelites when they began to settle down in the land of Canaan. We'll see how well our answers to the above questions match what this lesson will show us.

Bible Study

Daily Living

A. Religious Aspects

Monotheism

Following the legacy left by Abraham, the Israelites were monotheists. The Pentateuch reiterated many times the abomination of idol-worship and polytheism. However, in retrospect, we know that not every one of the Israelites kept the faith, as sometimes, they lapsed into idol-worshiping.

Monotheism was a distinctive characteristic that set the Israelites apart from the rest of their neighbors. "For from the top of the rocks I see him, and from the hills I behold him; there, a people dwelling alone, not reckoning itself among the nations" (Num 23:9). Religion, culture and identity as a people/nation were one and the same thing for the Israelites. From the time Abraham was called by God out of his homeland of Ur, a special people was already chosen—a unique race belonging to God, knowing God and being taught and guided by Him. This is a special privilege that the Israelites often did not cherish, for they were always distracted by the many different ways of their neighbors and often wanted to be like the other peoples.

The Priesthood

God stipulated that the Levites were the ones to take care of all the affairs regarding worship. "Bring the tribe of Levi near and present them before Aaron, the priest, that they may serve him. And, they shall attend to his needs and the needs of the whole congregation before the tabernacle of meeting, to do the work of the tabernacle" (Num 3:6, 7). From among the Levites, the high priest would be picked to attend to important ceremonies, such as offering the sacrifice on the Day of Atonement. From time to time, God would raise prophets through the movement of His Holy Spirit. The prophets acted as the bridge between God and men. As time passed, there were even schools of prophets being set up (2 Sam 2:3-18). In later times, we also see the emergence of scribes. These are the "men of letters," and literally, being the learned ones, they often drafted covenants and letters for the people.

The Feasts

The Israelites kept seven festivals each year – the Passover, Pentecost, Day of Atonement, Feasts of Tabernacles, Unleavened Bread, Firstfruits and Trumpets. Adults had to go to the Holy Temple to keep these feasts (cf. Lev 23; Ex 12; Num 29).

The Holy Sabbath

For six days, the Israelites were to work. But the seventh day was the Holy Sabbath day hallowed by God. They had to go to the Levites and teachers of the Law to hear the words of God. On this day, the priests would offer sacrifices in the tabernacle. The people were often found lacking in the observance of the Sabbath, and as a result, the religious leaders started imposing many regulations to prevent them from working on the Sabbath. One example of such a regulation was that they could not even cook on the Sabbath.

B. Moral and Familial Codes

Before they entered the land of Canaan, God instructed the Israelites through the mouth of Moses that close relatives were not to be married (Lev 18:7-18). Marriage with members of the same tribe were, however, encouraged (Num 36; 27:4). They were also instructed specifically not to intermarry with gentiles (Deut 7:3, 4). While there was no explicit instruction about monogamy, it was generally accepted as the norm.

Within a marriage, the husband assumed the role of the head of the household, and the wife belonged to him. Divorce was permitted only in circumstances of sexual immorality (Deut 24:1, 2).

In a family, children were esteemed as an inheritance from God (Ps 127:3). Hence, a barren woman was often seen as cursed by God and despised by society.

On the level of the tribe, the eldest man would be the head of the tribe. Each family would share a tent, with the parents and the unmarried children living together.

C. Daily Practical Living

Nomadic pasturing was one of the main means of livelihood for many of the Israelites. Sheep were the most commonly seen animal, followed by cattle and camels. They built tents where pasture and water could be found. Huge stones were piled up as walls to make sheep pens.

The Israelites also engaged in farming. A considerable area of the land of Canaan had lands that were dry and hard. Often two oxen had to be yoked together to pull the plows. Wheat was the most basic crop. Barley was also commonly cultivated. Among the fruit produce of the land, grapes, olives and figs were the most representative.

Check for Understanding

1. In what ways were the Israelites separated as a distinct people from the rest of the peoples?

2. List the seven major feasts.

3. What were the two most important reasons for keeping the Sabbath (cf. Ex 20:11; Deut 5:15)?

4. What were some of the things that the Israelites did for their livelihood?

Life Application

God's Love

An article in the National Geographic entitled "Under His Wings" provides a penetrating picture of God's wings of protection:

After a forest fire in Yellowstone National Park, forest rangers began their trek up a mountain to assess the inferno's damage. One ranger found a bird literally petrified in ashes, perched statuesquely on the ground at the base of a tree. Somewhat sickened by the eerie sight, he knocked over the bird with a stick. When he struck it, three tiny chicks scurried from under their dead mother's wings. The loving mother, keenly aware of impending disaster, had carried her offspring to the base of the tree and had gathered them under her wings, instinctively knowing that the toxic smoke would rise. She could have flown to safety but had refused to abandon her babies. When the blaze had arrived and the heat had scorched her small body, the mother had remained steadfast. Because she had been willing to die, those under the cover of her wings would live. "He will cover you with His feathers, and under His wings you shall take refuge" (Ps 91:4). Being loved this much so should make a difference in your life. Remember the One who loves you and then, be different because of it.

The story we've just read draws a parallel between the love of God and the love of the mother bird. Indeed, God's love for us is one that brings Him down from His glorious throne to come into the world to save us through His own death. "Surely He has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows . . . He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities" (Isa 53:4, 5). God loves us so much, that in order to save us from death, He bore our sins and suffered in our stead. It is a love almost unfathomable, and it's so amazing, for God became a human being and died for us!

This message about God's love is something we have heard so often that we don't really see its significance anymore. We don't realize the degree of sacrifice made by God to save us. It has become something we take for granted, like water flowing out of the faucet when we turn it on or like electricity supplied at the flick of a switch. We seldom slow down to think of the sacrifice of God behind the saving grace that we enjoy every moment.

Here is a description of what happens when a human being is crucified. Think of how Jesus Christ suffered for us as a human being, and may God move us to remember His great love for us once again:

What is Crucifixion?
A medical doctor provides a physiological description:

The crossbeam is placed on the ground and the exhausted man is quickly thrown backwards with his shoulders against the wood. The legionnaire feels for the depression at the front of the wrist. He drives a heavy, square wrought iron nail through the wrist deep into the wood. Quickly, he moves to the other side and repeats the action, being careful not to pull the arm too tightly, but to allow some flex and movement. The beam and the man are then lifted into place on the upright timber. The left foot is pressed backward against the right foot, and with both feet extended, toes down, a nail is driven through the arch of each, leaving the knees flexed. The victim is now crucified.

As he slowly sags down with more weight on the nails in the wrists, excruciating fiery pain shoots along the fingers and up the arms to explode in the brain – the nails in the wrists are putting pressure on the median nerves. As he pushes himself upward to avoid this stretching torment, he places the full weight on the nail through his feet. Again he feels the searing agony of the nail tearing through the nerves between the bones of his feet.

As the arms fatigue, cramps sweep through his muscles, knotting them with deep relentless and throbbing pain. With these cramps comes the inability to push himself upward to breathe. Air can be drawn into the lungs but not exhaled. He fights to raise himself in order to get even one small breath.

Finally, carbon dioxide builds up in the lungs and in the blood stream and the cramps partially subside. Spasmodically, he is able to push himself upward to exhale and bring in life-giving oxygen.

There are hours of limitless pain, cycles of twisting, joint-rending cramps, intermittent partial asphyxiation, and searing pain as tissue is torn from his lacerated back as he moves up and down against rough timber. Then another agony begins: a crushing pain deep in the chest as the pericardium slowly fills with serum and begins to compress the heart.

It is now almost over. The loss of tissue fluids has reached a critical level. The compressed heart is struggling to pump heavy, thick, sluggish blood into the tissues. The tortured lungs are making frantic efforts to gasp in small gulps of air. He can feel the chill of death creeping through his tissues. Finally, he allows his body to die.

All these, the Bible describes in simple words: "they crucified Him" (Mk 15:24). This is the pain and suffering that God brought upon Himself when He chose to come and die as a human being for us. What wondrous love is this?

Write a paragraph each for the following questions, and then share it with the rest of your class:

1. Knowing that we're being loved this much should make a difference in our lives – what are some of the things we want to do so our Lord Jesus would not have suffered in vain for us?
2. Have we ever realized the great love behind our election as His special chosen people? What can we do to stand out as His special people in today's world?
3. In which aspects of our lives and to what extent can we adopt the ways of our peers at school and in society?
4. How can we tell this great story of love to the rest of the world? How do we do it in our immediate spheres of influence, such as our schools and homes?

Teaching Tips

Prompt the students to talk about how they should lead their lives as Christians, in holiness and kindness, at home, in school, in church. Also, ask them what they think they can actively do for God and His kingdom, and for people in the world at large. If the students are shy about speaking aloud concerning their own experiences/thoughts, they can write their responses on a piece of paper, and without writing their names, put the papers into a box. The teacher can then take the pieces of paper out and read to the class what they have each written. Be sure to make this into a discussion, with the teacher facilitating the various input from the students and guiding them in the right path.

"For there is no sorcery against Jacob, nor any divination against Israel. It now must be said of Jacob and of Israel, 'Oh, what God has done!' " (Num 23:23). May the Lord strengthen our faith in His protection for us, for no evil can befall us as long as we remain His people, under His wings. May we also remember to cherish this special status as His people, to live holy lives in order to glorify His name and to spread His blessings to everyone around us.

Lesson 3

The Book of Joshua

Listed Scriptures

Joshua; Deuteronomy 4, 19

Lesson Aim

1) That the students understand the key events of the Israelite conquest of Canaan under the leadership of God through Joshua
2) That they may understand the important teachings behind the events and the actions of the Israelites
3) That they may know obedience in God leads to success and blessings

Memory Verse

"This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate in it day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it." (Josh 1:8)

Bible Reading For This Week *(for students and teachers)*

Joshua; Deuteronomy 4, 19

Bible Background

"Therefore understand today that the Lord your God is He who goes over before you as a consuming fire. He will destroy them and bring them down before you; so you shall drive them out and destroy them quickly, as the Lord has said to you. Do not think in your heart, after the Lord your God has cast them out before you, saying, 'Because of my righteousness, the Lord has brought me in to possess this land; but it is because of the wickedness of these nations that the Lord is driving them out from before you'" (Deut 9:3, 4).

A possible question that the students may pose is why God would be so hard-hearted against the various nations that inhabited the land of Canaan. It is important to understand that these were very evil people. Some of them had very inhumane religious rites, including sacrificing their own young children. God is an impartial

God, and this never has changed – He was, He is and He will remain so.

"'For My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways My ways,' says the LORD, 'for as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My thoughts than your thoughts'" (Isa 55:8, 9). We must believe that God rewards those who diligently seek Him (Heb 11:6). His righteousness and His love are surely far greater than ours. This is the faith that we ought to have in Him.

Warm Up

So far, we have followed the early history of the Israelites up to the point of entry to Canaan by the River Jordan. Today we will take a look at the actual conquest of the territories in Canaan. This can be seen as the closure to the chapter of God's deliverance of the Israelites from the land of bondage (Egypt) into the promised land flowing with milk and honey.

Bible Study

Part 1
The Structure of the Book of Joshua

Following the Pentateuch, the book of Joshua records the succession of Joshua. It is the first of the history books in the Bible (Joshua to Esther, twelve books in all). The historical books cover the history of the ancient Israelite nation from the end of the exodus out of Egypt, through the period of the kings, all the way to the time of captivity and the return to rebuild the temple and city walls.

The book of Joshua chronicles the entry to Canaan, the destruction of the Canaanite tribes, the division of the land and the establishment of an Israelite society. The title is obviously derived from the name of its protagonist. It is also possible that Joshua had some form of participation in the penning of the book. The contents of the book may be outlined as follows:

a. Conquest of Canaan (1–12)
   — Prologue and account of God's designation of Joshua as Moses' successor (1)
   — Spies in Jericho (2)

   — Crossing of the Jordan and camping at Gilgal (3–5)
   — Fall of Jericho (6)
   — Achan's sin and conquest of Ai (7–8:29)
   — Covenant on Mt. Ebal (8:30–8:35)
   — Treaty with the Gibeonites (9)
   — Conflict with the Amorite kings and the southern campaign (10)
   — The northern campaign (11:1–5)
   — Summary of the occupation (11:16–12:24)

b. Division of the land (13–21)
   — Prologue and account of the unconquered lands, as well as a summary of the territory on the other side of the Jordan (13)
   — Allotments of Judah, Ephraim and (Western) Manasseh (14–17)
   — Allotments of Benjamin, Simeon, Zebulun, Issachar, Asher, Naphtali and Dan (18–19)
   — Cities of refuge and Levitical cities (20–21)

c. Final words of encouragement (22–24)
   — Dismissal of the 2 1/2 tribes east of the Jordan (22)
   — Covenant at Shechem (24:1–28)
   — Graves of Joshua, Joseph and Eleazar (24:29–33)

Teaching Tips

To simply go through the structure of the narrative in the book may be a rather boring task. One way to get around this may be to assign the book as a reading assignment at least one or two weeks before the actual class and have the students attempt an outline at home. When they come to class on the Sabbath, the teacher can then divide the class into discussion groups and have them piece together whatever work they have done at home. Each group can then give a brief report or make a poster that can be displayed on the classroom notice board.

Part 2
Victory at Jericho, Defeat at Ai

Jericho

The city of Jericho was a well-fortified city. Yet, God destroyed it without even the need for a battle. All that the people of Israel needed to do was to go around the

city according to the number of times designated by God for each of the seven days. After the collapse of the city walls, the Israelites attacked the city, leaving nothing except for Rahab and her family. Rahab was not born an Israelite. But, she had the spiritual insight to know the power of God, and to choose the right thing to do so as to receive spiritual blessings for herself and her family. She even became part of the genealogy of Jesus Christ.

Ai

As the case was with Jericho, Joshua sent spies into Ai to check out the place before deciding on the military strategy. The report was that Ai was a much more easy target than Jericho, and they needed only to send two or three thousand men, for the people of Ai were few. Most unexpectedly, the Israelites suffered heavy casualties at Ai. It was the disobedience of one man, one family, that drove God to withdraw His help.

A Comparative Study

In many ways, the battles at Jericho and Ai can be compared and contrasted. For this exercise, read Joshua 6 and 7, and then answer the questions that follow.

a. i. Outline the instructions given by God regarding the daily marches around Jericho. What were some of the difficulties that might have made complete obedience to these instructions difficult? (Prompt students, if needed, with answers such as instructions were illogical and apparently had nothing to do with military offense, the Israelite army had a large number of men and not everyone might be willing to obey, etc.)
   ii. Compared to the instructions given for the battle of Jericho, what was God's requirement for the Israelites at the battle of Ai?

b. i. Rahab and Achan can be contrasted. In what ways was Rahab a wise woman? In what ways was Achan a foolish man?
   ii. What happened to each of these two people?

c. What parallels can we see today in our lives compared with those of Rahab and Achan when they were faced with a choice to obey or disobey God?

Note for the teacher:

A possible question that may be raised is why the family of Achan was implicated. It is important to explain the reasons to the students should such a question actually arise. It is essential for all the family members to know that everyone is responsible for encouraging and correcting one another with love and humility, to ensure

that everyone observes God's commandments. The head of the family (i.e., the parents) must especially guide their children in the Lord (Eph 6:4). Furthermore, this is one of the requirements for one to be anointed as a deacon or an elder (1 Tim 3:4, 5, 12).

Rahab's family members were saved because of her. In a similar way, Achan's whole family was implicated because of his folly. At first glance, it may appear that God was too harsh. However, we should think deeper. Was it possible for Rahab's decision to have succeeded if the family had not agreed to support her? Similarly, from Joshua 7:16–18, we know that Achan was found out after many levels of investigation and screening, first by tribe, followed by clan, and then by family, before going to the individual level. Throughout the whole process of inquiry, no one stood up to confess or point Achan out. So, in the same way, we can infer that the family does play an important part where Rahab and Achan's deeds were concerned.

Part 3
Further Conquests and the Allocation of Land

A. Further Conquests (Josh 9–12)

The defeat of the cities of Jericho and Ai cast a great blanket of fear over the rest of the Canaanite tribes. They sought out different ways and means to cope with this formidable people who surely had the presence of God with them, granting them inexplicable power to conquer. One of the tribes, the Gibeonites, even resorted to deceit to force the Israelites into a peace treaty with them. The Israelites did not inquire of God and fell into their trick (9:14). Another attempt was the allied attack by the five kings. Joshua sincerely prayed and God caused the sun and the moon to stop, and the sun did not go down for one whole day (10:13). So, the Israelites won another victory. Thereafter, as a result of the Israelites' obedience to completely annihilate the various tribes, God was with them in their battles. Chapters 9 & 10 chronicle the southern conquests, and chapters 11 & 12 give us the details about the conquests of the northern tribes (see map of conquest). The pattern of God's abidance remained unchanged through all the generations. When they obeyed and trusted in God, they had success. When they chose their own ways according to their own will and understanding, they failed. It is still the same with our lives as God's children today. We should therefore always have faith that God watches over us as long as we walk by His ways.

Teaching Tips

Maps of (a) the path of conquests led by Joshua, (b) the various settlements of the tribes and (c) the cities of refuge are useful aids for this section of the Bible Study. It is important that the students get to have a visual depiction of the many locations as we discuss the places – it is not only a good mnemonic aid for them but also a good framework for the teacher to structure the lesson.

B. Division of Land (Josh 13–19, 22)

The land conquered was allocated as follows:

a. Reuben, Gad and the half tribe of Manasseh received the lands east of the Jordan (13:8–13:32).
b. The Levites were a specially chosen tribe that served the Lord and were not allocated any area specifically. Instead, the other tribes had to offer a tenth of what they had for the livelihood of the Levites. Parts of the cities and regions inherited by the various tribes were allocated to the Levites for occupation (14:4, 21).
c. The rest of the tribes received the lands west of the Jordan. The two tribes that came forth of Joseph were counted as two and each got a portion of the inheritance (16, 17).

C. Cities of Refuge

Cities of refuge can be seen as an expression of God's love and righteousness. They were built for those who had killed another accidentally or unintentionally. These cities provided refuge for them from the avengers who sought their lives. They could dwell there until they were brought before a trial or until the death of the high priest, after which they were cleared of their guilt (Josh 20). There were three cities of refuge on each side of the River Jordan:

East of the Jordan (Josh 20:8; Deut 4:41–43)

a. Bezer (where Reuben's inheritance was)
b. Ramoth (where Gad's inheritance was)
c. Golan (where Manasseh's inheritance was)

West of the Jordan (Josh 20:6, 7)

a. Kedesh (where Naphtali's inheritance was)

b. Shechem (where Ephraim's inheritance was)
c. Kirjath Arba (where Judah's inheritance was, also known as Hebron)

Check for Understanding

1 Which books in the Bible are conventionally classified as history books? What are their main contents?

2 Recapitulate the main contents of the book of Joshua.

3 What were the human factors that contributed to the success of the conquest of Jericho?

4 What was the main reason why the Gibeonites succeeded in deceiving the Israelites into establishing a treaty with them? What can we learn from this historical incident?

5 How can we gain spiritual wisdom?

6 Where were the six cities of refuge located? What was the purpose of these cities?

Life Application

People of Faith

To be part of the chosen people of God is a great blessing. The Lord Jesus says, "You did not choose Me but I chose you" (Jn 15:16). That part of our salvation is true and God has fulfilled His part. The rest is up to us. We have to understand that following the Lord Jesus till the very end involves an active choice on our part. Joshua's famous words can serve as a reminder for all of us. "And if it seems evil to you to serve the Lord, choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the River, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you dwell. But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord" (Josh 24:15).

Besides Joshua, the Bible records many great men of faith who chose God over

their lives, over their own enjoyment and comfort. Here are a few examples. Can you think of more?

1. When Joseph was serving Potiphar in his household, Potiphar's wife approached him and attempted to seduce him. As a lonely foreigner, Joseph was in a very vulnerable position. Nevertheless, the fear of God never departed from his heart. He made a great statement of faith and reverence to God: "How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?"(Gen 39:9). So, although the mistress continued her advances, Joseph was not moved in his resolution to stay holy.

2. When faced with the choice between worshiping another god, i.e., the golden image built by King Nebuchadnezzar, and worshiping the one true God, Daniel's three friends stated their choice most clearly. They left for us a classic example of true commitment to the Lord, no matter what the circumstances are: "Our God whom we serve is able to deliver us . . . but if not, let it be known to you, O King, that we do not serve your gods, nor will we worship the gold image which you have set up" (Dan 3:17, 18).

3. When God sent Jeremiah the prophet to preach about the imminent fall of Judah, the people, especially the nobility, were greatly annoyed by his prophecies. They even attempted to harm him. Jeremiah did not flinch but continued to preach, even though it meant risking his life. He said to them, "The Lord sent me to prophesy against this house and against this city with all the words you have heard. Now, therefore amend your ways and your doings, and obey the voice of the Lord your God . . . as for me, here I am, in your hand; do with me as seems good and proper to you" (Jer 26:12–14).

Today, we may not necessarily face situations as drastic as those faced by the believers in the past. Nevertheless, there are many choices in our lives that stand in opposition to our worship and devotion to God. One of the many choices we face every day is to actually make time for God. Here's an excerpt from Manna (Issue 35), where one sister shares how she sets time aside for God.

Many times, we feel that there isn't enough time in the day to get everything done. Time – it is something we all treasure, something we wish we had more of, but it just seems to slip so quickly through our fingers.

As students, we are often burdened with so much work that we tend to let go of things that are vital to our well-being: God and our faith. How many times have we pushed God away because of our busy schedules? How many times have we rushed off to school without first giving thanks to God for another day to live and just mumbled a few words of thanks seconds before jumping into bed?

"To everything there is a season, a time for every purpose under heaven" (Eccl 3:1). According to the words of Solomon, there is a time for everything: a time to study, a time to play, a time to learn worldly knowledge and a time to gain spiritual wisdom. But, it is up to us to set out that time, to use our time wisely and devote part of it to God.

Question: How to schedule God in our lives?
Answer: Make an appointment with God and offer the best time in your day

A good way to put God in our lives is to make an appointment with Him each day. We should examine our lives and determine when the best time is for us to communicate with Him and to meditate on His words. We need to choose a time when we're not too tired and when our mind is clear to offer our best to Him.

I finally managed to figure out the best routine for myself by my second year of university. Although I prayed morning and evening, they were usually short prayers. I felt I needed to find a better time when I could really pray in-depth and meditate on the words of God.

I discovered that the best time for me was around 8 p.m. I studied and ate dinner and then it was time for God. Even if I were working on a paper, I would drop everything and give an hour to God. During that time, I would sing hymns, read the Bible, and then end with a prayer. It was time well spent and I truly treasured it.

Once we place God first, we will experience an immense difference in our lives. I noticed that when I made time for God by scheduling a period of time with Him each evening, I always completed my work within a shorter amount of time. I would often receive inspiration from Him when I was stuck on a paper.

Moreover, the time that I set out for God also became a stress reliever for me. For that hour, I would forget about my studies and concentrate on the Lord. Amazingly, during the most stressful days, the lyrics of a hymn or a Bible verse would always touch me and lift my burdens. I truly felt immense peace and joy in my heart during those times. During my final year of university, whenever I was completely overwhelmed with work, God provided me with the sanity I needed.

I encourage you to give it a try, even if you can only afford to give up twenty minutes. Use that time to meditate on His words and to tell Him what a stressful day you've had. You'll definitely feel the difference in your life. As long as we

truly put God first in our lives, we truly don't have to worry about anything – everything will fall nicely into place.

The Bible says, "Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness and all these things shall be added to you" (Mt 6:33). We have read how the sister makes time for God and experiences God's blessings. Other than setting aside a daily session for God, there are other choices in our lives that we have to make. As the saying goes, "Faithfulness in little things is a great thing." There are often many little choices that we have to make for God, and for the sake of maintaining our faith. The following is but a conservative list of possible choices standing between you and God:

- a part-time job (in school or outside of school) or a class in school that requires hours on a Saturday, making it hard for you to get to church on time, or worse still, totally conflicts with service times (Read Ex 20:8-11; Heb 10:25).

- computer games or social activities on the Internet, such as emailing and aimless on-line chatting, that seem to develop a stronger hold on you as you spend your time on them (Read Ps 119:37).

- social activities that more often than not, fall on Saturdays (Read Isa 58:13, 14).

- certain activities which will cause God to turn His face away from you (Read Ps 119:11, 101).

Discussion:

Together with your classmates, discuss what other things may stand between you and God. Then, discuss what the difficulties are in overcoming them. After that, generate and share among yourselves Bible verses that apply to those situations cited and discuss how you may overcome them, so as to choose God over these things. Recall also the choices you have made in your life, how you chose God over other things that distracted you. Share with your classmates what the choices were, how you went through the decision-making process and what the results were.

Reflection & Prayer

"Deal bountifully with Your servant, that I may live and keep Your word. Open my eyes, that I may see wondrous things from Your law" (Ps 119:17, 18). These are beautiful verses. To live and keep the word of God is not a chore, for as the Lord Jesus says, His yoke is easy and His burden is light (Mt 11:30). We ask that God open our eyes, so that we may understand the wonderful things in His law, so that we will choose to follow His ways, for therein lies wonderful things that we will experience as a result of obeying. This is faith in Him – substance of things hoped for, evidence of things not seen (Heb 11:1)!

Lesson 4

The Books of Judges and Ruth

Listed Scriptures

Judges, Ruth

Lesson Aim

1) That the students may understand the instability during the time of the judges was a result of the Israelites' turning away from God time and again
2) That the students may understand the chaos of that time period and how God saved those who cried to Him for help
3) That the students may appreciate the fear of God in Ruth, and her filial piety towards Naomi, which led to many blessings

Memory Verse

"Entreat me not to leave you or to turn back from following after you; for wherever you go, I will go; and wherever you lodge, I will lodge; your people shall be my people, your God shall be my God." (Ruth 1:16)

Bible Reading For This Week *(for students and teachers)*

Judges, Ruth

Bible Background

Judges

The chronology of the book of Judges is problematic since the sum of the periods mentioned in it comes to about four hundred years. However, the time of the settlements in Canaan to the time of the kings (anointing of King Saul) is usually dated from the 13th Century B.C. to the middle of the 11th Century B.C. The era of the judges as we can calculate from the book is far too long. Nevertheless, this book gives us a good glimpse of what the history of the Israelite nation was like after the death of Joshua, when they settled down to a life in the land of Canaan. It shows us the consequences of their having spared some of the inhabitants of Canaan. It also continues a pattern that was seen earlier in the history, that the Israelites were prone to forgetting God, turning to evil deeds, including the worship of other gods.

Nazirites

A nazirite was dedicated to the sacred service of the Lord through a vow made either by the individual or by a parent. He or she had to abstain from the fruit of the vine and other intoxicants, avoid defilement by contact with a dead body and not allow a razor to cut the hair (Num 6:1–7). Ironically, Samson the nazirite fulfilled none of the stipulated requirements (Judg 14, 16).

Ruth

Set in the period covered by the book of Judges (Ruth 1:1), Ruth brings to bear various customs of the Hebrew society at that time. One of these is the gleaning provision set by the Lord, that they should leave the corners and the gleanings to the stranger, the fatherless and the widow (Lev 19:9–10; Deut 24:19–22). Another is the levirate marriage, where the next of kin has to marry the widow of a deceased so that his name may not be blotted out of Israel (Deut 25:5–10). This is a heart-warming narrative that reflects the interaction of love and care within an extended family in an era when the importance of God in one's life was often neglected.

Warm Up

Have you experienced times when you felt that you were really close to God and that all that you did was acceptable in the sight of God? Were there times when you sinned against God and realized that you felt really lousy and things just didn't seem to go right? It is important that we, as children of God, are sensitive to God and His laws. The world we live in today sends out many different kinds of messages, sometimes even conflicting ones. Being bombarded by different standards and norms, we can get lost very easily. It is important to know God and His word really well, and keep His word in our hearts. That way, we can navigate safely through life in this ambivalent world of confusion.

Today, we will look at two books of the Bible belonging to the "history books." One of them depicts a world of confusion, just like the one we live in today. There, we see how the children of God often lose sight of what is right or wrong and lead their lives in an ad hoc and often tragic manner. Another book will provide a contrast, where we will see how the fear of God and true love triumph in an era when things are not going right.

Bible Study

Part 1
The Book of Judges

Judges is the second of the history books. It records the period of time between the death of Joshua and the time of Eli the prophet/priest. This was a period with repeated wave patterns of spiritual highs and lows. The Israelites turn away from God and worship foreign gods – they are oppressed by the foreign tribes – they cry to God for help – God saves them by raising a judge to fight for them – soon after, they go back to their old idolatrous and sinful ways.

At the beginning of the book, there is an explanation given about why such a pattern recurred: the Israelites did not continue to chase away the remaining Canaanite tribes. They also made alliances with them through marriage and religious assimilation. That became the root of the troubles that followed (Judg 1:27–3:7). Judges records a dark period of religious and moral confusion. Some of the deeds of the Israelites were clear attestation of their departure from God's laws. For example, Micah the Ephraimite made idols, set up a temple of worship and appointed his son to be the priest (17:1–6).

The Judges and Their Deeds:

a. Othniel (3:7–11)
   He defeated the king of Mesopotamia whom God allowed to oppress the Israelites as a result of their worshiping the Baals and Asherahs.

b. Ehud (3:15–30)
   By using a ruse (pretext of going to pay tribute), he killed the king of Moab and the other warriors of Moab.

c. Shamgar (3:31)
   He killed 600 men of the Philistines with an ox goad.

d. Deborah (4, 5)
   She was a prophetess as well. She had the courage to lead the Israelite army against the army of Jabin, king of Hazor. The general of the Canaanite army was Sisera, who died also at the hand of a heroine, by the name of Jael.

e. Gideon (6–8)
When the Israelites sinned once again, the Lord gave them into the hands of the Midianites. Gideon was then called to deliver the nation. Gideon asked God twice to show him a sign that he was really chosen to save Israel, and God performed the sign of the dew on the fleece (6:36–40). When they were going into battle, God instructed Gideon to choose only three hundred men and strengthened his confidence by allowing him to overhear the dream of one of the enemy soldiers. Another note-worthy and praise-worthy episode about him is the way he appeased the Ephraimites who were offended that they were not involved in the battle (cf. paragraph on Jepthah).

f. Abimelech (9)
He was the son of Gideon. He killed seventy of his brothers and established himself as king. He reigned for three years, after which God sent His punishment upon him; he was killed by a woman who dropped a millstone on him and crushed his skull.

g. Tola and Jair (10)

h. Jephthah (11–12:6)
In the battle against the Ammonites, he foolishly made a vow that unnecessarily sacrificed his daughter. He later caused forty-two Ephraimites to be slain, which is a great contrast to the wisdom exhibited previously by Gideon in a similar situation.

i. Ibzan, Elon and Abdon (12:7–15)

j. Samson (13–16)
He was brought up a nazirite (read Num 6:1–7). Even though he was designated to become a nazirite before his birth, he did not fulfill any of the nazirite requirements. In fact, he did not even live a life as part of the nation of God. He frivolously attended drinking feasts (14:10) and touched the carcass of a lion (14:8, 9). He lusted after women and ultimately, revealed his secret to Delilah, allowing his hair to be cut (16:15–19). He lost the abidance and help of God and finally, died tragically with the Philistines.

Teaching Tips

One way to get the students to remember the details of what each judge did might be to get them to work in groups to read the Bible, sort out the details and then present the important points to the rest of the class. It would certainly work better than for them to simply read the summarized notes which are here in the textbook.

Part 2
The Book of Ruth

The author of this book is unknown. This book is sometimes called the "love story" of the Bible. It tells of the love of a wonderful gentile woman for her old and helpless mother-in-law. She was willing to give up a bright future ahead of her, and chose to follow her mother-in-law back to Israel rather than to return to a comfortable life in her own country. As a result of her sacrificial love, she became a part of the chosen nation of God, and God became her God. She, like Rahab, another gentile woman before her, was even given a part in the genealogy of Jesus Christ on earth. The example set by Ruth is one that endures even though centuries have passed. It is not difficult to understand why this woman who was born and grew up in a sinful gentile land became a woman blessed greatly by God. Her love, her readiness to embrace God and His laws, her willingness to take hardships and her obedience to Naomi are all virtues that are so lacking in today's society. It is important that we all remember Ruth's story and learn from her, that our lives on earth may be as blessed as hers, and that we may bring benefit to all around us.

The book consists of only four chapters, which can be summarized as follows:

a. Elimelech fled the famine in Judah and went to dwell in Moab. His sons married Moabite women there. In the end, all the men in the family died. Only Naomi and her daughters-in-law, Ruth and Orpah, were left.

b. Ruth made the decision to go to Judah with her lonesome mother-in-law. She went to glean the fields so as to find food for the two of them.

c. Ruth proved herself to be a submissive woman. God blessed her and Boaz agreed to speak for her.

d. Boaz married Ruth according to the Law, and they became the great-grandparents of King David.

Check for Understanding

1. Why is the period covered in the book of Judges a period of darkness? What were some of the sinful things that the Israelites did?

2. Why did God raise the judges?

3. Were all the judges wise and God-fearing? Name those who were and those who were not.

4. Why did Ruth become one of the most blessed women in the course of history?

Life Application

Obedience

Part A- The modern world that we live in today can be described as an alienated and fragmented one. Things are always in a flux; it is hard to find things that stay constant and permanent. Under such instability, it is always a comfort to know that God's love and protection are with us. Other than God's love for us, one other thing we can be sure of is the love of our parents. Our parents' love for us transcends time and space. Our parents do not forget us, or neglect to be concerned about us, just because we move to another state for college. Our parents do not stop loving us just because time has lapsed. No matter how far apart we are from them, no matter how long we have been away from them, their hearts are always yearning for us, and wishing us all the best.

Unfortunately, many people simply do not think much of such a great love that God has bestowed upon mankind. We often think little about the feelings of our parents. We put on our best behavior outside of the home, but we often yell at our parents, use hurtful words and have no qualms about throwing tantrums. Sometimes, we treat them like vending machines, demanding this or that, as and when we want.

The following is a story about how a little girl realizes her mother's love for her. How many of us are like her, thinking only of what we have done, and never pausing for a moment to remember the many unsaid acts of love our parents have done for us?

A little girl came up to her Mommy one day and handed her a list.
"What's that, honey?" Mommy asked.
"It's the money you owe me," the little girl replied.
Mommy took the list and her heart ached as she read:

For clearing up the toys - $1
For washing dishes - $5
For putting baby brother to sleep - $2
Total: $8

Mommy put aside her apron and started to write a list of her own.
"May I see what you have written, Mommy?" the little girl asked. She took the note from Mommy and read:

For carrying you nine months in my tummy – FREE
For staying up to care for you during the nights when you were ill – FREE
For wiping your nose when it ran – FREE
For hugging you when you were in tears – FREE

The little girl's eyes filled with tears and quietly, she took her list from her Mommy. She scribbled on it and returned the note. Over the list was written – PAID IN FULL.

After reading the story, do you see some traces of yourself in this little girl? Write down five things that your father or mother has done for you which you have always simply taken for granted. Then, write down some of the ways (directly or indirectly) in which you can show them that you do appreciate them and are grateful to them.

Part B- "Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. 'Honor your father and mother,' which is the first commandment with promise: 'that it may be well with you and you may live long on the earth'" (Eph 6:1; cf. Ex 20:12). Of the Ten Commandments, the first four deal with God's requirement of man towards Him. The latter six deal with God's requirement of man's relationship with his fellow mankind. The commandment to honor one's parents comes first among the latter six. This shows how important it is in the sight of God that we should honor our

parents. Let us take a look at some other biblical exhortations concerning this requirement that God has of us:

"Listen to your father who begot you, and do not despise your mother when she is old." (Prov 23:22)

"Whoever curses his father or his mother, his lamp will be put out in deep darkness." (Prov 20:20)

"The eye that mocks his father, and scorns obedience to his mother, the ravens of the valley will pick it out." (Prov 30:17)

One phenomenon in this technological age that has gained the scrutiny of sociologists and psychologists is the subtle reversal of roles in many families. Children seem to have gained more and more social advantages over their parents. It is not totally surprising to find families in which the children have more technological knowledge than the parents. The children are completely at ease with computer-related tasks while many a parent may be struggling to catch up with new software and computer gimmicks out on the market. With immigrant families, we often see the children wielding more power to function well in society with the one advantage they have over their parents – they speak the language of the society much more fluently.

Many of us today live against such a sociological backdrop. Unfortunately, not many people realize the hidden harms in this phenomenon. Wisdom, emotional stability and strength of mind to handle the ups and downs of everyday life do not come with education or technological adeptness. They are acquired over the years through life experiences, and most importantly, from a consistent and faithful walk with God. The strength of character in parents and their pivotal role in sustaining the family are often neglected. Many teenagers fail to see the wisdom of their parents until much later in life. As a result, many teenage problems could actually have been circumvented, had the teenagers heeded the advice of their elders.

Discussion Questions:

1. Discuss as a class your views about this phenomenon. How might this phenomenon affect the life of faith of teenagers and young adults?

2. Recount some of the wise advice you have received from your elders.

3. What are some things you can do to show your respect for your parents now and in the future?

Reflection & Prayer

The last verse in the book of Judges says, "In those days, there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in his own eyes" (Judg 21:25). The world we live in today can be likened to the period of the judges. It is politically incorrect to talk about a "standard," much less a "biblical standard" as a guide to life. Hence, we see all kinds of people and actions in our world today. We also see more broken hearts, broken homes and alienated individuals. It is important for us not to sway according to whatever tides there are out in the world. From times of old until today, we have innumerable witnesses to the fact that if we hold fast to the principles that God has set in the Bible, we are right with God and all will be well. May God bless us with wisdom to always seek His will and His righteousness.

unit 2

Goals

The choices we make in life can have far-reaching effects on our future and even future generations. It is important therefore to carefully consider all our decisions. God had direct sovereign rule over the Israelites, but they chose to be ruled by a king instead. As it turns out, and as the prophet Samuel forewarned them, they went through much suffering under kings who were wicked. With some kings, the whole nation was even brought to idol-worshiping before the sight of God.

In these lessons, the students will study the works and lives of some prophets and kings. An overarching pattern can be seen: Those who obey God prosper. Whenever the people turn away from God, they put their own lives and security in jeopardy. From the lives of the good kings who failed (like David) and the deeds of the evil kings, the students should understand the importance of a consistent life of enduring in God's words.

Teacher Devotional

The Israelites did not only turn away from God to commit sins. Often, they failed to realize that God was their source of help when they were in trouble. They would turn to foreign kings for military help, and paid allegiance to them. Or, worse, they turned to foreign gods who could not help them at all. The lesson to us is that we must first recognize who is the real source of help for us. Recognition itself is not enough, for we must go one step forward to apply this recognition to the way we lead our lives. When we are in need, do we readily turn to God for help? Or, are we like men of little faith, trying all ways and means in vain before we realize God is willing and ever-ready to help us?

God is Our Help in Times of Need

"The LORD is my strength and my shield; My heart trusted in Him, and I am helped; Therefore my heart greatly rejoices, And with my song I will praise Him." (Ps 28:7)

Lesson 5

The Book of 1 Samuel

Listed Scriptures

1 Samuel

Lesson Aim

1) That the students may understand the meaning and importance of complete obedience to God
2) That the students may understand the need to rely on God and to seek His will in all things

Memory Verse

"Has the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed than the fat of rams." (1 Sam 15:22)

Bible Reading For This Week *(for students and teachers)*

1 Samuel

Bible Background

The two books of Samuel are actually one book in the original Hebrew text. The division into two books first appeared in the Greek translation (the Septuagint) and then in the Latin Vulgate. Since then, subsequent translations have had these as two separate books. The reason the books are named after Samuel is likely due to his being the main character in the narratives.

The contents of the two books can be briefly summarized as follows:

1 Sam 1–15: Samuel and Saul
1 Sam 16–31: Saul and David
2 Sam 1–8: David's rise to power
2 Sam 9–20: David's reign
2 Sam 21–24: various narratives, psalms and lists

The Philistines

They were a group of Aegean origin (Mediterranean area). They were one of the "Sea Peoples" recorded in history who ravaged the eastern Mediterranean world subsequent to the collapse of the Myceanean civilization at the end of the Late Bronze Age. Attempting to land in Egypt, they were stopped in a great land and sea battle by Rameses III (1190 B.C.), after which they settled on the southwestern coastal strip of Canaan. In Canaan, they established a confederation of five states. The pentapolis consisted of Ashdod, Ashkelon, Gaza (coastal), Ekron and Gath (inland). Their expansion inland brought them into conflict with the Israelites (mentioned in 1 Samuel). While Saul was not able to prevail against the Philistines, David finally put an end to their expansion.

WARM UP

In our walk of faith, we've heard so very often about obedience to God and trust in God. What exactly does it mean to obey God and to trust in God? Other than giving definitions, can you think of biblical characters who obeyed and trusted in God wholeheartedly? Under what kinds of circumstances did they obey and trust? How were they rewarded?

In today's lesson, we'll be taking a look at characters from the book of 1 Samuel; some of them obeyed and trusted in God while some blatantly turned away from doing God's teachings. Learning about what these people did serves as a good mirror for us to examine our own relationships with God.

BIBLE STUDY

1 Samuel

The two books of Samuel are actually one book in the original Hebrew text. For 1 Samuel, the authorship of chapters 1 to 24 is often traced to Samuel. The rest of the book could have been written by Nathan the prophet and Gad the seer (cf. 1 Chron 29:29). The book of 1 Samuel chronicles the events in the lives of some characters that are familiar to us – Eli, Hannah, Samuel, Saul and David.

A. Hannah, an Exemplar of Prayer with Faith

In the era that Hannah lived, a woman who could not have any children had to bear a social stigma as one not blessed by God. It was no wonder that Hannah was not a happy person in spite of the love of a doting husband. However, she knew to turn to the right source of help in her state of unhappiness and dissatisfaction – she turned to God in prayer.

Hannah's prayer was not recorded as a long psalm or long discourse with God. The Bible records her prayer all in one verse (1:11). She simply asked God to look upon her affliction. Her prayer is one that is in accordance to what the Lord Jesus taught about prayer in Matthew 6:7, 8, "and when you pray, do not use vain repetitions . . . for your Father knows the things you have need of before you ask of Him."

After Hannah prayed, she got up and "ate and her face was no longer sad" (1:18). This is the true essence of a prayer of faith. When one prays with faith, one does not wait for the request to materialize before feeling relieved of the burden. This is because one completely gives one's burdens to God and moves on with a heart of obedience that God has the final say in what the outcome of the petition is. God did not only grant Hannah a son, Samuel, as she requested; God granted her three more sons and two daughters (2:21). Nothing is impossible for God. We just have to entrust and submit ourselves to His will.

B. The Downfall of Eli and His Sons

Eli was a priest as well as a judge of Israel. Most ironically, he was not able to preserve his own faith, nor the faith of his two sons, leading ultimately to a tragic end for all three. There are good reasons for the downfall of this priestly family, including:

a. Eli neglected to teach his sons in the way of the Lord (2:12, cf. Prov 22:6). As sons of a priest and judge, the sons of Eli actually did not know God. That clearly is the failure on Eli's part to teach them in the right way.

b. Eli was lax in disciplining his sons when they did wrong (3:13). When he heard reports of how his sons ate the food meant for offerings and slept with women at the temple gates (possibly temple prostitutes – "cultic prostitution" was characteristic of Canaanite religions and that could have infiltrated into the lives of the Israelites), he did not restrain them.

C. Samuel– Faithful to God and to Man

Samuel's name means "asked of God"; he was granted to Hannah when she prayed to God for a son. Because Hannah made a vow to offer up her son to God, Samuel was brought to the temple at a very young age. He grew up learning all the ways of service to God in the temple. All his life, Samuel was faithful to God, so much so that at the end of his life, he could boldly say that he had been faithful in all his dealings with the Israelites (read 1 Sam 12:1–5). During the days when Samuel was judge and priest over Israel, he led the people in faith and God was with him. Some of the major events during his time included (a) the defeat of the Philistines through prayer and (b) the establishment of kingship in Israel.

a. The Philistines were defeated through prayer (7:1–13)
The Philistines were among the strongest of the Canaanite tribes. They were a constant threat to the peace and stability of the lives of the Israelites, coming at them with their strong attacks. On one occasion, the Israelites lost heart upon hearing news of the attack (7:7). They immediately asked Samuel to pray to God for His deliverance (v. 8). From here, we can see that Samuel was indeed a stabilizing force in the lives of the Israelites, interceding for them always. Through Samuel's prayer, God's deliverance came, in the form of a loud thunder that confused the Philistines. Thus the Israelites were able to defeat them.

b. Israel asked for a king (Ch 8)
Israel saw that other nations had kings who could be seen physically. The Israelites, on the other hand, had a God who could not be seen with the physical eye. A universal human weakness is that human beings find it easier to believe in something that can be seen. On top of that, the two sons of Samuel did not seem to be able to succeed Samuel as godly leaders (v. 5). Hence, the Israelites asked to have a king. They wanted to be just like all the other nations. Such a request obviously did not please God. As God told Samuel, it was God that they had rejected, not Samuel, and God allowed the Israelites to have their way (vv. 7–9). Although God granted them their request, it should not be equated with the idea that God approved of such a request or that God was pleased. This should be a good reminder to us that when a prayer request has been granted, it does not necessarily mean the request was right or pleasing in God's eyes. (Compare with the Israelites' asking for meat in the wilderness. Read Num 11:4–6, 31–35.) We should also pray to God to reveal His will to us and to help us to submit to His will, like Jesus Christ did in the Garden of Gethsemane.

D. Saul– His Rise and His Fall

When the Israelites insisted on having a king to rule over them, God instructed Samuel to pick out from among the people a young man named Saul (9:16). Saul was an excellent youth among his peers. Physically, he was tall and strong (10:23). He was surprised to be chosen as king (9:21), implying his humility. When he first started out, some people taunted him and despised his ability, but he held his peace, indicating a controlled and calm spirit within (10:27).

Unfortunately, Saul did not continue in his virtues. A very good litmus test of one's true character occurs when one is in a position of power and has to deal with pressing issues. Through many events, Saul failed to maintain his integrity and ultimately, God's presence and favor departed from him. This is a good reminder that the end of a man is more important than his beginning. Here are some instances that led to his downfall:

a. Superceded his own authority and offered sacrifices (13:13, 14)
The Israelites and the Philistines had another battle. Saul and his men were gathered at Gilgal. Samuel instructed him to wait for seven days. Before the seven days were up, the Israelite camp was losing morale. Saul began to get anxious. In this state of mind, he decided to not wait for Samuel to arrive to sacrifice to God. He decided that he would do the offering himself, which was against God's commandment. For that, he lost God's approval.

b. Unreasonably put the Israelites under oath (14)
During a time of war, Saul placed his men under oath, saying, "Cursed is the man who eats any food until evening, before I have taken vengeance on my enemies" (14:24). He instituted such a command without stopping to think if that was in accordance to the will of God. He was unaware that his own son, Jonathan, had eaten of some honey. Moreover, the people were so hungry that they rushed in to eat of the spoil of their conquest, eating the animals with the blood. One foolish and rash decision by Saul led to the transgression of many people.

c. Disregarded God's command and took of the spoils of the conquest (15)
In the battle against the Amalekites, God specifically stated that they should annihilate all the people as well as the animals of the Amalekites. Unfortunately, Saul has his own kind of wisdom once again. He spared King Agag and also took of the spoils. As with previous incidents, Saul was able

to come up with a good excuse for doing what he did. This time, he claimed that the animals were for offering to God. Samuel's reply was that "to obey is better than sacrifice and to heed than the fat of rams" (v. 22). Saul's good excuses were probably good enough for himself, but not for God. God rejected him as king.

After being rejected by God, Saul continued to go on a downward spiral. Instead of showing any penitence, he persisted in his evil track. He was jealous of David, and tried multiple times to kill him. The evil spirit had entered his unrepentant heart. Towards the end of his life, Saul even consulted a sorceress, which was certainly against God's teachings (1 Sam 28). He died tragically in battle, an example of one who failed to cherish the grace of God and repeatedly went against God's teachings (1 Sam 31).

E. David– His Tumultuous Rise to Kingship

When Samuel saw that Saul had time and again disregarded the instructions of God and gone his own way, he told Saul that God had given the kingdom into the hand of someone else who was "after His own heart" (1 Sam 13:14).

In the Bible, David is about the only character who had such a description conferred upon him – after God's heart. This is an accolade that truly befits David, for all his life, he sought after God. Even when he committed sin, he did not try to justify himself, but sought God's forgiveness with true penitence. David is a good contrast to the character of Saul.

David's battle against Goliath is probably among the best known stories we have about David. It was in this battle that David became publicly known to the rest of the Israelites. He showed himself to be one who relied on God totally. It was not that he did not understand the power of Goliath. He did. However, he saw the battle not as a human one but rather, as a battle against God (17:26). Hence, he was very sure when he said, "The Lord who delivered me from the paw of the lion and from the paw of the bear, He will deliver me from the hand of this Philistine" (17:37).

After his victory over Goliath, David did not become king right away, in spite of his having been anointed by Samuel earlier. The famous adulation by the women of Israel that "Saul has slain his thousands and David his ten thousands" (1 Sam 18:7) led to an unquenchable jealousy in Saul, who sought to kill David.

The rest of 1 Samuel is dominated by narratives about David's life as a fugitive from Saul's pursuit. They can be summarized as follows:

a. Nob – he was given the holy bread from the table of the showbread in the temple to stave off hunger (21)
b. Achish – he had to feign madness before the king of Grath to preserve his life (21)
c. Adullam – he hid himself in a cave. Many came and pledged allegiance to him (22)
d. Keilah – he had to flee from Keilah because Saul sought to kill all the men there unless they turned David in (23)
e. Ziph, Maon, En Gedi – these were among the places that David fled to but could not hide himself for long (23)
f. En Gedi – David had an opportunity to kill Saul but he refrained from harming the Lord's anointed (24)
g. Carmel – at Carmel, David sought help from Nabal but was turned down. It was the wise Abigail who came to the rescue and prevented bloodshed between David's men and Nabal's men (25)
h. Wilderness of Ziph – David had a second opportunity to kill Saul but he spared him again (26)
i. Achish – David went to Achish again, and pretended to be an ally of the King of the Philistines (27, 29)
j. Ziklag – the Amalekites attacked David's camp and destroyed the city, taking away the children and wives, including those of David. David managed to fight back and recover all that belonged to him and his men (30)

After a long series of trials and difficulties, David became king of the Israelites. It was as if the long years of being a fugitive was meant as a training period for him. He proved that in hard times, he was able to hold fast to God's commandments and always relied on God. Because of this, David was one of the great men of faith in the Bible.

Teaching Tips

A recent article in Manna, Issue 36, p. 3 – 6, gives a good comparison between Saul and David. All students are encouraged to read that article as supplementary reading in addition to this lesson.

Check for Understanding

1. In what ways is the prayer of Hannah considered an exemplary prayer of faith?

2. What were some of the sins committed by the sons of Eli? How do you think Eli could have prevented or restrained them from their irreverence?

3. What were some of the strengths of Samuel as one dedicated to the service of God?

4. What were the weaknesses of Saul?

5. Recount some of the incidents in the life of David in which he showed himself to be a faithful and obedient servant of God.

Life Application

Fighting Off Sin

Part A- We have studied about the downfall of the sons of Eli and Saul. These people could not claim that they committed sin out of ignorance. In fact, Saul committed sin in spite of his knowledge of God's commandment. Saul knew that he did wrong, but he always thought of excuses to justify what he did. It is necessary, therefore, to be watchful at all times. There are often telltale signs that warn us of sin. We have to be sensitive to them.

Let us take a look at some Bible verses that encourage us to fend off sin. For each of them, write down one practical application that works for you in your life. You may then share your thoughts with the rest of your classmates.

1. "Test all things; hold fast what is good." (1 Thess 5:21)
   How I would apply it in my life
   The Bible teaches us to examine all things carefully. Today, we are bombarded by ideas and standards of behavior from the media, from our peers at school and many other possible sources. Not all of them are in accordance with the teachings of the Bible. What are some ideas or codes of behavior that you think you should examine carefully and guard against? (Students fill in the blank here.)

2. "Your word I have hidden in my heart, that I might not sin against You." (Ps 119:11)
   How I would apply it in my life
   We are not fighting a physical battle. Our enemy, the devil, prowls around like a lion ready to devour us. We cannot but be equipped with God's armor. How can we fortify ourselves with the word of God? (Students fill in the blank here.)

3. "Therefore, let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall." (1 Cor 10:12)
   How I would apply it in my life
   We have often heard that pride goes before a fall. Pride blinds one to one's own weaknesses. One needs to be extra careful when one is successful. What are the situations that may cause you to feel confident or proud of yourself? (Students fill in the blank here.)

4. "Brethren, if a man is overtaken in trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted. Bear one another's burden and so fulfill the law of Christ." (Gal 6:1, 2)
   How I would apply it in my life
   The Bible teaches us to watch out for one another. Who are the people in your life that you feel you should keep a lookout for? Are there people who are keeping a lookout for you? Do you fall into the devil's trap of isolating yourself? What are some ways to encourage brothers and sisters to stay strong as one body with members taking care of one another? (Read Eccl 4:9–12) (Students fill in the blank here.)

5. "Turn away my eyes from looking at worthless things, and revive me in Your way." (Ps 119:37)
   How I would apply it in my life
   Many times, sin creeps into our lives very slowly. It may start off as something that catches our attention. Slowly, it grows on us and we become more and more attached to it and ultimately, we forget and lose sight of the teachings of the Bible. What are some things that are considered "worthless" (or even harmful) that we should turn our eyes and attention away from? (Students fill in the blank here.)

Part B- Below is a piece of writing penned for a sister who was going to go abroad for further studies. The writer of the passage wanted to remind and forewarn the sister that there may be many things out there in the world that can steer us away from God's teachings and from understanding what really counts in life. Read the passage to the class (it is not in the student workbook) and discuss what things may potentially draw us away from what is really important as Christians:

The Secret of My Success

Now there was a certain wise man who habitually dispensed advice though he did live in a cave in a very inaccessible mountain. And a certain merchant went through much hardship and in spite of his potbelly, clambered up the mountain and asked the wise man, "O great guru, what is the secret of success?" To which, the sage murmured, "Work hard and take the narrow one-way path of total dedication." The merchant happily went on his way and dedicated himself to his business, and the merchant made the Fortune's billionaire list.

Likewise, a struggling student groped his way through the thickets that flourished on the mountain side, and torn and bleeding, asked of the wise man, "O great guru, what is the secret of success?" To which the old man intoned from within the cover of his dhoti, "Concentrate and flee all distractions from the way of knowledge." The student nodded with understanding and he came down from the mountain and immediately concentrated on his chosen field of study; and the student won the Nobel Prize.

A Christian stumbled upon the cave one day and spending some days with the wise man, was suitably impressed with his knowledge. He asked the wise man, "What is the secret of success?" To which, the wise man smiled magnanimously and offered, "Be moderate in religion and live tolerantly among men." The Christian shook with emotion and felt a sense of enlightenment; and the Christian made no enemies in his lifetime and did not progress in his faith either.

Now it came about that the merchant, the student and the Christian all died and were buried. And, in Hades, they lifted their eyes, being in torment, and saw the guru from afar. And they cried out and said, "O great guru, why are we all here? We are in agony in this flame." But the guru approached and removed his turban, revealing two just visible horns emerging from thick matted hairs, and said, "That is the secret of my success."

Reflection & Prayer

"Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me and know my anxieties. And see if there is any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting" (Ps 139:23, 24). May we all learn to always pray like the psalmist, to constantly check ourselves and see if there are hidden sins inside of us, that we may not continue in our sins which lead to destruction.

Lesson 6

The Book of 2 Samuel

Listed Scriptures

2 Samuel 1, 6, 22

Lesson Aim

1) That the students may acquire knowledge about events in the life of David
2) That the students may learn to rely on God for all things, like David did
3) That the students may learn the true meaning of repentance

Memory Verse

"God is my strength and power, and He makes my way perfect. He makes my feet like the feet of deer, and sets me on my high places." (2 Sam 22:33, 34)

Bible Reading For This Week *(for students and teachers)*

2 Samuel 1, 6, 22

BIBLE BACKGROUND

The book of 2 Samuel could have been written by Nathan the prophet and Gad the seer (cf. 1 Chron 29:29). It is fundamentally a chronicle of the kingdom of David.

A Note about Mortal Sin

There are sins for which forgiveness can be asked but there are some sins which cannot be forgiven. 1 John 5:16 mentions such a distinction: "If anyone sees his brother sinning a sin which does not lead to death, he will ask, and He will give him life for those who commit sin not leading to death. There is sin leading to death. I do not say that he should pray about that."

Your students may ask why David was forgiven even though he committed mortal sins, sins leading to death. Both murder and adultery are sins leading to death. If asked, it would be necessary to explain about sins leading to death.

Under the Old Testament, forgiveness came directly from God, through repentance, sin and trespass offerings (cf. Lev 4, 5) and also the yearly Atonement made by the high priest (Lev 16). Under the New Testament, our sins are forgiven directly because the Lord Jesus has fulfilled for us the eternal atonement. In Hebrews 10:19–27, the Bible tells us that Jesus Christ opens up a living way of salvation for mankind. "[B]y the blood of Jesus," there is a "new and living way" (vv. 19, 20). Jesus is the High Priest who is prefigured by the high priests in the Old Testament. He "does not need, as those high priests, to offer sacrifices, first for His own sins and then for the people's, for He did it once and for all when He offered up Himself" (Heb 7:24–27). Hence, "if we sin willfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins" (Heb 10:26). "It is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted the heavenly gift, and have become partakers of the Holy Spirit, . . . if they fall away, to renew them again to repentance, since they crucify again for themselves the Son of God" (Heb 6:4–6).

It is therefore necessary that we warn our students of the gravity of committing sins like David's sins, adultery and murder.

Warm Up

What do you think are the most important qualities of a successful walk in our life of faith, qualities that will lead us to the heavenly kingdom? (Students respond.)

To enter the kingdom of God, to gain God's favor, one does not need to possess a lot of biblical knowledge or eloquence. Neither does God require us to offer a lot of money or sacrifices. It is also not about working a lot for God. But don't be mistaken. It does not mean that offering our time, effort or even money to God is not important. Of course, we also must be equipped with the knowledge of God's word so that we know how to walk in God's way.

One of the most important qualities is something we studied last week, which is obedience to God. Today, we are going to continue to study about the life of David. We will learn that David is truly one who obeyed God and relied on Him always. When he slipped and committed sin, it was his genuine repentance that led God to forgive him and accept him again. David is certainly someone worthy of our emulation.

Bible Study

2 Samuel- The Life of David

The main narrative concerning David may be summed up in the following three sections: (I) David's kingdom, (II) David's sins & (III) David in his old age.

A. David's Kingdom

After the death of Saul, David did not immediately become king over all Israel. Only the house of Judah followed him, and he ruled over Judah, at Hebron, for seven and a half years (2:10, 11). The men of Saul were at war with the men of David for quite some time before David finally became king over all Israel (3:1, 5:1). So, David reigned over all Israel for thirty-three years at Jerusalem. He led the Israelites against the Jebusites and conquered Zion, which was made the capital city and was named City of David.

Right after he became king over all Israel, David sought to bring the ark of the covenant into the capital city. However, during the journey, Uzzah was struck dead when he reached out his hand to touch the ark. That frightened David, who decided to leave the ark in the house of Obed-Edom. For this, the household of Obed-Edom was blessed. Upon hearing this, David's fears were soothed and the ark was ultimately transported to the City of David. There was a big celebration for this special occasion and David even danced, joining in the celebration.

Being king did not cause David to forget God. David further thought about building a temple for God (7:2). But, God spoke through the prophet Nathan that his descendant would be the one to build the temple for Him instead. However, God made a covenant with David, that his house would be kings forever, as long as they obeyed the word of God (cf. 1 Kgs 1:1–4).

David was a good king who treated all Israel well. Under his rule, there was peace for the Israelites as he subdued more Canaanite tribes, such as the Moabites, the Syrians and the Ammonites. He even went to great lengths to take care of the survivor in Jonathan's family – his crippled son, Mephibosheth. David received Mephibosheth into his house and treated him like one of his own sons. This proves the nobility of David, and also his loyalty to the friendship he shared with Jonathan.

B. David's Sins– Adultery and Murder

As much as David was a God-fearing man, the peace and prosperity of his kingdom inevitably caused him to become complacent and lose his vigilance. One evening, as he rose from his afternoon nap and started taking a stroll on his rooftop, he saw a woman bathing (11:2). She was a very beautiful woman. Instead of checking himself, David went one step closer to sinning and decided to inquire more about her. He found out that the beautiful woman was Bathsheba, who was already married to Uriah, a loyal soldier of his army. This piece of information should have deterred David from thinking any more about Bathsheba. But, having been overtaken by his emotions, David allowed himself to succumb. He asked his men to bring the woman to him and he lay with her, thus committing the great sin of adultery. It was a violation of the seventh of the Ten Commandments! It is a sin leading to death.

If David had thought his sin could have simply been forgotten, he was wrong. Bathsheba became pregnant, and David had to come up with ways to hide his sin. Efforts to send Uriah home did not succeed. As a last resort, David arranged for Uriah to be stationed at the forefront of the most dangerous battle, and then for the army to desert him. It was murder albeit without using his own hands. Such ruthlessness is indeed unimaginable for a man whom we know as one after the heart of God! We can understand how frightening the sin of lust can become. One sin often leads to another, which is why we have to nip it in the bud before it grows on us. As the Bible says, "when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death" (Jas 1:15). We must never underestimate the destructive potential of the temptations around us!

David did not realize his grave sins until God sent Nathan the prophet to reprimand him (12:1–12). David was awakened from his stupor of sin. He repented immediately (12:13). Although God forgave him, God's punishment came upon David. The first calamity was the death of the baby born of adultery. Thereafter, more trouble befell David, as prophesied by Nathan, "the sword shall never depart from your house because you have despised [God]" (12:10).

Here is a list of the calamities that came upon David and his family:

a. Amnon raped Tamar, his half-sister. Absalom, Tamar's brother, avenged his sister's rape and killed Amnon (Ch 13).
b. Absalom fled from David's house after killing Amnon (Ch 14).
c. Absalom gained many followers at Hebron and became their king. David had to flee from his own son (Ch 15).
d. Shimei cursed David (Ch 16).
e. Absalom attempted to kill his own father (Ch 17).
f. David retaliated against Absalom but instructed that Absalom be spared. Nevertheless, his men killed Absalom. David once again had to mourn the death of another son (Ch 18).
g. After subduing the rebellion, David returned to Jerusalem only to face another revolt (Chs 19, 20).

Teaching Tips

If class size permits, it would be a good idea to have the students divide themselves into groups (or work individually) and take one of the above calamities each, read the biblical references in detail and retell the story to the rest of the class. That way, the students will be more familiar with the contents of the story, instead of the outline information given here.

C. David in His Old Age

a. David's psalm of thanksgiving (Ch 22)
When God had given David rest from all his enemies, he praised the Lord God for having been his protection and shield (Ch 22). This psalm is a very good psalm for meditation when one is in trouble, for one can be assured that God will not forsake us just as He did not forsake David in his trouble. It is also a good psalm of thanksgiving, for God is worthy of our praises.

b. David's census (Ch 24)
With the whole kingdom in peace and his own household in harmony after years of turmoil, David decided to have a census taken. As much as Joab, his general, advised against it, for it is a sign of pride and vanity to count one's subjects, David insisted on having the census taken. For this, David incurred the wrath of God and God gave him a choice regarding what punishment should be inflicted upon himself and the people. In the end, God sent a plague and seventy thousand Israelites were killed.

c. Conclusion
As we look back at the whole life of David, we see that as a young lad, he was strong in faith and God's abidance was evident. By middle age, as

times became peaceful for him, he lost his vigilance, committing sins that finally implicated his whole family. This is a common pattern in the life of faith in many people. It is often hard to sustain one's faith all the way into old age, unless one stays watchful and relies on God all the time. We should also understand that no one is ever perfect in his faith and walk with God. Everyone has his or her own weaknesses. We should watch out for our own weaknesses, so that we may not falter.

Check for Understanding

1. How long did David reign in Hebron before he became king over all Israel and reigned in Jerusalem?

2. After David became king over all Israel, did he forget God? Name at least two incidents which showed that he honored God even after he was made king.

3. What was the result of David's complacency after his kingdom became settled as a superpower in the region?

4. Although God forgave David, what were the immediate consequences that he had to bear?

5. List some of the subsequent calamities that befell the house of David.

Life Application

Part A- A Study of Psalm 51

Psalm 51 is a psalm of repentance, the prayer of David when Nathan the prophet went to see him and made him realize his grievous sins. Read the psalm once through. Then, answer the questions that follow:

1. In verse 1, David directly asks God to "have mercy upon" him. Locate other verses in which he also asks for forgiveness of his sins, even though he does not explicitly say "forgive me" or "have mercy upon me." (Answer: vv.1b, 2, 7, 9, 14)

2. 1 John 1:9 says, "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us of our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." This tells us that to receive forgiveness at all, we must first confess our sins. Does David confess his sins before God in this prayer? In which verses can we find his confessions? (Answer: vv. 3–5)

3. David asks God to create in him a clean heart and renew a steadfast spirit within him (v. 10). What does it mean for a sinner to have a clean heart and a renewed spirit? (Answer: True repentance entails turning away from one's sins)

4. In verse 17, it is written "the sacrifices of God are a broken spirit . . . and a contrite heart." What are some other attitudes that one should have before God when asking for forgiveness?

Part B- Contrasting Examples

David sinned greatly against God. But, he repented sincerely and accepted God's punishment. In contrast, there are others in the Bible who did not repent of their sins, nor did they turn back even when given another chance. Below are a few examples. Do you harbor any of the attitudes present in these characters?

1. Cain and Abel were the offspring of Adam. When each of them made an offering to God, Abel's offering was found acceptable whereas Cain's was not. In his jealousy, Cain killed Abel, his very own brother. When God asked him where his brother was, did Cain confess his sin? How did Cain reply? (Read Gen 4:9)

2. Balaam was a prophet. Balak, the king of the Moabites, hired him to curse the Israelites, seeing that they were expanding in number and power. God specifically told Balaam that he was not supposed to go according to the commands of King Balak (Num 23:12). But Balaam did not heed the words of God. What happened to him finally, which managed to stop him from going on to curse the Israelites? (Read Num 23:22–31)

3. Saul was one who always tried to explain himself when found guilty of committing sin. When he unrightfully offered the sacrifices at Gilgal instead of waiting for Samuel to arrive, what was his excuse? (1 Sam 13:12)

   When he once again did not keep God's instructions and spared the king of

Amalek and kept back animals, what was his excuse? (Read 1 Sam 15:15)

We see that Saul continued to be unrepentant throughout his life. In 1 Samuel 24:16–21, after David spared his life once again, he told David, "You are more righteous than I, for you have rewarded me with good, whereas I have rewarded you with evil." One would think that he would have stopped persecuting David. But, he continued to try to seek David's life. That is not true repentance.

4. Judas Iscariot succumbed to the lure of money and betrayed the Lord Jesus for thirty pieces of silver. Before he committed the sin that would smear his name for eternity, the Lord Jesus showed him His love and kindness. What was this great deed of love? (Read Jn 13:1–5) However, this act of great love and humility, which can be seen as a beckoning for one to turn from sin, could not touch the heart of Judas.

Final Thought:
In your own life, do you ever make excuses for yourself when you do something wrong? What were some of those situations? Discuss how you felt after the incident. What could you have done differently?

REFLECTION & PRAYER

"Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation. The spirit is willing but the flesh is weak" (Mt 26:41). These are the words of the Lord Jesus when He was at the Garden of Gethsemane. From the life of David, we know that even one who is truly faithful towards God can fall into sin. The lesson for us is to be watchful at all times. We have to watch out for sin, which creeps upon us slowly, often subtly disguised as the little pleasures or the cares and worries of life. As the Lord warns in Luke 21:34–36, "But take heed to yourselves, lest your hearts be weighed down with carousing, drunkenness, and cares of this life, and that Day comes on you unexpectedly . . . watch therefore and pray always . . . " May we always lead a watchful and prayerful life, to be able to stand against the wiles of the Devil in this perverse and crooked generation!

Lesson 7

The Book of 1 Kings

Listed Scriptures

1 Kings 8, 12, 16–19

Lesson Aim

1) That the students will have basic knowledge about the history of the kingdoms of Israel and Judah and the events in the lives of a few major kings and prophets
2) That the students will understand the need to be vigilant at all times and to hold fast onto God without any compromise

Memory Verse

"Behold, heaven and the heaven of heavens cannot contain You. How much less this temple which I have built." (1 Kgs 8:27)

Bible Reading For This Week *(for students and teachers)*

1 Kings 8, 12, 16–19

BIBLE BACKGROUND

The four books, 1, 2 Samuel and 1, 2 Kings, deal with the kingdom of Israel (including Judah after the division). Beginning with the unstable ascents of Saul and David to the throne, the whole series continues with the division of the kingdom under Rehoboam and thereafter, the separate lines of kings until the Northern Kingdom of Israel disappears in 722 B.C. After that the historical record focuses on the Judean kings up to 586 B.C., when the Southern Kingdom is taken into exile by the Babylonians.

Before the division, the name "Israel" designated the entire nation chosen by God to be His people. After the division, the Northern Kingdom was known as Israel while the Southern Kingdom was called Judah. After the post-exilic age (when the Israelites were taken into captivity in foreign Assyrian and then Babylonian lands),

the residents of Judah were regularly called the "Jews." But the name Israel was also used. In the New Testament Israel simply referred to the Jewish people.

The chronicler of the events recorded in Kings (both parts 1 and 2) is unknown. The narratives were probably compiled during the end of the Southern Kingdom. There are many corresponding episodes found in 1, 2 Chronicles.

1 Kings contains events leading from the old age of David, through the reign of Solomon and the division of the kingdom, to the days of Ahab.

Warm Up

We've often heard about the Northern and Southern Kingdoms of Israel. Do you know how the people of God divided themselves into two kingdoms? And, how many of the kings of each kingdom do you know about? Can you name at least a few of them? In addition, who were the prophets who existed during the times of the kings? Can you name a few of them and state what some of their great works or messages were?

It is not possible to study all the kings and prophets in just one or two lessons. However, in the next two lessons, we shall attempt to take a look at a few of them and learn from their lives.

Bible Study

Part 1
Solomon's Reign

David's own son, Adonijah, attempted to usurp the throne. That prompted David to officially pronounce Solomon as his successor and have the priest Zadok anoint him as king.

Before his death, David instructed Solomon to "be strong and prove [himself] a man" and to "keep the charge of the Lord God; to walk in His ways, to keep His statutes, His commandments, His judgments and His testimonies" (2:2, 3). This is the formula of successful living that holds true even today.

Right after having been anointed king of Israel, Solomon went to Gibeon and offered sacrifices to the Lord. It was there that God appeared to him and granted him his request for wisdom to rule the country well. On top of that, God promised him wealth and prosperity for his kingdom.

Solomon never forgot the unfulfilled ambition that David had of building a temple for God. He made a pact with Hiram, the king of Tyre, to buy cedar and cypress logs from him. Hundreds of thousands of people participated in the great work of temple building. Only the best stones, metals and wood were used. It was no wonder that the temple was believed to be the most opulent of all the temples that were ever built.

After the completion of the temple, Solomon moved the ark of the covenant into the holy of holies (the most holy place). Solomon, together with all the congregation of Israel, offered sacrifices to the Lord and dedicated the temple. Solomon blessed the congregation. The acceptance of God could be seen when His glorious cloud came from heaven and filled the whole temple. That was the most glorious and peaceful moment for the people of Israel.

Thereafter, Solomon continued a series of different construction projects for himself. The number of constructions during the reign of Solomon probably far exceeded that of any other king on the face of the earth. He gained great wealth from the many tributes paid to him and his fame spread to different foreign regions.

Unfortunately, Solomon departed from the teachings of God by taking foreign wives and letting them lead him astray to worship other gods. Consequently, various enemies rose against Israel and Solomon's life ended in turmoil. His predicament should definitely be a warning to us. It is important to hold fast onto God, especially when things are going well, for that's when it might be easiest to become complacent and lose our vigilance.

Teaching Tips

Bring pictures of the temple with you to class. Such pictures are available in many Bible reference books and even off the Internet. Also, have a diagram of the layout of the temple. This is available in the map section of most reference Bibles. This will help the students construct a better mental representation of the temple. You can talk about the various sections of the temple, which correspond with the Tent of Meeting in many ways.

Part 2
Rehoboam and Jeroboam

After the death of Solomon, his son Rehoboam succeeded the throne. In his moment of folly, he refused the advice of the elders of the state and chose to listen to his friends who were much younger and inexperienced. So, he chose to impose greater tax burdens on the people of Israel and spoke harshly to them in an attempt to consolidate his power. His plan backfired and there was a revolt against him. That caused the great division of the kingdom into the Northern and Southern Kingdoms. Jeroboam, the leader of the revolt, gained ten out of the twelve tribes and became king of the Northern Kingdom, known as Israel. Only the tribes of Judah and Benjamin continued with Rehoboam, and they formed the Southern Kingdom of Judah.

You can count with your fingers how many of the kings obeyed God. After Solomon, the people of God simply went through one cycle after another of turmoil, often at the hands of foreign enemies. Yet, that did not deter them from doing evil. Neither did they pause to think about the cause of their plight, which might have led them to realization and repentance. Finally, the Northern Kingdom was destroyed when the Assyrians invaded their land about the year 722 B.C. The Southern Kingdom did not survive long after that. The Babylonian Empire arose, bringing the mighty Assyrians into its subjection and the Southern Kingdom of Judah finally fell around the year 586 B.C. It is indeed sad to see that a people specially chosen by God should fall and deteriorate from grace like this.

Part 3
Ahab and Elijah

King Ahab was one of the most wicked kings in the history of the Israelite nation. He "did evil in the sight of the Lord and did more to provoke the Lord God of Israel to anger than all the kings of Israel who were before him" (1 Kgs 16:30, 33). He further took Jezebel, the Sidonian princess, as wife (1 Kgs 16:31). The Sidonians worshiped idols, particularly Baal. Needless to say, Ahab went the way of setting up altars for the pagan gods and led the country in the many sinful acts associated with idol-worship of that time.

At such a decadent and turbulent time, God's grace was withdrawn from the people. Elijah, a true prophet of God, foretold that there would be a severe drought for years. Unless the prophet himself said otherwise, the drought would continue.

During the great famine, God took care of Elijah. The amazing grace and power of God upon His faithful servants can be clearly seen. Elijah was firstly sent to the Brook Cherith, where God sent ravens to bring him bread and meat, and he drank of the water from the brook. When the brook dried up as a result of the drought, God sent him to the widow of Zarephath. Miraculously, the bin of flour and the jar of oil that belonged to the widow did not run dry until the day God sent rain on the land again. Today, this miracle still bears testimony to God's providence for all who trust in Him.

Another well-known miracle which God performed through the hands of Elijah was the defeat of the four hundred and fifty prophets of Baal (and another four hundred prophets of Asherah; cf. 1 Kgs 18:19). Two altars were set up, one by the prophets of Baal and the other by Elijah. The false prophets cried out the whole day, invoking the name of Baal and even cutting themselves, all to no avail. After they were done, it was Elijah's turn. Water was even poured on the sacrifice and the wood and the trenches around the altar were filled. Elijah then prayed and called upon God to send fire to consume the sacrifice, so that the hearts of the people of Israel would once again turn back to God. Of course, fire came down from heaven and burned up the sacrifice. The prophets of Baal were seized and killed.

A stark contrast to the life of Elijah is none other than Ahab. While Elijah's life was full of the manifestation of God's power, Ahab did not even wake up from the stupor of sin to realize God's power. His greatest mistake was probably in his marriage. The Sidonians were an idol-worshiping people who were known to commit great evil in their worship of Baal and Asherah (such as fertility rites and even self-injury). How Ahab could marry a woman who herself practiced such evil is indeed a great puzzle. Jezebel was definitely a wrong choice of spouse for Ahab, for she stirred him up to do many wicked deeds (1 Kgs 21:25). His life ended in violence as he died in battle.

Check for Understanding

1. In what ways was Solomon a good king?

2 Why do you think Solomon did not keep his faith towards the latter part of his life?

3 What were some of the miracles in the life of Elijah which proved that he was indeed a prophet of God, with God's abidance?

4 What similarities do you see in Solomon and Ahab?

LIFE APPLICATION

Making Choices

From the lives of Solomon and Ahab, we see that their choice of spouses was clearly a determining factor in their fall away from God's grace. Their lives teach us that the friends or loved ones we choose to be close to are crucial in our walk with God. Let us now look at three case studies and try to gather some insight into what we ought to be watchful about when we make choices in our own lives.

Case 1

Kirsten, a church sister, got into a very well known college. Unfortunately, the college was rather far from church and she could only attend services when she had her semester breaks, because that's when she returned home. There were no other brothers or sisters at her college, so she could not have any fellowship with them.

Kirsten found herself constantly surrounded by friends who did not share the same interests as her, being of different faiths and hence having different ways of life. In the first few months, she found herself struggling really hard, trying not to be an outcast and at the same time keeping the Christian teachings she was brought up to observe. It was hard to be a loner and the odd one out all the time. Slowly Kirsten gave in. It started with compromising on Sabbath Day observance. Her friends always asked her to hang out with them on Saturdays. Even though she didn't get to go to church for Sabbath services, she had resolved to keep the Sabbath by listening to the dozens of sermon cassette tapes she had brought from home. However, over time, she gave in to the invitations. Then soon enough, she found herself looking forward to the weekend as a time to go out with friends.

Gradually, she found that Bible reading just didn't shed any new light on matters of faith anymore. A heavy school work load and socializing were enough to occupy her time. She slowly began to lose touch with God. Prayers became shorter and lacking in content. She remembered God, but found it hard to include or feel God in her life. She picked up the ideas and ways of her friends; she enjoyed all types of movies, she loved going to parties, and dressing up like she had never dared to . . . she embraced many ideas which were contrary to the teachings of the Bible. At the time of graduation, Kirsten had become completely changed. She decided that she could no longer see herself as a Christian anymore, simply because the faith she used to have had become something she could not visualize having in her life again.

Questions to think about:

1. *What options about her lifestyle (activities) and friends did Kirsten face from the time she applied to college to the time she graduated from college?*

2. *Kirsten started out with the strong intention to worship God and keep her faith amidst people who did not know God. Why do you think she failed to keep her resolution?*

3. *What are some of the things she could have done to help herself maintain her life of faith even though she was far from church members or a church to go to for regular services?*

4. *What are some of the things her peers from the church, or other church members, could have done to prevent her from falling away from the faith?*

5. *Imagine yourself in the shoes of Kirsten when she was in her senior year in high school and when she was in college. What would you have done differently?*

Case 2

Sam was recently baptized in the True Jesus Church after a neighbor introduced him to the gospel. When he decided to accept baptism, he looked back on many of his old ways and realized that those were rather senseless things. He resolved not to go back to those activities after baptism. He attended services diligently and led a life of Bible reading and prayer. Soon he also received the Holy Spirit.

Unfortunately, many of the friends Sam used to do things with were reluctant to give up on this friend so easily. They continued to ask him out often and hoped that Sam would join them like he used to. Even when Sam would go out with them the occa-

sional time, he always wanted to go home early. He was no longer interested in partying late into the night. Neither was he keen on checking out cute girls anymore. Sam's friends could not understand what had come over him, that he had become "so holy."

For Sam, it was a big dilemma. On the one hand, he wanted to start life afresh after baptism. However, it was just not possible to completely cut all ties with his friends just because he had converted to Christianity. He wanted to be able to keep his old friends while making new ones in church. He hoped that he could bring his friends to know God. Yet, he knew that if he were to continue with his old buddies, he might go back to his old ways. He just didn't feel he could win them over to Christ.

Questions to think about:

1. *Sam was caught between his resolution to be a good Christian and his friendships with his non-Christian friends. What were some of his struggles and what choices did he face?*

2. *Sam had good intentions in wanting to bring his friends to know God. Do you think that by joining them in their activities Sam could have succeeded in winning them over? If you had been Sam, what would you have done?*

3. *If you were one of the brothers in church who knew Sam and his struggles, what advice would you give Sam? What are some things you would do to help him?*

Case 3

Jim has always been a very good youth in the church and a good son at home. At school, he's also an exemplary student. One of his favorite past times is to chat and play games online with people from all parts of the world. One summer, when he had a lot of free time, he spent many hours a day in front of his computer. Soon, he found that he could not tear himself away. He loved some of the games so much that he even sacrificed his quiet time with God just to wait for the right opponents online. He never thought that he would be addicted to the Internet. There were even times when he got out of bed when the whole family had gone to sleep just to play another round. He found that he could not concentrate in his prayers anymore. He even skipped Bible reading. He knew that the situation had to be stopped, but he didn't know how.

Questions to think about:

1. *What do you think could be some of the causes of Jim's preoccupation with chatting and playing games online?*

2. *Is there anything that friends or RE teachers or his parents could have done to prevent his addiction?*

3. *If Jim confides his problem to you, how would you advise him to stop?*

4. *What are some of the things that friends in church can do to help Jim?*

Now that you have read the stories about others, think of your own situation. Are there internal struggles that you have that are similar to those described in the case studies? Write your own case study, incorporating your own struggles. Then, come up with some questions. After that, share your stories with the class and see if they can come up with solutions to your questions.

REFLECTION & PRAYER

King Solomon is often hailed as the wisest king that ever lived. Under his reign, the kingdom of Israel was prosperous and well-respected by nations far and wide. He himself enjoyed almost all the pleasures of this earth – education, knowledge, great cuisine, all forms of physical enjoyment. Yet, at the end of his life, he had this to say:

"Rejoice, O young man, in your youth, and let your heart cheer you in the days of your youth; walk in the ways of your heart and in the sight of your eyes; but know that for all these, God will bring you into judgment." (Eccl 11:9)

"Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God and keep His commandments, for this is man's all. For God will bring every work into judgment, including every secret thing, whether good or evil." (Eccl 12:13, 14)

Many things may seem important to us at certain points in our lives. But, the significance of these things pass

away, and other things replace them as priorities. Some things are really important, and we should never forgo them just for the sake of fleeting pleasures. As children of God, we should always pray that God will give us the wisdom to know what is truly precious and important, so that in our decision-making, we will always make the best choice, and be preserved in His grace.

Lesson 8

The Book of 2 Kings

Listed Scriptures

2 Kings

Lesson Aim

1) That the students would have basic knowledge about the kings of Israel and Judah
2) That the students would learn from the strengths and weaknesses of the characters studied in this lesson

Memory Verse

"Blessed is the man who fears the Lord, who delights greatly in His commandments" (Ps 112:1)

Bible Reading For This Week *(for students and teachers)*

2 Kings

Bible Background

After the division of the Israelite kingdom into the Northern and Southern Kingdoms, Israel and Judah existed side by side for two centuries. Sometimes they were at peace, sometimes they were at war. The Assyrians conquered Israel in the year 722 B.C. and the whole northern territory was annexed by the great Assyrian Empire. Judah also fell under Assyrian domination, but continued as a separate kingdom for almost a century and a half, until the Babylonians conquered them and swept them into captivity about the year 586 B.C.

Kings Named Joash

Joash (as mentioned in chapters 11, 12) was the 9th king of Judah, who became king at the age of seven, through the help of Jehoiada. His father was Ahaziah and his mother was Zibiah. His grandmother, Athaliah, killed all the potential heirs to

the throne after her son Ahaziah died. However, baby Joash was saved and hidden till he was seven (chapter 11). The Bible also spells his name as Jehoash. It is easy to be confused by the spelling of the names. There is another "Joash" (as mentioned in 13:9) who was the son of Jehoahaz of Israel. He became the 12th king of Israel. His name was actually Jehoash, but is sometimes spelled Joash.

Teachers should also refer to the Bible Background section in Lesson 7 for additional information.

Warm Up

Last week, we looked briefly into some major characters during the period of the kings in the history of the Israelite nation. Do you still remember who they are and what major events occurred in their lives? Today, we continue to look at some of the prophets and kings, both from the Northern and Southern Kingdoms. Their failures should serve as a warning for us; their good examples, a source of inspiration.

Teaching Tips

Since some of the kings of Israel and Judah have the same names, it may be helpful to refer to a chart of all the kings of Israel and Judah, found in most Bibles.

Bible Study

Part 1
Elijah and Elisha

Throughout his life, Elijah walked with God. He was faithful in carrying out the instructions of God and preached whatever message God told him to, regardless of how the listeners would take it, or whether or not it would endanger his life. For instance, King Ahaziah was infuriated by Elijah's prophesy that he would die, and sent his soldiers to try to arrest the prophet. However, not only did the soldiers fail to capture the prophet, all three batches of soldiers were killed by fire that came from heaven (2 Kgs 1). Thus, we can see the protection of God over those who

obey and walk with Him.

When Elisha, the apprentice of Elijah, knew that his master was soon to depart from this earth, he followed him closely. He had earlier asked to have a double portion of the Spirit that had been upon his master (2:9) and the condition for his request to be granted was that he had to personally witness Elijah being taken away. His close walk with Elijah demonstrated his eager sincerity to be filled with God's power. As we know, Elisha was rewarded when Elijah was taken up by a whirlwind to heaven. The same applies when we wish to be filled with God's power. It is not merely a matter of asking. How we conduct our lives and our perseverance in walking closely with God is ultimately the way to have God with us.

After succeeding Elijah, Elisha performed many great miracles, among which included:

- healing the water at Jericho (2:19–22)
- helping the three kings to defeat the Moabites (3:5–27)
- enabling the vessels of the widow to be filled with oil (4:1–7)
- prophesying that the woman of Shunem would bear a son (4:8–17)
- raising the son of the woman at Shunem (4:18–37)
- counteracting the poison in a pot of stew (4:38–41)
- feeding a hundred men with twenty barley loaves (4:42–44)
- healing Naaman, the general of Syria (5:1–14)
- causing the ax head to float (6:4–7)

Of the many events in the life of Elisha, there are two incidents worth noting:

a. Elisha understood his position as the servant of God and did not allow himself to accept the gift of gratitude from Naaman after healing him. However, Gehazi was covetous and lied to secure the rewards for himself. For this he was afflicted with leprosy. This is a good reminder to all of us, that we should never use working for God as a route to obtain personal benefits (cf. 1 Tim 6:5).

b. During the battle against the Syrians, when the city of Samaria was under siege, an Israelite officer did not believe Elisha's words when he prophesied that the following day, they would have abundance of food. When God caused the Syrian army to imagine their being ambushed by the Israelites, they fled, leaving all their food supplies in their camp. The hungry Israelites plundered the camps and the officer who did not believe the words of Elisha was trampled to death during the great stampede in the rush for food. Thus the words of Elisha, "you shall see it with your eyes, but you shall not eat of it," came true. This is another reminder about the importance of faith (cf. Heb. 11:6).

Part 2
The Kings of Judah and Israel

The latter half of 2 Kings records the rise and fall of the rest of the kings in Israel and Judah. Looking at their lives briefly, we can hope to learn from their failures and successes:

a. Athaliah – Mother of Ahaziah (Ch 11). When she saw that her son had died, she killed all the royal heirs and made herself the ruler, and reigned for six years. Later, Jehoiada helped Joash, Ahaziah's son who was saved from Athaliah's plot, regain the throne.

b. Joash (Jehoash) (Ch 12) was a king who walked in God's ways, being guided by Jehoiada the priest. He made renovations and repairs to the temple of God.

c. Jehoahaz and, later, Jehoash ruled in Israel (Ch 13).

d. Amaziah succeeded the throne after his father Joash was murdered. He was a good king who walked in God's ways, like his father. He also killed his father's murderers. During his reign, he led Judah in battle against Israel (Ch 14).

e. Ahaz, the son of Jotham, did not keep the ways of the Lord when he became king (Ch 16). He turned to idol-worship and committed great evil, including sacrificing his children as part of the rites of worship (16:3). When the king of Israel joined forces with the king of Syria to attack Jerusalem, Ahaz did not seek the help of God. Instead, he sought help from the king of Assyria, and even offered him all the treasures to be found in the house of the Lord as well as in the treasuries of the king's house.

f. Hoshea, the king of Israel, did evil in the sight of the Lord (Ch 17). During his reign, the Assyrians attacked Israel and made him a vassal. Chapter 17 outlines all the evil committed by the Israelites. The Assyrians besieged Samaria for three years. Some history scholars believe that the Samaritans are the descendants of the Israelites who had intermarried with the Assyrians. The conquest of Israel by the Assyrians, in the year 722 B.C., marked the end of the Northern Kingdom.

g. Hezekiah was one of the last kings of Judah (Chs 18, 19). He was a good king who walked before God. He rebelled against the king of Assyria, and did not offer tribute to him, unlike the king of Israel. God heard the prayers of Hezekiah and protected Judah from the Assyrians. Sennacherib, the great king of Assyria, suffered a great defeat by the Lord God. He returned to his land and was ultimately killed by his own sons.

   Hezekiah pleaded for an extension of his life when the prophet Isaiah told him about his impending death. God granted his request. Unfortunately, during the fifteen years of his extended life, he committed the grave mistake of showing off all the treasures of Judah to the Babylonian king. The Babylonians were the ones who came and ended the Judahite kingdom (Ch 20).

h. Manasseh, the son of Hezekiah, was probably the most evil king of all the kings of Judah (Ch 21). He practiced idolatry, sacrificed his children, dabbled in witchcraft and killed many innocent lives (vv. 3, 6, 7,16). His son, Amon, who later succeeded him, was not a king who walked in the ways of God either.

i. Josiah was a king who walked in the ways of God (Chs 22, 23). He restored the temple of God, removed idols and taught the people to turn back to God. Unfortunately, he made a wrong political move to fight against Pharoah Necho, who joined the Assyrian king in alliance. Pharaoh Necho killed Josiah in battle.

j. Jehoahaz, Jehoiakim, Jehoiachin and Zedekiah were the last kings of Judah (Chs 24, 25). Essentially, these kings were almost like puppet kings of the Babylonian Empire, which was the strongest force in the Middle East at that time. The kingdom of Judah fell about the year 586 B.C.

Check for Understanding

1. What did Elisha ask of Elijah before Elijah was taken up to heaven?

2. Describe at least three miracles performed by Elisha.

3 Without referring to the notes in this workbook or the Bible, could you name some of the kings who were (a) evil and did not walk in God's ways, (b) good and walked in the ways of God?

4 Which empire conquered the Northern Kingdom of Israel and in which year did Israel fall?

5 Which empire conquered the Southern Kingdom of Judah and in which year did Judah fall?

LIFE APPLICATION

Part A- Remaining Watchful

From the lives of the many kings mentioned in this lesson, we have seen how some of them walked in the ways of God and how some did not. One does not become evil or good overnight. Human beings are social animals. The environment a person is in often shapes the person. One should therefore always examine his or her weaknesses. Here's a verse that warns us about the things to watch out for in ourselves:

> *Watch your thoughts; they become words.*
> *Watch your words; they become actions.*
> *Watch your actions; they become habits.*
> *Watch your habits; they become character.*
> *Watch your character; it becomes your destiny.*

How much truth do you see in this short verse? Have you seen it happening to you? Take a moment to reflect and meditate on your thoughts, words, actions and habits. Then, in your workbook, write down the things you think you ought to watch out for in these areas. Take this piece of paper home with you today, keep it in a place where you can always reflect on it, so as to improve yourself.

Note to teacher: Give your students 10 minutes to meditate and fill out the sheet of paper. It is important to give the students time in class to think about certain issues, for they may not have the motivation or opportunity at home to do it on their own.

Part B- Trials and Temptations

Today, we may also have witnessed for ourselves how some people have fallen away from God. In fact, we may have been weak at times, and may have almost lost our faith. Talking about our fears or our lack of faith is not anything to be embarrassed about. In fact, it is one of the ways we make ourselves face our weaknesses, and try to conquer them. Fellowship with brothers and sisters often consists of sharing our fears and doubts so that we may encourage one another.

In this exercise, we will look at some of the areas in our lives where we may face temptations or trials that may draw us away from God. Write down the things that may draw you away from God and how you can help yourself, and how church brothers and sisters can help too. After that, you may want to discuss your answers as a class.

Areas in your life	Temptations/trials that may draw you away from God	How you can help yourself/How church brothers & sisters can help one another	Which specific Bible verses can help you?
Friends outside church			
Ideas/theories learned in school or from the media			
Problems in family			
Problems with people in church			
Others			

"Remember now, O Lord, I pray, how I have walked before You in truth and with a loyal heart, and have done what was good in Your sight." (2 Kgs 20:3)

These were the words of King Hezekiah when he prayed to God to allow his life to be extended. God answered his prayer and added another fifteen years to his life. Unfortunately, all the good deeds that Hezekiah had done before could not blot out the fact that in his later years, he committed the grave mistake of showing off all the treasures in his kingdom to the Babylonian king. It is important to realize that we have to persevere in holding fast to the words of God. Spiritual nurture and keeping God's teachings are not things we do for a moment and imagine will last forever. It is a lifelong battle and the victory is not ours unless we hold on to the very end.

Lesson 9

The Books of 1 and 2 Chronicles

Listed Scriptures

2 Chronicles 2, 3, 19

Lesson Aim

1) That the students would get an overview of what is covered in the two books
2) That the students can learn from the good examples mentioned and take the examples of evil doers as reminders not to walk the same path

Memory Verse

"The Lord is with you while you are with Him. If you seek Him, He will be found by you; but if you forsake Him, He will forsake you." (2 Chron 15:2)

Bible Reading For This Week *(for students and teachers)*

2 Chronicles 2, 3, 19

Bible Background

As with the books of Samuel and Kings, the two books of Chronicles are originally in one volume. The first division was made in the Septuagint (the first translation of the Hebrew Bible into Greek) and then later the Latin Vulgate (Latin translation of the Bible). The division was adopted in subsequent translations and versions. The Hebrew title of Chronicles is "book of the acts/events of the days," that is, annals, a phrase used to describe royal acts or records. The books can be seen as consisting of four sections: genealogies and lists that trace the story from Adam to the community after the exile (1 Chron 1–9); the reign of David (1 Chron 10–29); the reign of Solomon (2 Chron 1–9); and the history of the Davidic monarchy (later the Southern Kingdom) up to the Babylonian captivity (2 Chron 10–36). Please also refer to the Bible Background sections in Lessons 7 & 8 on 1 and 2 Kings.

Are there books in the Bible that seem hard to read through from beginning to end because the accounts seem so repetitive and even boring? Let students respond.

It is easy to dismiss a book as boring if we do not know what to focus on when we read it. That is why Bible studies are helpful because we get to discuss specific questions based on certain themes or areas of interest. This is a good way to make our Bible reading fruitful, instead of simply going through the sentences without making sense of how the events relate to one another or without finding relevance in our lives.

The two books we are covering today may seem like a repetition of events already covered in earlier books like 1 and 2 Kings. But if we were to focus on specific characters and see how they were or were not blessed by God, we will find teachings from their lives that are relevant to our relationship with God. So today, we will study two books of the Bible, by highlighting some of the important characters and events.

Teaching Tips

Many people find that it is not easy to read through these two books without finding the records tedious and repetitive. So, it is useful, when studying these two books, to take down notes of important events/people/details and categorize the information in various ways.

The information presented in the next section (Bible Study) is merely an overview. It would be boring for your students to simply go through the list. You may want to expand on some of the details in the next section and concentrate on the information you want your students to remember, instead of skimming through the two books as an overview.

Another possibility is to have different groups of students taking charge of reading a few selected chapters and then summarizing their findings to the class. This way, the whole class will get to have the highlights of some selected chapters.

1 and 2 Chronicles

As with the books of Samuel and Kings, the two books of Chronicles are originally in one volume. The records were probably compiled into one volume around the year 450 B.C. It is likely that the compiler/chronicler was Ezra. He could have done it during the time he led the Israelites back to the land of Judah, for the purpose of reviving their religious faith. These historical records of the acts of the kings would have been a good piece of teaching material for Ezra, who was both a scribe and a priest for God.

A. Genealogy

The genealogy of the Israelite nation is summed up in about ten chapters. The contents can be categorized as follows, according to the chapter breakdown:

a. Adam to Abraham: This list gives us information on who the close relatives of the Israelites are (1)

b. The descendants of Jacob:
   1. The tribe of Judah (2) and David's descendants (3)
   2. The tribe of Simeon (4:24–43)
   3. The tribes of Reuben, Gad and half tribe of Manasseh (5)
   4. The tribe of Levi, temple musicians and descendants of Aaron (6)
   5. The tribes of Issachar, Benjamin, Naphtali, Ephraim and Asher (7)
   6. The tribe of Benjamin mentioned again, and the life of Saul (8)

c. Those who returned from exile (9)

B. The Reign of David

a. Fall of Saul and why (10): His failure to obey God's teachings and dabbling with sorcery

b. David's early years as king/leader and a list of heroes who served him (11, 12, 14)

c. David arranged to have the ark of the covenant transported back to Jerusalem. The incident with Uzza, however, instilled fear in David and the people. Thus, the ark was left in the house of Obed-Edom (13)

d. The Levites were assigned to take charge of the ark (14, 15)

e. David's prayer of thanksgiving and desire to build a temple for God (16, 17)

f. David's further conquests (18–20)

g. David sinned when he took a census of the people (21)

h. David instructed Solomon to build the holy temple (22)

i. Further records about the duties of the Levites and the various governing divisions in the kingdom (23–27)

j. Details of David's plan for the temple-building project (28, 29)

C. The Reign of Solomon (2 Chronicles)

a. Solomon offered sacrifices to God and also asked for wisdom (1)

b. Preparations for the temple/Help from the king of Tyre (2)

c. Architecture of the temple (3–5)

d. Completion and dedication of the temple to God (6)

e. God accepted the offerings of the people and the dedication of the temple (7)

f. Solomon's many building projects for his own pleasure (8)

g. Visit of the Queen of Sheba/Solomon's great wealth and wisdom (9)

D. The Davidic Monarchy

In the eyes of God, the Northern Kingdom were a stiff-necked and rebellious people. All the kings of Israel (Northern Kingdom) did evil in the sight of God, and the

people also turned away from God. In 2 Chronicles, only the kings of the Southern Kingdom are mentioned. Here is a brief outline of some of the well-known kings and the events in their lives.

a. Asa (14–16)
He boldly removed the altars and wooden images of the foreign gods. He also defeated the Ethiopians through prayers. Unfortunately, in the battle against Israel, he sought the help of the Syrians. When the prophet admonished him, he locked him up. In the end, Asa died in his sickness, for he did not seek God's healing.

b. Jehoshaphat (17–20)
The kingdom of Judah flourished at the beginning of his reign, for he obeyed God's laws. Later, he joined forces with Ahab of Israel to attack Gilead, much against the counsel of the prophet Imla. In that battle, he nearly lost his life. He ruled the kingdom well. In a later battle against the Ammonites and Moabites, he led the Levite musicians to sing praises to God at the forefront of the army, and with that, they had a great victory.

c. Joash (23, 24)
Jehoiada the priest was courageous to destroy Athaliah, who murdered all in the line to the throne, except for Joash. Joash was made king. With the guidance of the priest, he made repairs to the temple. However, after the death of the priest, he turned to worship idols. Ultimately, he died in sickness.

d. Uzziah (26)
He was a king who walked in the ways of God. Unfortunately, he was proud in his heart and entered the temple to burn incense on the altar of incense (which was a priestly duty). He was stricken with leprosy and died in isolation.

e. Hezekiah (29–32)
He was among the most well-known kings, especially at the end of the Southern Kingdom. He cleansed the temple, and encouraged all Israelites (including those from Israel) to observe the festivals in Jerusalem. He re-established the paying of tithes and many other things pleasing in the eyes of God. When Sennacherib of Assyria fought against Judah, God delivered Hezekiah and his kingdom. Hezekiah ultimately died in peace and wealth.

E. Conclusion

When we look at the nineteen kings of the Southern Kingdom of Judah, we see a line of consistency: Those who obeyed God and did good things were blessed, while those who did evil in God's eyes had tragic endings. There were also some who started out doing good but did not persevere and ultimately turned away from God's laws; the story of their lives are regrettable.

From these stories, we should remember how the Israelites were the ones who insisted on having a king to rule them (1 Sam 8:6, 7, 19, 20). Yet, not one of their kings turned out to be a truly great king who could take care of them like God did. This shows that men are, after all, men. Human beings have weaknesses and strengths. It is the same with people and church members who hold certain positions in church work. No one can ever replace God.

Check for Understanding

1. What are the four main categories of events dealt with in 1 & 2 Chronicles?
2. List the twelve tribes of Israel from memory.
3. What are some of the key events in the life and reign of Solomon?
4. Name at least three kings of the Southern Kingdom and write down their good deeds.

Life Application

Part A- Learning From Your Church Friends

One of the great ancient scholars, Confucius, said that we can find our teachers in the midst of friends; we emulate the good examples and search ourselves when we see undesirable ones. In the church, we have a community of people who can be our "teachers." For this activity, we are going to share with one another what we count as admirable characteristics. Here is the task:

1. Think of one or two church members that you know. Write down, on the piece of paper provided by your teacher, two admirable characteristics that you see in those church members. (Please keep identities of the church members anonymous. This is not a session of honoring any particular person(s).)
2. Elaborate on what these characteristics are, giving instances of how these characteristics were exhibited and what good effects they brought about.
3. Explain why or how you think such characteristics are pleasing in the sight of God, and how people with such characteristics will be able to be of good service to the Lord.
4. Then, share what you have written with the rest of the class.
5. Discuss how someone may be able to acquire or develop the various strengths that have been mentioned.

Part B- "The Touch of the Master's Hand"

It was battered and scarred, and the auctioneer thought it scarcely worth his while to auction off the old violin, but he held it up with a smile.

"What is the bid for the old violin? Who will start the bidding for me?"

"One dollar. One. Who'll make it two? Two dollars. Who'll make it three? Going for three." But, wait, from far back in the room, a gray-haired man came forward and picked up the bow.

Wiping the dust from the old violin, and tightening up its strings, he played a melody pure and sweet, as sweet as an angel sings. The auctioneer, with a voice that was quiet and low, said, "What is the bid for the old violin?" as he held it up with the bow.

"One thousand."

"Two thousand."

"Three thousand."

"Three thousand going once, twice, going, gone."

The people cheered, but some of them cried, "We don't quite understand what changed its worth."

Quick came the reply, "The touch of the Master's hand."

Many a man, with a life out of tune, battered and torn by sin, is auctioned off to a thoughtless crowd, much like that old violin. A mess of pottage, a glass of wine, a game, and he travels on. He's going once, he's going twice, he's going . . . he's almost gone. Then, the Master comes, and the thoughtless crowd can never quite understand. The worth of a soul and the miracle that's wrought by the touch of the Master's hand.

- Author unknown.

As we look at the lives of many kings in the history of the Israelites, we cannot help but marvel sometimes at how some kings could persist in doing so much evil. Yet, there are those whose good deeds are impressed upon us. To head for good, or dash down the path of evil? This often is separated by a thin line, a very thin line of whether we submit ourselves to the "touch of the Master's hand." The following are the lyrics of a very well-written Christian song. The message is similar to the one in the story that we have just read:

"Something beautiful, something good,
All my confusion, He understood,
All I had to offer Him, was brokenness and strife,
But He made something beautiful of my life."

Surely at one or more points in time, we have been like the old violin – battered, torn, almost worthless. But, when God came into our lives, with a touch of His hand, He made something beautiful of our lives. How often do we reflect on how great it is that we have God in our lives? Write down your experiences of how God has made something beautiful of your life, by giving you many beautiful things in your life! Be prepared to share your reflections with the class.

REFLECTION & PRAYER

"If My people who are called by My name will humble themselves, and pray and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land" (2 Chron 7:14). God said this to Solomon right after he dedicated the holy temple. A similar message is being echoed in the memory verse for today's lesson: "The Lord is with you while you are with Him. If you seek Him, He will be found by you; but if you forsake Him, He will forsake you" (2 Chron 15:2).

Indeed, God is a God who wants to hear our prayers and give us His blessings. Unfortunately, we often fail to turn to Him. We simply try to keep to ourselves and neglect to involve Him in our lives. May these two verses be kept well in our memories, so that we know to seek God and be close to Him in all the things that we do.

Lesson 10

The Book of Ezra

Listed Scriptures

Ezra 3, 9, 10

Lesson Aim

1) That the students may understand the historical background of the return of the Israelites in exile
2) That the students may understand the importance of the power of God in building (rebuilding) His temple
3) That the students may understand the importance of marrying within the Lord

Memory Verse

"This is the word of the Lord to Zerubbabel: 'Not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit,' says the Lord of hosts." (Zech 4:6)

Bible Reading For This Week *(for students and teachers)*

Ezra 3, 9, 10

BIBLE BACKGROUND

The books of Ezra and Nehemiah are thought to be originally one volume. These books record the post-exilic return of the Jews. From the time of Origen (3rd century), they were divided as we have them today.

The Persian emperor, Cyrus, having conquered the Babylonian Empire in 539 B.C., gave the Jews permission to return to the land of Israel to rebuild the temple. Apparently, the repairs on the temple did not take place immediately after the post-exilic return. It was not until 520 B.C., when Zerubbabel was governor of the province of Judea, that the temple building work was in full swing. Zerubbabel, encouraged by the prophets Haggai and Zechariah, resumed the work of building the temple, with the permission of King Darius. The work was finished in 515 B.C. (Ezra 6:15).

Zerubbabel brought the first group of Jews back to the land of Israel. The work by Zerubbabel is recorded in Ezra 1–6. Ezra was the leader of the second group, and he contributed greatly to the revival of faith of the Israelites. The work by Ezra is recorded in Ezra 7–10.

Ezra returned to Judah in the seventh year of Artaxerxes (Ezra 7:7). There are two possibilities with regard to the year. It could be the year 458 B.C., during the reign of Artaxerxes I. Or, it could be during the reign of Artaxerxes II, which then makes the year of Ezra's return 397 B.C.

If the date of Ezra's work is around the year 458 B.C., Ezra should be a contemporary of Nehemiah. It is baffling that Nehemiah is never mentioned in the book at all. Various biblical scholars have attempted different analyses to solve this conundrum of dates. The various theories are not mentioned here because the contents, especially the teachings of the two books (Ezra and Nehemiah) are not affected by the problem of dating the books.

Note, however, that Nehemiah mentions Ezra's work in his records. It is generally accepted that Nehemiah came to Jerusalem in 445/444 B.C. So, it is likely that Ezra's return was around the year 458 B.C., during the time of Artaxerxes I.

W A R M U P

From the last two lessons, we learned about how the Israelite kingdoms of Israel and Judah were taken into captivity, respectively, by the Assyrians and Babylonians in 722 B.C. and 586 B.C. The Bible does not have a lot of records about what life was like for the Israelites in captivity. However, we know that after the Persians conquered the Babylonians, the Persian kings were kind to the Israelites in that they allowed them to return to their land and rebuild the temple and city walls. In this lesson and the next, we will take a look at how the Israelites rebuilt their temple and city walls. From the difficulties they faced, the way they handled the setbacks and how God guided them, it is hoped that we can find relevance to apply to our life of faith today.

B I B L E S T U D Y

Part 1

The First Return (Ezra 1-6)

The books of Ezra and Nehemiah are thought to be originally one volume. These books record the post-exilic return of the Jews after 70 years of captivity. Ezra records two batches of Israelites who returned to Jerusalem. The first group was led by Zerubbabel and Joshua the priest. They completed the work of rebuilding the temple of God. The second group was led by Ezra, who was known to be a scribe. He played a pivotal role in reviving the faith of the Israelites. As such, we can divide the book of Ezra into two main sections:
a) The first return (chs 1 – 6)
b) The second return (chs 7 – 10).

a. The decree of Cyrus (Ch 1)
God moved Cyrus the Persian king to give permission to the Israelites to return to their homeland, and to rebuild the temple in Jerusalem. Cyrus also commanded the return of all the treasures and articles which were taken from the house of the Lord by King Nebuchadnezzar when the Babylonians attacked Judah. Sheshbazzar was commissioned to go with the Israelites and was made the governor of Judah. We can see the hand of God in history, and especially in the history of His people. His mighty hands rule over even the strongest kings on earth (Read Prov 21:1 – "The king's heart is in the hand of the Lord, like the rivers of the water; He turns it wherever He wishes.")

b. The Israelites return to their homeland (2–3:7)
Under the leadership of Zerubbabel and Joshua, about 43,000 Israelites went back to Jerusalem in this first return (about 537 B.C.). A census was taken, according to the tribes, and those whose parentage could not be ascertained as being of the priesthood were not permitted to be priests. They also started to offer sacrifices and kept the festivals.

c. Rebuilding the temple (Chs 3–6)
1. Laying the foundation (3:7–13): On the second month of the second year, the Israelites began work on the temple. First, they had to lay the

foundation. When the builders laid the foundation of the temple, the priests stood in their apparel with trumpets and the Levites had cymbals, and they praised the Lord. Many of the old men, who had seen the old temple (before the captivity) wept as the foundation was laid.

2. Obstacles arose (4): Some enemies of the Israelites got wind of the rebuilding of the temple and sought the Israelites out, offering to join them in the temple building. Zerubbabel and the rest of the leaders rejected them, saying that they would not have a part in the building of God's temple. In consequence, these adversaries turned and plotted against the Israelites. They created trouble by reporting to Cyrus (and even later, Darius) that the Israelites planned to start their own nation and stop paying tribute to the Persian king. The work of rebuilding the temple was halted when the king believed these lies and passed a decree to stop the work. A lapse of fifteen years ensued thereafter.

3. The work resumed (5:1–5): When they faced obstacles in building the temple, the Israelites thought that it was not the timing of God yet, and turned their attention to rebuilding their own lives. They became far more concerned about building their own houses instead of the temple of God (Hag 1:2, 7–9). God inspired the prophets, Haggai and Zechariah, to speak to the people. Through the encouragement of these two prophets, the Israelites decided to resume the work of building the temple again. In the second year of King Darius (520 B.C.), they started work again. This time, by the grace of God, the work progressed without hindrance.

4. Help from King Darius (5:6–6:12): At the petition of the governor of the region where the Israelites dwelled, Darius conducted a search of the archives and found records of King Cyrus' decree that allowed the Israelites to rebuild the temple. He therefore passed a decree that no one should hinder the work and that expenses of the rebuilding should be paid to the Israelites from the tributes and taxes received in the region.

5. The completion of the rebuilding of the temple (6:13–22): In the sixth year of Darius, the Israelites completed the rebuilding of the temple and even observed the Feasts of Passover and Unleavened Bread.

Part 2
The Second Return (Ezra 7-10)

a. Ezra, the scribe who was full of zeal (7:1–10)
Ezra was a priest descended from Aaron (7:2–7). He belonged to the family of Seraiah, whom Nebuchadnezzar had killed (2 Kgs 25:18–21). When Seraiah cleaned out the temple, he got hold of the Book of the Law. Hence, Ezra had the opportunity to study the word of God and became a scribe learned in the teachings of God. In the seventh year of Artaxerxes, he led another group of Israelites back to the land of Israel.

b. Help from the palace (7:11–28)
Artaxerxes gave full support to Ezra's endeavor. He not only gave permission for the Israelites to return to their land; he also provided for their traveling expenses and gave tax exemption to those belonging to the family of the Levites (who were the priests). From this, the special providence of God is evident.

c. The safe return by the help of God (8)
Before they set off, Ezra gathered all those who were returning by the river that flows to Ahava and camped there for three days. He found out that there were no Levites among the would-be returnees. In order that there would be people to tend to the affairs of the temple, he sent men to search for Levites and the Nethinim. (Nethinim refers to the group of people appointed to help the Levites in the service of the temple, see 8:20.) The journey they were about to embark on was long and arduous. He had not asked the king for an escort of horses and soldiers. So, Ezra led the people in fasting and prayer for God's abidance. Four months later, Ezra, together with more than one thousand seven hundred men, arrived in Jerusalem, with all the articles for the temple as well as the gold and silver. Even though they had not relied on any special human protection along the journey, they arrived safely. Hence, we see the providence of God yet again.

d. Prayer of penitence on behalf of the people (9)
Upon returning, Ezra learned soon enough that the people of God had intermarried with pagan women, and the leaders of the tribes were the ones who transgressed most severely in this. He was grieved and took it upon himself to pray to God for forgiveness. Other than offering such intercessory prayers, he

also encouraged the people of God not to continue in this trespass (read Deut 7:3, 4). Ezra understood that to marry and join the gentiles in their ways was a great sin in the sight of God. Today, we are also the chosen people of God. Let us not follow in the footsteps of the Israelites who went and followed the ways of their pagan spouses.

e. Cutting ties with their pagan wives (10)
All the Israelites gathered together before Ezra, and they realized their sin in marrying pagan wives and following in their ways. They wept for their sins and vowed to cut their ties.

f. Conclusion
The return of God's chosen people to the land God had promised them shows us that God's promises are steadfast. Through it all, God's providence and grace never departed from them. In the process of rebuilding the temple, we see that they faced a lot of difficulties and obstruction. Nevertheless, they did not give up and the work was finally completed. It is the same for us today as we try to build up the church of God. After the physical temple had been rebuilt, there was still the need for Ezra to lead the people in rebuilding the temples that were within themselves, i.e., their spirituality. We see that the Israelites were quick to repent and mend their ways. This is something we ought to emulate today, as we strive to build our spirituality, as each of us is a temple of God.

Check for Understanding

1. Who first led the people of God back to the land of Israel/Judah to rebuild the temple?
2. What did this first batch of people bring back with them to Jerusalem?
3. Why was the work of rebuilding the temple halted for a long time?
4. When Ezra led the people of God back to Jerusalem, what was the big sin he discovered among the people?
5. What did the people do to show their repentance?

Life Application

Part A- The Importance of Marrying Within the Lord

In the book of Ezra, we see how Ezra was grieved that the people of God had married pagan women, for it was not the will of God that His people should intermarry with people who did not regard God as their God. Besides, the gentiles were often from evil and idol-worshiping nations. Today, the will of God has not changed. It is important that we recognize the importance of our status as the children of God. We are the salt and light of this world, to bring non-believers to know God. We should never go after the ways of people who do not know Him, especially people whose conduct and outlook on life run contrary to the teachings of God. We should strive to marry within the Lord, for marriage with non-believers often brings people away from God. It is very hard to maintain a life of service to God while trying to simultaneously maintain a marriage with someone who is not of the same faith.

Here are two case studies on the topic of marriage with non-believers. These stories are adapted from real stories, but the names have been changed. As we read their stories, try to put ourselves in the shoes of these believers. Then, as a class, discuss the questions that follow.

Case 1

Ken was baptized as an infant. As he was growing up, he went through well-structured religious education both at home and in church. As a teenager, he was one of the best students in his RE classes, knowing the Bible very well. He showed great respect for the elderly and was a good influence on the younger kids in church. When he was in college, he was even a leader in his campus fellowship. After graduation, he worked for a year before going on to graduate school. It was there that he got to know Ashley, who was a Christian from another denomination.

Their friendship developed into a romantic relationship and Ken knew that he had to try to bring Ashley to our church. Out of her love for him, Ashley accompanied him to our church services on the Sabbath. She was not used to our mode of prayers at first but soon got accustomed to it. She even enjoyed some of our sermons, which she found were true to biblical teachings. However, she could not bring herself to accept our church doctrines. Whenever Ken was with her, he found it hard to bring doctrinal issues into their conversation as it would always end in some form of tension or disagreement. Ken decided that all he could do was to pray for her.

When the church members started to see that Ashley was more than just a friend to Ken, they started to feel that Ken had "regressed" in his faith. Such an attitude was no help at all for Ashley to feel accepted in the church. Some sisters tried to talk with her, but somehow, being Ken's girlfriend, the conversations remained superficial and cordial. She only continued to join Ken in attending our services because of her love for him, but deep inside her, she felt like a stranger in the church.

After Ken and Ashley got married, the situation continued for two more years. However, Ashley's sense of alienation did not go away, and Ken could really sense it. Her unhappiness in coming to our church, coupled with the increasing responsibilities of life after marriage, finally led Ashley to decide that she would go back to her own church. Soon, Ken tried to make peace and often joined the community of the other church and today, he does not even come to our church services.

Questions to think about:

1. *It is said that affairs of the heart are beyond one's control. Do you think Ken could have avoided getting himself romantically involved with Ashley? Explain your answer.*

2. *Were there telltale signs for Ken that Ashley might not ultimately come to accept the doctrines of salvation, even though he tried really hard and she tried her best to come with him to church?*

3. *If there had been greater support from church members, do you think Ken and Ashley would have become a happy couple in our church today? What are some of the things they did not handle well? What are some things they could have done, which they did not do?*

4. *After their marriage, what could Ken have done differently so that Ashley would not have led him away from the faith?*

Case 2

Mandy was brought up to know that she should strive to marry in the Lord. However, she had always wondered in her mind if she would ever find her spouse in church. She knew she was not the prettiest or smartest girl in church, and somehow, all the happily married couples seemed to be perfect matches. She felt she just didn't fit in. But, she hoped to be married in church someday.

When she was of marriageable age, she started to feel as if her fears were coming true. One by one, she saw her peers getting married, and it seemed as though she was the only one left. So, one day, when one of her non-believing boyfriends started to show interest in her, she found it really hard to turn him down. After all, she didn't want to end up all alone.

After a short courtship, she married her non-believing friend. She made some points very clear though. She told her husband that she would like to continue worshiping God in the True Jesus Church after marriage, and that their children had to be baptized in our church. He agreed to it all.

Today, Mandy has been married for eight years. Her two children are baptized. Unfortunately, they come to services an average of once or twice a month. Her children do not enjoy being in the children classes at all because they do not know anything about the Bible stories that the teacher teaches. Mandy often wonders if things could have been better had she not married her husband, for there were simply too many things that they could not connect at the emotional and spiritual levels.

Questions to think about:

1. *While we often hear people say "you should have faith" or "just pray and God will send you a spouse," we know that fears of loneliness and peer pressure can be strong forces for those who cannot seem to find someone from church. Imagine yourself in the shoes of Mandy before she met her husband.*
   a. *What were some of her fears?*
   b. *Are those fears legitimate?*
   c. *How could she have overcome such fears?*

2. *If you were friends with Mandy, what would you have done for her so as to circumvent what ultimately happened?*

3. *What were some things that Mandy could have done in order to bring her husband and children to know the true God?*

Final Thoughts

We know that it is a very risky thing for us to even consider marrying non-believers. It is almost like playing with fire in our life of faith. Unfortunately, today, we still see many youths getting married to people outside of the faith. A small portion of these youths managed to bring their spouses to the Lord. But the majority of them

were simply led away. As high-school students, we are definitely not of marriageable age yet. So, such an issue may seem too far in our future for us to think seriously about now. However, it is important that we develop certain principles in our lives at a young age. Otherwise, we will be easily swayed by the many ideas in the world. May God guide all of us, that we will be preserved in His saving grace.

Part B-
Building Up the Temple of God That Is Within Me

In the book of Ezra, we see that Ezra resolved to study and teach the word of God (7:10). The people were also diligent in listening to Ezra when he taught. Then they immediately carried out what they knew were the right things to do. These are all very important factors in the rebuilding of the temple.

1 Corinthians 6:19, 20 says, "Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's." Today, what are you doing to build up the temple of God that is inside you? Write down at least four ways in which you can build up the temple of God, that is YOU! After writing down four ways to build up the temple of God within you, share them with your class.

REFLECTION & PRAYER

"For Ezra had prepared his heart to seek the Law of the Lord, and to do it, and to teach statutes and ordinances in Israel" (Ezra 7:10). This is a very inspiring verse. Ezra resolved to commit himself to study the word of God, and not only that, he wanted to actually do it and also to teach it! How many of us have ever made such a resolution? We put in a lot of time and energy into our studies at school, but do we also strive to study and know the word of God well? How about bringing what we know about God's teachings into our daily lives? And on top of that, do we teach the word of God by sharing with others and leading by example? How else can we teach the word of God?

Lesson 11

The Book of Nehemiah

Listed Scriptures

Nehemiah 1, 4, 13

Lesson Aim

1) That the students may understand the historical background of the return of the Israelites in exile
2) That the students may understand the importance of the power of God in rebuilding the city
3) That the students may understand the importance of repentance and resolve to keep God's teachings

Memory Verse

"For if I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear. But certainly God has heard me; He has attended to the voice of my prayer." (Ps 66:18, 19)

Bible Reading For This Week *(for students and teachers)*

Nehemiah 1, 4, 13

BIBLE BACKGROUND

It is generally accepted that Nehemiah came to Jerusalem in 445/444 B.C. He was cupbearer to King Artaxerxes I (465 – 424 B.C.). That was a position of very high office, being someone close to the king. While Zerubbabel led the first group of Israelites back to rebuild the holy temple, we know that Ezra later went to revive the faith of the nation as he led a second group back. As for Nehemiah, his role can be seen as more related to the building of the city walls as well as the revival of a life of true worship towards God.

Please also refer to the Bible Background section for Lesson 10 for additional information.

Warm Up

Over the course of history, we see how God sometimes helped His people by arranging for them to find favor in the sight of people in power. For example, God first arranged for Joseph to become the premier in the land of Egypt, so that when the great seven-year famine came, the sons of Jacob could move their families to Egypt and survive the harsh time. We also see a similar example in the case of Moses. When he was a baby, he was found by the daughter of the Pharaoh, thus escaping the fate of having to be killed.

During the captivity, God used this method to help His chosen people too. Today, we will study the case of an Israelite whose position in court was one that allowed him to stay close to the king of Persia. We will see how he obtained favor and help from the king and returned to the land of Judah to help rebuild the city of Jerusalem.

Bible Study

Nehemiah

The author of the book of Nehemiah was Nehemiah himself. He was the cupbearer of the Persian king, Artaxerxes I, who ruled from 465–424 B.C. Nehemiah, following Zerubbabel and Ezra, also returned to the land of Judah. He was governor there for a period of twelve years. It is believed that he went back to the court of the Persian king for a brief time after that. In 433 B.C., he returned to the land of Judah again and carried out the reforms of the religious and social life of the community.

The book of Nehemiah can be divided into four major sections:

a. Nehemiah returns to the land of Judah (1–2:8)
b. The city walls are rebuilt (2:9–7)
c. Revival of faith (8–12:26)
d. Offerings upon the completion of the city walls (12:27–13)

A. Nehemiah Returns to the Land of Judah (1–2:8)

a. Grieving for the holy temple (1):
Although Nehemiah was in a foreign land, his heart never left his homeland. He was very concerned about what was going on in the land of Judah. When he heard that the people in the province of Judah were in distress and reproach, and that the city walls were in ruins and the city gates burned, he was exceptionally moved. He wept and cried to God for help. The spirit of Nehemiah is admirable. How many of our present-day believers actually weep and pray for the church, or for the members in church?

b. The king granted him permission to return (2:1–8):
Artaxerxes noticed that Nehemiah had a sad countenance, and asked about the cause. After Nehemiah told him about what was bothering him, the king granted Nehemiah permission to return to his homeland. He even granted Nehemiah's request to have timber and other resources for rebuilding the city walls.

B. The City Walls Are Rebuilt (2:9–7)

a. Upon arriving in Judah (about the year 445 B.C.) (2:9–20), Nehemiah could not wait till the following day but went immediately to examine the city walls. He saw the urgency in rebuilding them, for the ruined walls were a primary reason why enemies were persecuting the Israelites. In today's context, the "walls" of our church are also in ruins. There are many "holes" that needed to be covered up. As children of God, it is our duty to fortify the walls of our church today, whether it is in terms of spiritual nurture, human relationships or in our contact with people who haven't yet received our gospel.

b. Delegation of tasks in rebuilding the city walls (3):
The whole nation was involved in the rebuilding of the walls. The work was divided into different sections of the city walls, and the people were organized into groups, each handling a section.

c. Obstruction from enemies and how they circumvented it (4):
Sanballat and Tobiah, together with their group of men, tried to disrupt the work of rebuilding the walls. Nehemiah encouraged the people not to withdraw in fear. Instead, he devised a plan such that half the people would work on the rebuilding while another half would hold weapons and keep watch. They also arranged for people to keep watch at night.

d. Nehemiah rebuked the nobles for usury of their fellow Jews (5):
Nehemiah was furious when he found out that the nobles were demanding tributes from their fellow Jews. He ordered them to return all the money that they had received through such means.

e. Completion of the city walls (6):
The enemies of the Israelites threatened Nehemiah with false accusative letters but Nehemiah was not daunted. He prayed that God would sustain him with courage. After enduring various forms of difficulties, Nehemiah and the Jews finally completed the rebuilding of the city walls, in fifty-two days.

f. Nehemiah arranged for people to take charge of Jerusalem (7):
Nehemiah appointed his brother Hanani to take charge of the city and Hananiah to be in charge of the citadel, for he was a faithful and God-fearing man.

g. A census was taken (7:4–73):
There were not very many Jews who returned to the land of Judah during the first journey. God moved Nehemiah to take a census of the families who were living in the land so as to calculate the number of people who had actually returned.

C. Revival of Faith (8–12:26)

a. The Book of the Law was read (8):
On the seventh month, Nehemiah gathered all the people by the Water Gate, and Ezra the scribe was asked to read the Book of the Law (of Moses). The Levites were there to help the people understand the readings. The people of God were so touched by the words of God that they wept, but they were told not to grieve but to rejoice, for they had understood the law of God. They also began to build booths to observe the Feast of Booths (Tabernacles), for it had not been observed since the days of Joshua, the son of Nun. This was a sign that the people of God had neglected the laws of God for a long period of time.

b. The people of God repented of their sins (9–10:31):
On the twenty-fourth day of the seven month, the people gathered together to fast and pray and confess their sins. The Levites also prayed to God on their behalf. The people repented of their past sins and even drafted a covenant to obey the words of God. Nehemiah and all the priests put their seals on the covenant.

c. Resolutions were made (10:32–39):
Among the resolutions made, one was that they would offer a portion of their yearly gains toward the livelihood of the priests and other Levites, so the workers of God could concentrate on serving in the Lord's temple.

d. Jerusalem (11–12:26):
As for the rest of the people, a tenth of them were chosen by casting lots to move into Jerusalem to populate the city. A list of all the priests and Levites was also finalized.

D. Offerings Upon the Completion of the City Walls (12:27–13)

a. Offering the sacrifices (12:27–13:3):
To mark the completion of the city walls, the people circled the city and made offerings to God. The offerings were kept in storehouses, and the Levites assumed their roles in the various services in the temple of God, just like in the days of David. The people also made a resolution to be separate from the other nations.

b. The final clean-up (13:4–31):
After Nehemiah's term as governor was over, he returned to the king of Persia. During his absence, the faith of the people began to wane. By the time Nehemiah returned to Jerusalem a second time, he had to reorganize the lives of the people once again. First, he cleansed the temple, and reinstated the Levites in the services within the temple. He strongly rebuked the Israelites who had married gentiles. He reiterated to them also the need to observe the holy Sabbath. It was not only an outwardly clean-up, done on the temple, but also inwardly, in the spirituality of the people.

c. Nehemiah's zeal in rebuilding the walls of the city never dwindled no matter what difficulties arose before him. He saw the need to fortify the city of God against enemies. He also cared about the spirituality of the people. He cleansed the temple and reinstated religious services. More importantly, he stirred the people of God into repentance and obedience to the laws of God.

Today, we need more "Nehemiahs" in our church. We need people with a zeal for God's house, to guard against all forms of enemies, and also to strengthen the church internally. That way, every believer can be strong and keep the words of God. Are we ready to be "Nehemiahs" for God?

Check for Understanding

1. Who was Nehemiah? How would you describe his role in the history of the Israelites in the post-exilic era?

2. What were some of the sins the people of God had committed, and what were some of the things that they had neglected to do for many generations?

3. How did the enemies try to obstruct the work of rebuilding the city walls?

Life Application

Making and Sticking to Resolutions

The Israelites often resolved to obey God's teachings but usually could not follow through. When the Book of the Law of Moses was read to them, the people were full of remorse; they wept and resolved to depart from their old ways and to follow the teachings in the Book of the Law. But when Nehemiah went back to the palace of the Persian king, we see that the people lapsed into their old ways again. They began to neglect observing the Sabbath, and even married pagan women and followed in their ways.

This demonstrates one very important fact: Resolution alone does not ensure the carrying out of deeds. In our life of faith, are we not like the Israelites at times? We resolve to do certain things that we know are good for our spiritual growth and are pleasing in the eyes of God. But, how often do we find ourselves distracted by the things that pull us away from what we have resolved to do?

There is a story that goes like this:

A religious man felt that he was lacking in patience and gentleness. He decided that spending half a year up in the mountains reading holy scripture, meditating and enjoying nature's tranquility would help him improve on this aspect of his spirituality. So, indeed, this religious man spent half a year doing just what he had planned. At the end of the period of spiritual cultivation, he found himself a calmer,

happier and even gentler person. He knew it was time for him to go back to the world.

Half-way down the mountain, he met with a group of children who were so engrossed with their game that they did not realize they were blocking the path of the religious man. "Hey, little children, do stop your game and let me pass" so said the religious man. But, the children were laughing so hard they did not even hear him. "Hey, I said, stop your game and let me pass!" The religious man started to feel his blood rush to his face . . . After a failed third attempt to catch the attention of the children, he picked one of them up and shouted at the poor child in his face. Right away, the religious man caught himself, but it was too late. All his efforts at spiritual cultivation in the past half year did not seem to have helped him at all.

Food for thought:

1. *What does this story tell you about spiritual nurture?*
2. *Are there instances in your own life when you feel you are just like this religious man? In what areas of your life do you feel this way?*
3. *Did you try to help yourself? How?*

There are many resolutions that we make to improve our lives – our relationships with people, our own character, our service to God, etc. Often we end up being like the Israelites, finding it hard to keep up with the resolutions. In the section below are some common resolutions that we make. Write down some of the things that distract you from holding fast to your resolution. Then, write down what you can do or what type of support you need from people around you so that you can keep your resolutions. (Some suggestions have been added as a guide for you.)

1. I often resolve to . . .

—Spend more time reading the Bible

But this is what I end up doing . . .

—Watching TV

—Surfing the Internet

—Chatting on the phone or online with friends

Here's how I can help myself . . .

—Asking for help from family members to turn off the TV past a certain hour

—Limiting the number of hours a week I spend on the computer doing non-work-related activities

2. I often resolve to . . .
—Attend church or family services more often
But this is what I end up doing . . .
—Lounging around in the house in the evenings
—Going out for dinner with friends
—Other
Here's how I can help myself . . .
—Making arrangements with church friends to meet for dinner before service and then going to service together after that
—Other

3. I often resolve to . . .
—Participate in church work
But this is what I end up doing . . .
—Being too shy to approach the person in charge
—Not knowing who to turn to to get started
—Other
Here's how I can help myself . . .
—Discussing my wishes with church friends or family members so they can refer me to the relevant person in charge
—Other

4. I often resolve to . . .
—Preach to friends at school/work
But this is what I end up doing . . .
—Friends do not even know that I am a Christian
—Other
Here's how I can help myself . . .
—Student's input

5. I often resolve to . . .
—Student's input
But this is what I end up doing . . .
—Student's input
Here's how I can help myself . . .
—Student's input

Reflection & Prayer

Hymn 396 (I Would Be True) and Hymn 409 (Make Me a Blessing) are two very beautiful hymns, almost like hymns of resolution. As we sing them, let's reflect upon our own lives and see how we can strive to be better people for Christ. Let's also remember that we need to live out the word of God every day, instead of simply making resolutions without actually carrying them out. May God help us.

Lesson 12

The Book of Esther

Listed Scriptures

Esther 4, 6, 8

Lesson Aim

1) That the students may understand the circumstances of the people of God during the time of exile, and how they kept their faith
2) That the students may understand that we should be conscious of our blessings and to know how to be good Christians wherever God puts us
3) That the students may reflect upon their values and convictions in their Christian walk of faith

Memory Verse

"Yet who knows whether you have come to the kingdom for such a time as this?" (Esther 4:14)

Bible Reading For This Week *(for students and teachers)*

Esther 4, 6, 8

BIBLE BACKGROUND

The book of Esther tells the story of the origin of the Purim, which is still being celebrated today as a major Jewish festival. It is a simple story of how the Jews were delivered from persecution and death. This is a book that has generated many controversies among biblical scholars. Firstly, neither the date nor location of the book's composition can be determined with any precision. There is an absence of clear historical allusions or perspectives (perhaps with the exception of the mention of King Ahasuerus). Secondly, Esther and Mordecai seem to be unconstrained by Torah regulations that defined Jewish identity for many. Esther could successfully conceal her Jewish identity, in the way she dressed, her diet and even her behavior. Thirdly, God is not mentioned at all. To some scholars, this point lends a secular tone to the book.

Warm Up

When you think about the word sacrifice, what are the first impressions that come to your mind? (Let students respond.) What constitutes sacrifice? We live in a society where each man is for himself. Faced with such a social backdrop, what is the true meaning of sacrifice? This is a question that probably cannot be answered in just one lesson. But, bear this question in mind. It is something worth thinking about as we meet more people, more challenges and new ideologies in our lives. It is worth thinking about not only for our sake, but also for the sake of people around us. It is a question fundamental to the human spirit, for it is something that goes hand in hand with love, without which we can not exist.

Bible Study

The Book of Esther

The book of Esther records the story of how a little Jewish orphan became the queen of Persia and later saved her people. This legendary story took place about 40 years after the rebuilding of the holy temple, which was about 30 years before the rebuilding of the walls of Jerusalem. The setting is the capital of the Persian Empire, the city of Sushan. There is no mention of God in the entire book. Some believe that this was due to the situation that the people were in at that time. It was a time of captivity, and hence, a dark and inglorious period in the history of the Jewish people. Nevertheless, the power and grace of God over His people can be clearly seen.

A. Esther Crowned Queen of Persia (1–2:18)

a. The feasts of King Ahasuerus
King Ahasuerus, more commonly known as Xerxes I, was one of the great kings of the Persian Empire, ruling from 486–465 B.C. He was the son of Darius (I) the Great. According to archeological findings, an inscription at Persepolis indicates his great power during his reign. He put down rebellions in his empire brutally and even attacked Greece, burning the city of Athens in the process. The Greeks, however, managed to push the Persians back into Asia Minor about 466 B.C. Xerxes was assassinated in 465 B.C. The crowning of Esther probably took place around the year 478 B.C. From the description in the Bible, we can conclude that the feasts and celebrations were grandiose.

b. Vashti lost her royal position (1:9–22)
King Ahasuerus held the great feasts to give a full display of the power and wealth that he wielded. He even wanted to show off his beautiful queen, Vashti, to all his guests. Unexpectedly, the queen refused to go along with the king and failed to show up, thus incurring the great wrath of the king. In his fury, he heeded the voices of the highest ranking officials and annulled the royal position of Vashti.

c. Esther chosen as the next queen (2:1–18)
When all the beautiful girls from around the kingdom were selected, Esther was among them. She obtained the favor of the custodian of these girls and he gave her the best beauty preparations. Eventually, Esther emerged as the winner and was chosen as queen. Esther was Jewish. After the death of both her parents, her cousin, Mordecai brought her up. She looked upon Mordecai as her own father and was very obedient towards him. Mordecai instructed Esther to conceal her ethnic identity and parentage.

B. The Loyalty of Mordecai (2:19–3:4)

a. Mordecai saved the king (2:19–23)
Mordecai thwarted the plans of two eunuchs who attempted to kill the king. He reported their ploy to Esther who then informed the king about it. This incident was recorded in the book of the chronicles, but the king never got around to rewarding Mordecai. Yet, Mordecai never asked to have any reward. He did not get upset nor did he try to take advantage of Esther's position.

b. Refusal to bow down to Haman (3:1–4)
Haman was favored by the king and was promoted to a high position. In his pride, he demanded that all the subjects of the kingdom bow down to him. Mordecai knew that as a worshiper of God, he should never bow down and pay homage to any one other than God. That incurred the hatred of Haman. But, in the end, we see how God protects those who hold on to Him even in difficult times.

C. Haman's Ploy (3:5–3:15)

a. The ploy was laid out (3:5–7)
Haman bore a grudge against Mordecai for not bowing down to him. He found out that he was a Jew and hence, plotted to kill not only Mordecai but his whole race! The lot (Pur) was cast and a date (thirteenth day of the twelfth month, the month of Adar) was determined as to when the Jews would be annihilated.

b. The edict to have all the Jews killed (3:8–15)
Haman deceived the king with crafty words, asking that the "rebellious" race, the Jews, be destroyed. The king did not inquire further into the matter and merely gave power to Haman to do as he pleased. The edict was sealed, that on the thirteen day of the month of Adar, all the Jews in the Persian kingdom had to be killed.

D. Esther Saves Her People (4–10)

a. Mordecai persuaded Esther to meet with the king (4)
The Jewish people faced the impending great annihilation. All the Jews in the Persian kingdom were shrouded in a cloud of gloom. Mordecai reminded Esther to think of her position and her responsibility to save her own people from death. Esther was convinced that her royal position was something she could use to help her people. Facing the possibility of death for going into the king's inner court without being summoned, Esther put aside all her fears and decided to see him. In the meantime, she asked that all the Jewish people fast and pray for three days for her mission.

b. Esther invited the king and Haman to a dinner (5)
By the grace of God, Esther was spared from death when she went into the inner court to see the king. She was very careful and wise not to complain to him right away. Calmly, she asked that the king attend a dinner at her court, together with Haman. Up to this point, she had kept her ethnic identity under wraps. This way, she had the upper hand, for Haman did not even suspect her. Happily, he looked forward to the dinner that the queen had specially invited him to. On his way home, he saw Mordecai, who refused to bow down to him as before. He revealed his anger to his wife, Zeresh, and his friends. At their suggestion, he had the gallows made, in preparation for Mordecai's head!

c. The king could not fall asleep (6)
One night, the king tossed and turned in his bed, trying in vain to fall asleep. He commanded that the book of the chronicles be brought and read to him. It was then that Mordecai's role in saving the king was brought to his attention. It was also told to him that Mordecai had never been rewarded. The king consulted with Haman as to how a man whom he wanted to honor ought to be rewarded. Thinking that the person in question was himself, Haman suggested a highly publicized parade. To his great dismay, the king revealed that it was Mordecai whom he wanted to honor. Haman was given the task of conferring all the public honors on him!

d. Esther unveiled the evil plot of Haman (7)
On the second night of the feast, Esther pleaded with the king to spare herself and her people, revealing to the king her ethnic identity. By the grace of God, the king's favor was upon Esther and Haman was sentenced to death instead. He was hanged at the gallows that he had prepared for Mordecai!

e. Esther pleaded with the king to revoke the earlier edict against the Jews (8)
After Haman was hanged, all his possessions were given to Esther. Mordecai was promoted to a position to oversee the house of Haman. Although the lives of Esther and Mordecai were safe for that moment, the edict against all the Jews was still valid. The king therefore gave his signet ring to Esther, that she could draft another edict to revoke the earlier one. The new edict decreed that on the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, all the Jews could destroy whoever sought to take their lives. Indeed, the tables were turned, and God's people were preserved.

f. Purim (9–10)
On the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, the Jews destroyed all their enemies. On the fourteenth and fifteenth days, they celebrated with great feasting. These two days became the Purim, and it was passed down through the generations as a commemoration of how the Jews were spared from the hands of their enemies.

g. Conclusion
We can see how the path of each and every man is different from one another. It does not matter what stage of life we are in, as long as we know that God has arranged for us to be there. Our role is to do the will of God and to be humble and just in all our dealings.

Check for Understanding

1. What do you think was so special about Esther that she obtained the favor of the custodian and stood out from among all the candidates?

2. What do you think was going through the mind of Esther when she approached the inner court to see the king without being summoned?

3. Mordecai did the king a great favor but was not rewarded. In today's world, people are so used to making sure others know what they have done. What do you think was in his mind when he quietly continued to serve the king faithfully?

Life Application

Values and Convictions

Esther was faced with some difficult choices. At the most crucial point, she had to choose between life and death. It's not a decision that anyone would want to make, but it is also during these times that we learn what we really feel convicted about. Below is an excerpt of a testimony written by a brother. After sharing his answers, ask the students to think about the same questions and have them write down their thoughts. Be sure to ask them to share their answers so that all the students can be edified.

1. Write down one conviction that you have had for a long period of time. Please explain why by backing it up with an example.

A conviction is a fixed belief you regard so highly that you are willing to uphold it at all costs. One conviction that I uphold is sexual purity. I am very adamant against sexual relations before marriage. Thank God for giving me a fearful heart of Him so that I may obey this important commandment.

In college, it was uncommon to hear of someone who hadn't already "done it." These days a person is considered inexperienced and prude if he or she has not performed sexual intercourse with at least one partner. As the world becomes more "liberal" and corrupt, it is harder to find good friends that hold the same values and beliefs as you. Many are tempted and many will fall. Those who

are with Christ Jesus can, with the help of the Holy Spirit, control themselves from falling in. I've had friends in high school and college who proclaim themselves as "Christians" yet they regard fornication as something that can be compromised.

My conviction was tested a few times during my college years. I can recall an incident my junior year. One night a classmate and I were studying for an exam in the dormitory study lounge. We went through some old tests, reviewed our notes and chatted. Unexpectedly, my classmate proposed a question that took me by surprise. She asked me if I wanted to sleep with her that night. I thought I had misheard her so I casually played it off as if I didn't know what she meant. She reiterated her question and awaited my response. She had told me stories before of her ex-boyfriends, so that made it very easy for me to decline. It was scary to think how easy I could have just agreed with it and nobody would have known. Just one night, no strings attached. How many young people of this modern time would pass on that? Thank God for His omnipresence and for imparting to me a conscience where I understood the severity of the matter and that my entire life would have changed had I accepted that simple proposal. I was convicted not to fall into the lust of the flesh.

I realize that feelings and lustful desires can spur up at any moment, even for Christians. As Christians, however, we possess spiritual knowledge and the Holy Spirit to restrain our thoughts and control our actions to guide us away from eternal death. We must make a conviction for Christ and guard our bodies.

2. If you were to teach one value to your peers, what would that be? Explain in steps how you would teach it (4 to 5 steps).

I would teach the value of good language. First, the meaning of profane language would be defined. Next, I would give some reasons why people use profane language (i.e., to act "cool" and be accepted, to belittle others in an effort to raise his self-esteem, and/or from habit). After that, the students will learn why Christians should refrain from using foul language. As Christians we ought to be a better example to others in order to exude the fragrance of Christ and manifest the fruit of the Spirit. The Ten Commandments instruct us not to use our Lord's name in vain. Jesus' teachings and Paul's exhortations tell us to love one another and forgive our enemies. If you love your neighbor and forgive your enemies, you will not have a need to curse and use profanity. Lastly, I would use some examples of people who use foul language and people who use good language and contrast their characters so that the students can choose which they would rather be. The most important point to remember is that as a teacher, you must be the example to the value that you teach. You can not just "talk the talk," you have to "walk the walk."

1. Define profane and vulgar language
2. Give reasons why people use profanity

3. Discuss why Christians should not curse or use profane language by referencing to the Scriptures
4. Provide examples/testimonies of people who curse and people that use good language; contrast their characters
5. Be a living example

3. Read Ephesians 4:17-32. Pick one value that you also share from the passage. Explain how you would teach this value to your class (4 to 5 steps).

I would teach the value of telling the truth. The same method would be employed as mentioned in question 2. First, the definition of a lie would be given. Next, I would explain the different types of lies there are, ranging from "white lies" to the most severe ones. Then I would discuss why Christians should not lie and back it up with verses from the Bible (such as the Ten Commandments, Peter's denial of Jesus, and Paul's exhortation in Ephesians and Colossians). Then, I would contrast the consequences of lying against the rewards of telling the truth by using real world examples/testimonies. Once again, setting an example for the students is so important. If you don't practice what you teach, you can not expect them to either.

1. Define the meaning of lies
2. Explain the different types of lies
3. Use the Bible to explain why Christians should not lie
4. Tell real-life testimonies to illustrate the outcomes of lying and being truthful
5. "Practice what you teach/preach"

REFLECTION & PRAYER

There are many things we feel strongly about. Some of us resolve to never smoke while others feel convicted about staying pure. However, when we are faced with real-life situations and we are forced to make a choice, that is when our values are truly put to the test. And unfortunately, not all of us pass. At the same time, society teaches us that we often put our standards too high. If we were to lower them just a little bit, then we would be able to maintain our value system. But as Esther demonstrated, our values, especially our Christian beliefs, can not be compromised, no matter how difficult the choice. Let us resolve to remain strong so that we may fight the good fight and win the race to the heavenly kingdom.

Lesson 13

Review

Lesson Aim

1) That the students may have a review of some of the key points learned in the past twelve lessons
2) That students may be able to apply the memory verses to their lives

R E V I E W

Part A- Memory Verse Test

For the following Bible references, write out the memory verse, and explain how each verse relates to your life today. Some parts of the verses have been given to you as hints to help you.

1. Deuteronomy 7:6 (Lesson 2)
   "For you are a holy people to the Lord your God; _____–_____ on the face of the earth."
   Relation to my life today:

2. Joshua 1:8 (Lesson 3)
   "This Book of the Law shall not depart from _____. For then you will make your way prosperous, _____."
   Relation to my life today:

3. 1 Samuel 15:22 (Lesson 5)
   "Has the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings _____ than the fat of rams."
   Relation to my life today:

4. 1 Kings 8:27 (Lesson 7)
   students fill in
   Relation to my life today:

5. Zechariah 4:6 (Lesson 10)
   students fill in
   Relation to my life today:

6. Psalms 66:18, 19
   students fill in
   Relation to my life today:

Part B- Jeopardy

1. Prepare a chart similar to the one shown here. The point-chart corresponds to the questions given below.
2. As the students select the numbered boxes (according to the points), use a large Post-It note to cover the squares that have already been taken. On top of each Post-It note, indicate which team has earned the space (points)
3. At the end of the game, add up the points and present the winning team with a prize (and consolation prizes to the team(s) which did not win).

Quotes/ Bible Verses	People	All About the Kings	Israelite History	Places
200	200	200	200	200
400	400	400	400	400
600	600	600	600	600
800	800	800	800	800
1000	1000	1000	1000	1000

Quotes/Bible Verses

200
"And so I will go to the king, which is against the law; and if I perish, I perish." Who said these words? (Esther)

400
"Entreat me not to leave you or to turn back from following after you; for wherever you go, I will go; and wherever you lodge, I will lodge; your people will be my people, your God shall be my God." Who said these words? (Ruth)

600
"Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed than the fat of rams." Who said this? Bonus of 100 points: To whom did he say those words? (Samuel to Saul)

800
"If you remain completely silent at this time, relief and deliverance will arise for the Jews from another place, but you and your father's house will perish. Yet, who knows whether you have come to the kingdom for such a time as this?" Who said this and to whom did he say it? (Mordecai to Esther)

1000
"Shall we then hear of your doing all this great evil, transgressing against our God by marrying pagan women?" Who said this to whom? (Nehemiah to the Israelites)

People

200
I was consecrated as a nazirite to God. But, I loved women and drank wine. In the end, I caused my own death by revealing the secret of my strength. Who am I? (Samson)

400
He foolishly made a vow to offer to God the first thing that greeted him when he returned from victory. It was his daughter who came to receive him, and she had to be sacrificed. Who is this judge? (Jephthah)

600
Twice he asked God to show him a sign that he had really been chosen to lead Israel. God performed two miracles using dew and fleece. (Gideon)

800
Name the two men who led the first group of Jews in their return to Jerusalem during the reign of the Persian emperor Cyrus. (Zerubbabel & Joshua)

1000
Name two prophets whose message to the people of Israel motivated them to continue with their efforts at rebuilding the temple upon their post-exilic return to Jerusalem. (Haggai & Zechariah)

All About the Kings

200

"Give to your servant an understanding heart to judge your people" Instead of asking for wealth, this king asked for wisdom. Who is he? (Solomon)

400

David committed two sins which are considered unforgivable sins that lead unto death. What were the two mortal sins he committed? (Adultery with Bathsheba & murdering her husband Uriah through the enemies' hands)

600

This king lived during the time of the prophet Isaiah. He begot King Manasseh during the last 15 years of his life. Manasseh turned out to be one of the most wicked kings of the Southern Kingdom. (King Hezekiah)

800

She was the only female "king" in the history of the Israelites. She killed all but one of the heirs to the throne and made herself king. (Athaliah)

1000

Name four kings, two of the Northern Kingdom and two of the Southern Kingdom, and for each king, list one good or evil thing that he did. (Accept all possible answers. Refer to Lessons 7, 8, 9)

Israelite History

200

Which strong force/empire destroyed the Northern Kingdom of Israel about the year 722 B.C.? (The Assyrians)

400

God removed the family line of Eli from priestly duties eternally. What were the sins of the sons of Eli? (Took the food meant for offering & committed fornication with the women at the temple gates)

600

Name three miracles performed by the prophet Elisha. 200 points for each one, partial points can be awarded if students cannot come up with three. (Lesson 8 has a list of the miracles Elisha performed)

800

List three things that Saul did which were not only foolish but also not pleasing in the eyes of God. 250 points for each if student cannot come up with all three. (Superseded his own authority and offered sacrifices when Samuel did not show up; Put Israelites under oath of abstinence from food during war; Took of the spoils in the war against the Amalekites;1 Samuel, Lesson 5)

1000

What was the purpose of the cities of refuge? Name two cities of refuge. (Partial points – up to teacher; For those who killed another unintentionally, to dwell till brought to trial or till death of the high priest, see Lesson 3)

Places

200

"The land we passed through to spy out is an exceedingly good land . . . a land which flows with milk and honey." What's the name of this land? (Canaan)

400

This place is located in the southwest part of Canaan. It is where Delilah and Goliath were from. (Philistia)

600

This was the 2nd major city that the Israelites attacked in their entry to Canaan. Much to their surprise, they lost utterly, because one of the Israelites took of the spoils from an earlier conquest. (Ai)

800

This was one of the hiding places of David when he was fleeing from Saul. In a cave at this place, Saul attended to the call of nature, and David had a chance to kill him. But, David merely cut of the corner of Saul's robe. Where is this place? (En Gedi)

1000

Name one region situated east of the River Jordan and one other city/region situated west of the river. (Bashan, Gildead, Moab – east; Many regions/cities in the west – see Lesson 1)

In this book, we have studied much of the history of the Israelites, and have seen the success and failures of many different people. We know that God's promise has held true through the ages: "for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him" (Heb 11:6). Those who remain faithful to God and do good in their lives are blessed and received by God. Those who do evil are ultimately punished. Even though we sometimes do not see God's punishment or blessings right away, we must have the faith that our faithfulness towards God is being received by Him. End with a hymn.

"FLEE ALSO YOUTHFUL LUSTS; BUT PURSUE RIGHTEOUSNESS, FAITH, LOVE, PEACE WITH THOSE WHO CALL ON THE LORD OUT OF A PURE HEART."

2 Timothy 2:22

"Whatever your task, work heartily as serving the Lord and not men."

(Col 3:23)

"Be an example...of good deeds of every kind. Let everything you do reflect your love of the truth."

(Titus 2:7)