GOD'S HAND IN OUR LIVES

Teacher's Notes for Lessons on the Old Testament

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

01.	Creation	1
02.	The Fall Into Sin And The Promise Of A Savior	12
03.	Cain And Abel	19
04.	Noah And The Flood	27
05.	Tower Of Babel	31
06.	Call Of Abram; Abram And Lot	39
07.	Birth Of Isaac Announced To Abraham And Sarah	40
08.	Sodom And Gomorrah	47
09.	Isaac's Birth; Abraham Offers Isaac	48
10.	Isaac's Marriage To Rebekah	52
11.	Jacob Receives The Blessing	57
12.	Jacob Flees From Esau; Jacob's Dream	62
13.	Jacob Returns To Canaan	66
14.	Joseph Sold Into Slavery	71
15.	Joseph In Egypt	75
16.	Joseph's Brothers Come To Egypt	79
17.	Joseph's Brothers Come To Egypt Again	85
18.	Jacob And His Family Live In Egypt	90
19.	Early Life Of Moses	93
20.	The Call Of Moses	96
21.	The Plagues	99
22.	The Tenth Plague; The First Passover	102
23.	Israel Leaves Egypt	105
24.	Israel In The Desert	106
25.	The Giving Of The Law	111
26.	The Golden Calf	114

27. Worship In The Tabernacle 117
28. The Twelve Spies 121
29. The Bronze Serpent 125
30. The Last Days Of Moses 130
31. Israel Enters The Promised Land 134
32. The Fall Of Jericho 137
33. Gideon 142
34. Samson 147
35. Ruth 152
36. Samuel 158
37. Saul 163
38. David Anointed King 166
39. David And Goliath 169
40. David Becomes King 172
41. David And Bathsheba 175
42. Absalom's Rebellion 178
43. Solomon Builds The Temple 181
44. The Kingdom Divided 185
45. The Prophet Elijah 188
46. Elijah And The Prophets Of Baal 189
47. Elijah In The Wilderness 192
48. Naboth's Vineyard 196
49. Elijah And Elisha 200
50. Naaman And Elisha 205
51. Jonah 209
52. Overthrow Of Israel. King Hezekiah 214
53. Babylonian Captivity 220
54. Daniel 225

55. The Three Men In The Fiery Furnace 228
56. Daniel In The Lion's Den 231
57. Esther 233
58. Job 235
59. Return From Captivity/Rebuilding The Temple 240

STORY
Creation - *Genesis 1:1-2:7; 2:18-25*

TEACHER PRAYER
Heavenly Father, I praise You for your incredible Creation! Teach me to see the hand of Your power and wisdom throughout the Creation with which You have blessed us! Hinder and stop the efforts of Satan and the world to discount Creation and thereby discount Your greatness. Send Your Holy Spirit to bless my study and teaching. Equip me to so teach Your truth that the children will be awed by Your power and moved by Your grace to love You. Jesus, Savior, be with me as I seek to feed Your lambs. Amen.

VOCABULARY
Create - "to make something that did not previously exist" "Create" is not necessarily to make something out of <u>*nothing*</u> because God called upon the plants and animals to come out of the ground (1:11; 1:24; see also "Frequently Asked Questions" below). God also used "material" when creating Adam (clay) and Eve (rib). Even when God did make use of "material" to create, there is still no doubt that what came forth was a new creation and that it existed by the power of His Word.

Good - God's pronouncement at the end of each creative day is that He saw it and it was "good." When everything had been created, God declared that it all was "VERY good" (1:31). When God declared His Creation "good" it was good in every possible way. God's Creation was good in design, good in appearance, good in its functions (no mutations, abnormalities, etc.), good in its productivity–perfect in every way!R

Firmament - ***Literally***: "*an extended flat surface which is spread out fixed and steadfast."* Picture a flat surface pushed up between the waters. Above the surface are the waters of heaven held apart from the earth. (See further discussion in the text notes below.)

"according to its kind" - This is a quality which God built into the plants (1:12) and sea creatures (1:21) and animals (1:25). This is part of the order God established at Creation so that each individual type of plant/animal would reproduce its same kind of plant/animal (See further discussion in the text notes below.)

God's Image/Image of God - God is a Spirit and therefore, has no flesh and blood and thus no "image" in terms of appearance. In his letters, Paul connects the "image of God" with the characteristics of the New Man who is created by the Holy Spirit when He brings a sinner to faith (Ephesians 4:22-24; Colossians 3:9-10). From Paul's description together with the Creation account (and the fall into sin as the contrast), we conclude that when God created Adam and Eve in the image of God He created them sinless and with a perfect knowledge of God's Will. Furthermore, Adam and Eve were created in such a way that they had a unique relationship with God which was not enjoyed by any of the other creatures-a blissful/happy/perfect knowledge and relationship with God. After Adam and Eve fell into sin, it becomes immediately apparent that the image of God was lost. The significance of that loss also becomes sorrowfully obvious (cf: Genesis 3:8,10) .

OUTER AIM
The Triune God created all things

INNER AIM
I am God's creation whom He still preserves

BACKGROUND

The importance of the Creation account cannot be ignored. The truth that we are God's creatures is the foundation upon which our whole relationship with God begins:

- God is my Creator…He, therefore, has the authority to declare His will for my life.
- God is my Creator…He, therefore, has the power to preserve and help me in every need.
- God is my Creator… He is almighty and holy. He is just and, therefore, must judge sin. Since I sin daily, He must judge my sin. His grace is highlighted when I hear that this almighty Creator also loves me and sent His Son to die for me. I look forward to an eternal existence with my Creator in heaven.

The absence of the Creation truth is *part* of what leads to a godless society. The absence of Creation's truth (either through evolution or other beliefs) leaves the sinner without a foundation for a relationship with God.

- I am the product of a natural process of earth's biology…I'm not under any rule or authority except my own.
- I am the product of natural process of earth's biology…I'm going to live in nearly constant fear if I see the deterioration of the earth which sin causes.
- I am the product of natural process of earth's biology…I will be concerned most with life on the earth-its successes and pleasures.
- I am the product of natural process of earth's biology…I will make science my religion and rely upon myself and other men.

The Creation account displays the glory, power, and wisdom of the one true God. It establishes Him as our Creator. It provides the assurance that our almighty Creator also provides for us day by day.

Text Commentary:

The Creation account can be viewed as a progression of God supplying the earth's many needs until after the seventh day when its needs were completely satisfied.

Day 1

Verse 1: In the Beginning

Man has spent time and money on trying to answer the question of the origin of life (cf. Hubbell Telescope). Here lies the answer, plain, simple, clear, and straightforward. This marks the beginning of all existence. The beginning of all things was an act of God. Before the events recorded in Genesis 1:1 took place, only God existed and He eternally.

Those who wish to guess how the universe and all life came into being and devise their own explanations should listen to the question which God asked Job, *"Where were you when I laid the foundations of the earth?"* (Job 38:4).

God

The first subject of Genesis, and in fact of the whole Bible, is **God**. He is the Triune God. The "Holy Spirit" is mentioned in verse 2, and the Son ("The Word") is associated with Creation in John 1:1.

Created the heavens and the earth

Heavens and earth signify the entire universe. The heavens are the universe and in the space of that Creation there is also the earth. Verse 2 turns to a particular discussion of the earth.

Verse 2:

- All the Creation at this point was still *"*without form and void"
- The first step in the Creation was not a mistake or an imperfect failed attempt. This first step in Creation was good and according to God's intent. His design was to create the earth formless and then step-by-step change it from formless and void to a masterpiece. God created the unformed mass and then began to shape and to form it into its perfected complete state, as a potter fashions clay (Romans 9:20-21).
- "The face of the deep" and "the face of the waters" are parallel descriptions. "The deep" = deep waters, ocean (2 Peter 3:3-5).
- "*Hovering*" = like a vulture/eagle hovering over young (Deuteronomy 32:11). The Holy Spirit's hovering would not have been an aimless wandering. It must surely have had purpose. What purpose, we aren't told. The Son of God was also present and active at Creation (John 1:1ff).
- The created universe is described by three needs: 1) without form, 2) empty, 3) darkness. The rest of Creation solves these needs

Verses 3-5 Darkness
- SUPPLYING NEED: "Let there be light. . ."
God said. . .and there was. . .
Throughout the Creation account, it is God's Word alone which does the creative work. Notice the pattern throughout the account, "God said. . .thus God made / and it was so. . " (Psalm 33:6,9)

God divided the light from the darkness
God created light for the newly created earth. With the creation of light God caused a division between the darkness and light when before there was only darkness. God did not do away with the darkness because it would be as necessary as the light. However, now there was a period of light and a period of dark to which God assigned names. The sun was not yet created so this was simply pure light without any particular light-bearing body. The creation of light on the first day creates time which did not exist before the Creation of the world. The newly created reference to time is used in marking the days of Creation. Later (Day 4), light would be assigned to specific light-bearing bodies.

The evening and the morning. . .
Literally the time aspect of each day can be translated, "It was evening and it was morning Day One." Evening and morning by themselves do not equal a 24 hour day. However, properly understood the text speaks of evening coming, going into night and then morning arrives to mark the beginning of the second creative day.

Day 2
Verses 6-8 Formlessness
- SUPPLYING NEED: "Let there be a firmament"
Firmament
Literally: an extended flat surface which is spread out fixed and steadfast.
Picture a flat surface pushed up between the waters. Above the surface are the waters of heaven held apart from the earth. In the Flood the windows of heaven were opened and the waters normally held above the earth came crashing down for forty days and forty nights (Genesis 7:11). The waters were deep and God pushed an atmosphere between them. The firmament of God's Creation is not the same atmosphere, clouds, etc. that we know today. Instead, we can conclude that atmospheric conditions were quite different in the days before the Flood from what they are now–a vapor canopy over the earth providing a uniform tropical climate and mist that came up from the ground to water the earth (Genesis 2:6). To support this, rain is not mentioned until the Flood. In short, when God created the firmament, He made an atmosphere in which plant, animal, and human life could exist.

Day 3

Verses 9-13 Emptiness on Earth

- SUPPLYING NEED: "Let there be vegetation to fill the earth."

- The waters on the earth which had been separated from the waters above on the second day are now separated further to produce dry land.
- The waters gathered in "one standing place." Some Christian scientists believe that God accomplished this by creating gravity. This is very plausible and does not diminish the creative miracle of God. However, we cannot say with absolute certainty that this was the means by which God had the water flow to "one standing place." We should not imagine the earth's first forms, water and land bodies to be the same as what we know today. The topography of the earth changed greatly at the time of the Flood. It is very likely that at Creation, the earth had one land mass and one body of water. Then, after the Flood, it pleased God to give us the earth with continents and oceans as we know them today.
- Piece by piece the world is starting to take shape. Notice that the process is very orderly–a demonstration of the "orderliness" and wisdom of our God.

Let it cause to grow

- "herb" is used in a broader sense for all vegetation rather than what we would consider as "herbs and spices."
- "grass" = the young tender plants "herbs bearing seed" = the older mature plants with seed.

Each to reproduce according to its kind

- God's orderliness continues to show itself. If we plant a seed we know exactly the kind of plant it will produce. This is because God created each plant to reproduce according to its own kind.
- God provides for the reproduction of every plant.
- Some plants were created with a fruit around the seed ("whose seed is in itself"). This outer fruit surrounding the seed would provide food for man and animals as well as nutrients for the growing plant when allowed to grow in reproduction.
- Reproducing according to its kind is also true of the animals (v.21, 24).
- Some genetic crossing can be done but it is very limited. If the plants are "left alone" they will revert to the original form. (Hybrids can be produced in corn but it is still corn and the hybrid can't reproduce itself. Peaches can be altered to produce nectarines, but you cannot cross an apple and orange. Differing breeds of dogs and cats can be produced but they remain dogs and cats. A donkey and horse can produce a mule, but the mule is sterile and can't reproduce, etc.)

The third day is divided into two parts: first, the creation of dry land; and secondly, the creation of vegetation. God pronounced all things good at the end of each part.

Day 4

Verses 14-19 Emptiness in the Firmament

- SUPPLYING NEED: "Let there be lights to fill the firmament."

Lights in the firmament

- On Day 2 God separated the sky from the earth. On Day 3 He began to fill the earth and now, on Day 4, He turns back to the sky to fill it.
- The "Lights" = light-bearers, luminaries. God created light on the first day. On the fourth day God created specific heavenly bodies to bear the created light.
- These luminaries would cause a division between day and night just as the light on Day 2 had done.

Signs and seasons, days, and years

- "Sign" = a sign by which a person or group is characteristically marked; a reminding token
- The sun, moon, and stars are signs that testify to the glory of God (cf: Psalms 8, and 19).
- It was a star that served as a sign for the wisemen who came to worship Jesus (Matthew 2:2).
- The sun and moon came into play during the "Long Day of Joshua" (Joshua 10).
- Jesus comments that we look to the sky for signs of coming weather (Matthew 16:2-3).
- The North Star is a "constant" so dependable it can be used for navigation (and was depended upon for navigation before our modern navigational equipment was available).
- Days and years have been and are determined by the light-bearing bodies God created.
- **Seasons**: An astronomer can determine the season simply by noting the position of constellations in the sky: The seasons are determined by the sun's position in the sky (as viewed from earth…or the earth's position around the sun as viewed in space). Likewise, the seasons established by God continue to determine the time for planting, harvest, going out to sea, etc.
- God promises that the seasons He set in motion on the fourth day of Creation will continue until He destroys this earth on Judgment Day (cf: Genesis 8:22).

The greater and the lesser

"Greater" and "lesser" do not necessarily refer to a greatness in size, but can also be a reference to magnitude and intensity.

Day 5

Verses 20-23 Emptiness in air and water

- SUPPLYING NEED: "Let there be animals to fill sky and waters."

Let the waters abound

- Literally, "swarm, teem." (cf: Exodus 1:7, 8:3; Psalm 105:30)
- According to its own kind (just as with the plants)
- God's creation of WATER animals included everything in the waters…from large sea mammals, to fish, to plankton and to small microscopic organisms. The waters do certainly TEEM with life!
- God's creation of AIR animals included every flying thing…birds, insects, etc.

God blessed all these and said, "be fruitful and multiply and fill. . ."

God also gave this command to Adam and Eve after their creation. God again repeated it to Noah and his family after the Flood. God's will is that the earth be filled. Population control goes contrary to God's intent (especially when accompanied with fear that doesn't believe that God will provide for what He gives). God blessed His Creation with the ability to reproduce. By that blessing, His Creation was and is able to reproduce abundantly. God has built an incredible reproduction potential into His Creation, and the reproduction is of itself amazing!

Day 6, Part I

Verses 24-25 Emptiness on Earth

- SUPPLYING NEED: "Let there be land animals."

- "The beasts of the earth" = what we know as "wild animals"
- "Cattle" = what we know as "domesticated animals"
- According to their own kind - as with plants, air and water animals
- "Creeping things on the land," are parallel to the "every living thing that moves" which God created for the water.

Day 6, Part II

Verses 26-31 and 2:18-25 The crowning work of all God's Creation was the creation of man. Man was created in God's image (see vocabulary above). Man was created to have dominion over all things. The earth was created for MAN. The rest of Creation and mankind are NOT equal. The resources of the earth are given by God for man to USE, as wise stewards and not carelessly nor wastefully. It will be good to recall these things and compare them with the effects of sin and God's curse after the fall into sin. The Creation account in Genesis makes a clear distinction between man and animals.

Verse 29 indicates that Adam and Eve were vegetarians. After the Flood, the content of this verse is repeated but the animals are also included for food. Then, because animals would be used for food, God also gave them a fear of man (Genesis 9:2ff).

The creation of man in Genesis chapter one, reports the creation of Adam and Eve in a somewhat abbreviated form. The highlights of the Creation are noted: the pre-Creation discussion by God ("Let us make man in our image…"), the actual Creation, the command to multiply and subdue the earth. The creation of Adam and Eve is not separated in chapter 1. God simply refers to "them" in the plural (cf: Genesis 1:28).

The account of Adam and Eve's creation in chapter 2 is not separate from the sixth day (cf. 1:27). Moses by inspiration of the Holy Ghost simply goes into more detail in chapter 2 which he did not cover in chapter 1.

God began by creating Adam. First, God formed a man out of dirt. At this point he was merely earth. However, once God breathed "the breath of life" into that earthen form, then Adam became a living being.

Eve's creation is equally miraculous. First, God said it was not good for man to be alone but that He would make for him a comparable/suitable helper for him. God showed Adam all the animals to demonstrate to Adam that he was different from them and that his companion would not come from among them. Adam gave names to all the animals (which demonstrates his wisdom) and found no one for himself. Then God took a part ("rib" includes more than just the bone. It is also the flesh. In other words, God took a "piece" out of Adam's side) of Adam and from it He created Eve. Then God presented her to Adam and thereby established marriage.

Adam named his new counterpart "woman" for she was "taken out of man." In the Old Testament Hebrew, there is a play on words. The Hebrew "*ish"* = "man." The Hebrew *"ish-ah"* = "woman" and is the same word as "man" except with a feminine ending-literally: "a female man."

The nakedness of Adam and Eve was not noticed nor were they ashamed because there was no sin in the world. Where there is no sin there is no shame in uncovered bodies. This changed dramatically as we will see in the next lesson.

Day 7

Chapter 2:1-3

Everything was created in six days and on the seventh day God ceased His Creation. God's "resting" is not rest due to fatigue. Rather "He rested" means "He stopped." After six days, God's Creation was complete, therefore, He stopped creating. God then set the seventh day aside (sanctified) as a day of rest. Many generations later, God's sanctification of the seventh day became the basis for the Sabbath Day in the Old Testament Law (cf. Exodus 20:8ff).

The Sabbath Day is part of the Old Testament Ceremonial Law and is no longer binding because Jesus, the True Sabbath Rest has come and has given us eternal rest (cf: Colossians 2:16-17; Hebrews chapters 9-11). However,

the Sabbath Day principle of rest for the body and spiritual nourishment is still valid and important. Therefore we should ". .. not despise preaching and His Word but hold it sacred and gladly hear and learn it." (Luther's explanation to the third commandment).

Additional Scripture:
Exodus 20:11; Psalm 90:1-2,10 (demonstrates the sharp contrast between God-Creator-and man-creation); Psalm 104; Romans chapter 1(describes worshiping the creation rather than Creator-a common sin in our day); Romans 1:20 (we learn much about God by studying His Creation); Romans 4:17; Hebrews 3:4; 11:3.

***Preservation**: Psalm 145:15-16; Matthew 6:26-30*

Resources:
Bible History Commentary, Franzmann - pp. 12ff
Bible History References, Rupprecht - volume 1 p. 1ff
The People's Bible - Genesis, Jeske pp. 9ff
Sydow's Catechism - Questions 116-128

STUDENT PRAYER

Dear God, thank You for Your amazing Creation! Teach me to remember how You created all things so that when I see all the wonderful things in the world, I will remember that You are the one who gives them to me. Thank you for making me and taking care of me each day. Amen.

PRESENTATION

This lesson is one with almost limitless possibilities because the wonder of God's creation is so great. The importance of this lesson is becoming greater with each passing year As students are more and more inundated with the world's evolutionary philosophy, they will need more and more clear direction from God's Word. If this foundation is missing, they may easily become trapped in a theistic evolution, a mixture of truth and falsehood that compromises the glory of God and greatly endangers their faith.

While we stand in awe of our Creator, we can stand in equal awe of Him as our PRESERVER. After leading your students to awe and thanksgiving to God for His wonderful creation, then also lead them to realize that this same Great Creator takes care of each one of them day by day. Impress on the children that with just the POWER of His WORD, God was able to create all things. That same POWERFUL WORD is what preserves and cares for them. That same POWERFUL WORD is what also saves them for it is God's Word about Jesus that brings them to faith and gives salvation.

Strive to impress the uniqueness of man's creation upon the students. Stress that God created Adam and Eve in His own image which is what sets them apart. The means by which God created man is also different (dust, rib vs. only His Word), but the Creation in God's image far exceeds the means of creation in importance.

The presentation of Law and Gospel to the students in this lesson is not something that will be easily done without looking ahead to the next lesson (a lesson which very much centers on Law and Gospel). At Creation, sin did not yet exist. In the students' present-day world, sin is prominent. The contrast between these two worlds will provide an open door for a presentation of the "core Gospel truths" that should be a part of each lesson.

Having led the students to stand in complete awe and amazement of their present world, remind them that what we know today is corrupted by sin and incredibly less amazing than God's original Creation which was perfect. This comparison will also serve well to highlight the seriousness of sin and the wondrous glory of our God.

There are so many things in the world that testify to the wonders of God's Creation–a piece of fruit, a leaf, a blade of grass with its veins, etc. Consider bringing an example of God's Creation and use it as a discussion point in class.

Have students learn what God created on each day.

Ask students to think of something in Creation that testifies to God's POWER, to His WISDOM, and to His LOVE, and then discuss these attributes of God in the context of their choices.

Frequently Asked Questions

QUESTION: In Genesis 2:19, we read, "…out of the ground the LORD God formed every beast of the field and every bird of the air…" How does this coincide with the earlier account in chapter 1?

ANSWER: Turn to Genesis 1:11. Notice that it was the power of God's Word that created the plants but He did it through the earth. "*Let the earth bring forth grass , the herb…"*. Now turn to Genesis 1:24. Notice that again, although His Word created the animals, God used the earth as the source for them, "*…Let the earth bring forth living creatures according to its kind."*

The resultant picture we are given is that the animals, like the plants, came forth out of the earth at the command of God's Word. Genesis 2:19 could be translated (and better understood) as *"Out of the ground the Lord God had formed every beast of the field…"* Together with the preceding we know that God "formed them out of the ground" by commanding the earth to bring them forth.

QUESTION: When were the angels created?

ANSWER: The angels are spiritual beings whom God created to serve Him and His people (Hebrews 1:14). Although God doesn't tell us exactly when He created them, we can be certain that it was within the six days of Creation since He tells us that within those days EVERYTHING was made that was made (Exodus 20:11, Colossians 1:16). At some time between the seventh day and the Fall into Sin, some of the angels rebelled against God and became the Devil and his evil angels.

APPLICATIONS

- SEE CREATION: Challenge your students to "keep their eyes open" in their everyday life for the wonders of God's Creation. We so often pass right by the wonders God still provides, even in our sin-tainted universe.
- SPACE: The more we learn about the universe, the further our space probes go, the more we can be amazed at the sheer size of God's Creation.
- EVOLUTION: Discuss evolution and use the Creation account to demonstrate the falsehoods of evolution. Lead the children to be able to recognize evolution in what they see and hear. Example: Whenever a tour guide or book says: "this is 3 million years old," etc. This is VERY important because students may be taught to "be against" evolution and not know that the "facts" they are learning are really evolution. In discussing evolution vs. Creation it is important that the children not be left with the understanding that science and God's Word are opposed to one another. The theory of evolution is not true science. The study of science testifies to the glory and wisdom of God. Science is a wonderful thing when observed and studied in the light of God's Word.

- HANDS-ON: Perhaps plant a bean/pea seed in a clear glass/jar and watch its progress. Be amazed that water added to a seed causes a whole plant to spring forth-part of God's reproduction Creation….cut an apple apart to show the little "safety pockets" in which the seeds are protected and discuss how the fruit would protect and feed the seeds as they grow and also feed us-just as God designed.
- DEATH/LIFE: Whenever we witness a death/funeral we are, in a way, seeing Creation in reverse. At Creation, God breathed "life" into an earthen form. That earthen form was nothing without the breath of life. When someone dies, the breath that God breathed into man leaves the body and what is left is, nothing ("dust you are and to dust you shall return" Genesis 3:19). On Judgment Day, God will rejoin each person's "breath of life" with his body. Believers will then live forever in heaven and unbelievers will be forever in the misery of hell.
- MAMMALS/MAN: Man is scientifically categorized with mammals. There are obvious biological similarities. However, God's Creation account so clearly puts man in a completely different category from the animals, that it seems best to uphold this difference in our teaching and application as well.
- MARRIAGE: What was created on the sixth day? The standard answer is: "Land animals and man." We could also add "marriage." When God created Eve and presented her to Adam, He created marriage and established the relationship between husband and wife in a marriage. Although the scope of this lesson does not allow for an extended discussion of marriage, it is important for children to trace marriage and what God says about it back to Creation.
- CHRISTIAN ENVIRONMENTALISM: In view of the modern world's emphasis on preservation of the earth, it would be valuable to give the students a Christian viewpoint toward environmentalism. An extreme preservationist view (mother-earth, the animals are our brothers and sisters, etc) springs forth out of evolutionary thought and is completely unscriptural. A view that would automatically forbid use of the world's resources is also unscriptural since God gave the earth and its resources to man for his use. HOWEVER, as wise stewards of God's gifts, no child of God will want to use the earth and its resources in a foolish, destructive, or wasteful way.

PASSAGES
The First Article and Luther's Explanation

Lower
Genesis 1:1 - "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth."
Psalm 36:6 - "O Lord, You preserve man and beast."
Psalm 139:14 - "I will praise You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made."

Middle *(any of the above and…)*
Genesis 8:22 - "While the earth remains, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, winter and summer, and day and night shall not cease."

Psalm 37:25 - "I have been young, and now am old; yet I have not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his descendants begging bread."

Psalm 139:13-14 - "For You formed my inward parts; You covered me in my mother's womb. I will praise You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made: marvelous are Your works, and that my soul knows very well."

Psalm 145:15-16 - "The eyes of all look expectantly to You and You give them their food in due season. You open Your hand and satisfy the desire of every living thing."

Hebrews 11:3 - "By faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that the things which are seen were not made of things which are visible."

Upper (any of the above and…)
Genesis 1:27-28 - "So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. Then God blessed them, and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it…"

Ephesians 4:24 - "…and that you put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and true holiness."

Colossians 3:10 - "…and have put on the new man who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him…"

HYMNS:
All Praise to God, Who Reigns Above - TLH #19
Oh, that I Had a Thousand Voices - TLH #30
Praise to the Lord, the Almighty - #TLH #39
We Sing the Almighty Power of God - TLH #43
Beautiful Savior - TLH #657
How Great Thou Art - CLC Worship Supplement (2000) #744

Appendix:

There is a wealth of fine writing on the subject of Creation/evolution. Two samples are presented below. Both selections effectively demonstrate the marvel of God's Creation and the greatness of His power.

There Is No God?
Condensed from MIAMI HERALD
Jim Bishop*

There is no God. All of the wonders around us are accidental. No almighty hand made a thousand-billion stars. They made themselves. No power keeps them on their steady course. The earth spins itself to keep the oceans from falling off toward the sun. Infants teach themselves to cry when they are hungry or hurt. A small flower invented itself so that we could extract digitalis for sick hearts.

The earth gave itself day and night, tilted itself so that we get seasons. Without the magnetic poles man would be unable to navigate the trackless oceans of water and air, but they just grew there.

How about the sugar thermostat in the pancreas? It maintains a level of sugar in the blood sufficient for energy. Without it, all of us would fall into a coma and die.

Why does snow sit on mountaintops waiting for the warm spring sun to melt it at just the right time for the young crops on farms below to drink? A very lovely accident.

The human heart will beat for 70 or 80 years without faltering. How does it get sufficient rest between beats? A kidney will filter poison from the blood, and leave good things alone. How does it know one from the other?

Who gave the human tongue flexibility to form words, and a brain to understand them, but denied these gifts to all other animals?

Who showed a womb how to take the love of two persons and keep splitting a tiny ovum until, in time, a baby would have the proper number of fingers, eyes and ears and hair in the right places, and come into the world when it is strong enough to sustain life?

There is no God?

**Jim Bishop, popular author of 21 books, including "The Day Christ Died" and "The Day Kennedy was Shot," died in 1987. This column, written in the 1960's was a favorite of his wife, Kelly.*

The Doctrine of Creation
Excerpted from "The Abiding Word," pp. 14ff, CPH, 1946
Theodore Laetsch

All of God's creatures are wonderful, especially man. What an amazing creation is our eye! It dilates and contracts according to the needs of vision. It is a world of tender nerves and muscles, which receive millions of light rays and pictures and tell our soul how the outside world looks. The ear is a musical instrument such as no human art can produce. In it are 4,300 delicate rods, which vibrate with every sound as the strings of a harp, through which our mind perceives the wonders of sound and, above all, hears the greatest wonder, the Word of God. In a short time the stomach changes food so that it can be assimilated by the body. The blood is pumped by the heart into the remotest parts of the body. In a normal adult, the heart contracts and expands about 70 times a minute, 100,800 times a day, 36,792,000 times in a year. The lungs work just as unceasingly: through thousands of cells they inhale and exhale. What marvelous instruments are the organs of speech, mouth, throat, tongue, teeth! Thought and speech are an incomprehensible miracle; so are understanding, knowledge, memory, consciousness.

All plants animals and men are made up of millions of little cells, which may be seen and studied under powerful microscopes. Each tiny, little cell is a marvelous creation of God, endowed with unbelievable properties and powers. Let me read to you a few lines from Theodore Graebner, *God and the Cosmos*, p. 65:

> "…However, the amazement of the student increases when he considers that these chromosomes are the carriers or determiners of all hereditary traits or characters. Small as they are, they consist of still smaller bodies, called genes, these again built up out of molecules, and the molecules out of atoms. The genes of the egg (female) and sperm (male) cells combine into new patterns, and upon the composition of these patterns depends every character, whether physiological or mental. From the manner in which in the moment of conception these genes become distributed everything which distinguishes each of us individually from every other human being had its origin. Not only our racial characters, which make us members of the human species, but the individual characters, the color of the hair and the eyes, the length and shape of our fingernails, acuteness of sight or hearing, our ability to hold a musical note or to remember dates and names, our emotional natures, our intellectual preferences, our likes and dislikes, have been established through this organization of the inscrutable specks of protoplasm which were organized in this original cell, or ovum, from which each of us had his beginning, in a mass so small (1/125 of an inch) that it can be represented by a dot which you make on the margin of this page with a well-sharpened pencil.

STORY
The Fall into Sin / The Promise of a Savior - Genesis 2:8-17; 3:1ff

TEACHER PRAYER
Heavenly Father, as I teach Your lambs about sin and grace today, give me the words to say. Let Your wisdom and truth be in everything I teach. The world is so casual toward sin and wants to make sin look inviting. Oh, help me to lead the children to understand what sin is and to see it in all its seriousness, but never let them experience the despair of a fearful heart. Rather equip me to build on their faith's foundation with the sure and confident forgiveness that You proclaim in the Gospel. Send Your Holy Spirit, I pray. Amen.

VOCABULARY
Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil (2:17) - This tree in the center of the garden is the one (and the only one!) tree from which God had forbidden Adam and Eve to eat. This tree was the tree of the "knowledge of good and evil" because if Adam and Eve sinned against God by eating from it, they would then know evil. Without sin they would not have known evil.

"shall surely die" ***(2:17)*** - Literally in the Old Testament Hebrew: "***dying you WILL die!"*** God leaves absolutely no doubt that if Adam and Eve sin they WILL DIE in that very day. This strong emphasis in God's Word becomes significant when Eve tells the Serpent that God said, "lest perchance you die" (3:3).

Enmity (3:15) - "***hatred; ill will***" The enmity between the Son of God and Satan is evident by their opposing goals for mankind, the Truth of God vs. the lies of the Devil, etc. Satan opposes everything that God supports; they are in complete opposition. This is important for there is no middle ground in which a person can pursue sin and still rationalize that it as "OK with God."

OUTER AIM
Adam and Eve fell into sin when they disobeyed God.

INNER AIM
Sin infects us all but, we have God's undeserved love and salvation in Jesus Christ.

BACKGROUND
Genesis chapters 1 and 2 are a demonstration of God's power. By the power of His Word, God created the heavens and the earth and perfectly so. The name God uses for Himself in chapters 1 and 2 is *Elohim*-the Hebrew name for "God" that emphasizes power, might, perfection. Beginning in verse 4 of chapter 2, God further identifies Himself as *Jehovah* - the Hebrew name of the True God which identifies Him as the God of promise, salvation, and grace toward His creation, especially mankind. (The Hebrew, "*Jehovah"* is usually noted in English translations by the use of all upper case letters in the name: "LORD.")

In this lesson, mankind (the crown of God's creation) fails to show his love to God, fails in following God's will, i.e., he SINS! Sin offends the holy and almighty creator (*Elohim*), but He is also a gracious God who provides a Savior (*Jehovah*) for His fallen creation.

Jehovah's love is evident toward mankind even before the fall into sin and promise of the Savior. The LORD God (Jehovah Elohim) provided a home for man in the beautiful and bountiful Garden of Eden. In Eden, He richly provided for food and all other needs. He gave meaningful and enjoyable work in the tending of the Garden. He provided a "matched set" of companionship and unequaled human love when He created woman and established marriage. He gave Adam and Eve the promise of children.

As great as these blessings were, the greatest gift from Jehovah was evident when He still showed His love *after* Adam and Eve fell into sin and immediately promised them a Savior.

The Garden of Eden v. 8-14
God planted a special garden for the crown of His creation, man and woman. God's design was that Adam and Eve would live in the Garden, tend it, and enjoys its rich bounty. Everything was perfect! And still Eve became dissatisfied when the Devil tempted her.

God, through Moses, provides quite detailed description of Eden's location as well as its natural resources. The Garden of Eden was destroyed together with all other things on the earth during the Flood. Moses was inspired to provide this "road map" to give the people an idea of where the Garden of Eden was; but even more so to simply establish the truth that this was a REAL place, not just a make-believe location. The Garden of Eden was REAL in THIS LOCATION, even though, because of the Flood and changing rivers, we cannot know with certainty where it was. Two of the four rivers are still in existence today, the Tigris and Euphrates, but it is unlikely that their flow is the same as it was in Moses' day. The other two rivers, Pishon and Gihon, are unknown. Scholars can only speculate which rivers they might have been, even if they still exist.

Among the trees were two significant trees, the Tree of Life and the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil.

Bdellium is a fragrant gum resin obtained from a kind of tree found in Arabia, Babylonia, Media, and India. The Onyx is probably the stone which still goes by that name - a variety of stone that shows somewhat even bands or layers of white and black or dark tints.

God's Command v. 15-17
God put Adam and Eve into the Garden to live there and to tend, cultivate, and keep it. Tending the garden in the days before sin would have been completely enjoyable and satisfying work. Even now, work can be enjoyable and rewarding, but also tiring, frustrating, exhausting. Not so in Eden.

God told Adam and Eve that they could FREELY eat of every tree except one - the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil. Adam and Eve had limitless access to the full variety of trees in the garden! Out of the whole garden there was *only one* tree from which they were not to eat. Not being able to eat from that one tree did not harm them, it did not deprive them of anything needful. The Devil deceived Eve into thinking she NEEDED to have that fruit from the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil and that no other fruit could satisfy her desire. Eve was led to believe that God was UNFAIR ("What do you mean I can't eat from this tree! That's not FAIR!") while forgetting that God had given them full and free access to the whole beautiful garden, with just this one small exception. The Devil continues to tempt in the same way today by leading us to concentrate on what we don't have and to become dissatisfied and angry, rather than to concentrate on all that God has given us and to be filled with thanksgiving.

The Fall v. 1-13
Sometime between the creation of the world and the fall into sin, the Devil and the other evil angels sinned. Then the Devil began working to bring mankind into the same destruction that he and the other evil angels face. When the Devil came to Eve with the destructive goal of leading her into sin, he chose an appropriate form in which to appear because *"the serpent was more cunning than any beast of the field*." The Devil's first words to Eve were framed in the form of a question intended to bring doubt into Eve's mind. "Did God really say. . .?" Notice how, from the very beginning, the Devil presents God's Word in a negative way: **God said**: "Eat freely from ALL the trees except one." **The Devil said**: "Did God say you could NOT eat from all the trees?"

When Eve repeated God's command to the Devil, she subtracted from God's Word, added to it, and revised it. Eve subtracted from God's Word by not mentioning that they could FREELY eat from EVERY tree of the garden

(except the one). Eve added to God's Word by saying His command included "nor shall you touch it." Eve revised God's Word by changing "dying you will die" to "lest perchance you die."

Satan continued his temptation by assuring Eve that she would not die but would instead become like God knowing good and evil. The Devil played on the desire to become greater and to attain the stature of God. This is the same temptation He uses today. He continues to say, "Did God really say that? Here, let me show you a better way and I will make you great!"

The result of sin was that Adam and Eve did know good and evil, whereas before they knew only good. So they did gain what the Devil said they would, but not in the way or with the effect Eve had desired.

The truth of God, the lies of Satan, and the affect on Eve are compared in the table below. From this story we are able to see very well the true nature of Satan and the danger he poses to our souls. As Jesus said, *"[The Devil] was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own resources, for he is a liar and the father of it."* (John 8:44)

Table of Comparison

God's Truth	**Satan's Lies**	**Effect on Eve**
Genesis 2:9, 16-17 *And out of the ground the LORD God made every tree grow that is pleasant to the sight and good for food. The tree of life was also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. . .And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, "Of **every** tree of the garden you may **freely** eat; "but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die."*	**Genesis 3:1** *Now the serpent was more cunning than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said to the woman, "Has God indeed said, 'You shall not eat of every tree of the garden'?"*	**Genesis 3:2-3** *And the woman said to the serpent, "We may eat the fruit of the trees of the garden but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God has said, 'You shall not eat it, **nor shall you touch it**, **lest (perchance)** you die.' "*
Genesis 2:17 *"...but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die."*	**Genesis 3:4-5** *"Then the serpent said to the woman, **"You will not surely die.** For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."*	**Genesis 3:6** *So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make one wise, she **took** of its fruit and ate. **She also gave to her husband** with her, **and he ate.***

We cannot really say exactly when Eve sinned. However, we can say with certainty that it was before she actually took the fruit. By the time Eve took the fruit she had doubted God which is a sin. By the time Eve had taken the fruit she had seen the fruit and was enticed by it. By the desire in her heart, Eve had already sinned in disobedience to God.

After taking the fruit, Eve brought it to Adam and he also ate. Adam took the fruit knowing full well what he was doing. "*And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived, fell into transgression"* (1 Timothy 2:14).

In addition to the obvious disobedience against God by eating the fruit, Eve also sinned in her role as a wife. God had given Eve to Adam as a "helper comparable" to him. Leading one's husband into sin is certainly not a fulfillment of the role as his God-given helper. Eve sinned by failing to faithfully fulfill her role in God's design for marriage.

As soon as sin entered the world, Adam and Eve knew they were naked, were ashamed, and fashioned coverings for themselves. No longer were sexual impulses pure, innocent, and completely in harmony with God's will. Now they were corrupted by sin and the naked body was a thing of shame and an opportunity for lust.

God had said, *"in the day you eat of it you will surely die!"* Adam and Eve did not instantly die in a physical sense. They did, however, die instantly in spiritual death.

"Death" is "separation." "Death" as a whole encompasses three specific kinds of death: SPIRITUAL DEATH = the separation of the soul from God; TEMPORAL DEATH = the separation of soul from body; and ETERNAL DEATH = separation of soul and body from God forever in hell. Sin brought DEATH into the world. In the instant Adam and Eve sinned, they died. Their spiritual death was immediate. Their temporal death would not come immediately, but was unavoidable. Their eternal death would have been unavoidable as well if not for God's promise of a Savior.

When God came to the garden in the cool of the day, Adam and Eve hid. GONE was the blissful knowledge of God. Now they had FEAR. Adam and Eve first tried to deny their sin and then tried to blame someone else. GONE were the holiness and righteousness in which they were created. Now SIN and DENIAL had taken over their hearts. Fear of God, denial of sin, unrepentant hearts, alienation from God, blaming others for their sins-all of these entered the world with sin and continue to be manifest in the world today (also in the Old Adam/sinful flesh of believers).

God demonstrated His love for sinners by calling Adam and Eve to repentance and patiently leading them to repentance (cf: vv. 9,11, 13). God will also show a similar patience in His attempts to lead Cain to repentance after he murdered Abel (cf: Genesis 4:1ff ~ Lesson 3), and in all of His dealings with sinners.

God's Love v. 14-24

God cursed the serpent because of its role in bringing sin to the world. Verse 14 is directed to the serpent itself. Based on this passage we are left with the understanding that when God created the serpents, they were not the ground dwelling/crawling creatures we know today. Rather, seeing them "on their belly" is part of the curse at Eden.

In verse 15, God directs His words to the one who had made use of the serpent, namely, the Devil. Verse 15 is the first Gospel promise. God declares that He will establish enmity between the Devil and the woman's Seed. The woman's Seed (descendant) of whom God speaks is Jesus, the Savior. The woman's seed, Jesus, would bruise the serpent's (Devil's) head. The best way to kill a snake is to step on its head. God uses this imagery to foretell how Jesus would defeat the Devil and leave him powerless over God's children when He died on the cross and rose again. God also notes that "you (the Devil) will bruise His (Jesus') heel. A heel wound may be painful, but not fatal; fatal is the end of life. Jesus would die and at that time the Devil would seemingly have the victory. However, Jesus would rise again to life and no more be "wounded" by the Devil. Thus, the "bruising" of Jesus would not be the end.

God's promise of a Savior first made to Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden is repeated and expressed in ever greater detail throughout the progression of the Old Testament. Then when the fullness of time came God sent Jesus to be born as our Savior (cf: Galatians 3:4-5).

Next, God announced the effects which sin would have on Adam and Eve. The changes which God put into place as a result of sin also show His love and concern for mankind. Had God not established these consequences for sin, there would have been (and would not be) any lasting reminders of man's sinfulness. If the world would have remained perfect, Adam and Eve would have quickly forgotten their sinful state and the eternal destruction which their sins brought upon them. To this day, the effects of sin in this world are what help us to realize weaknesses, our needs, to understand the frailty and temporary nature of this life, and to help us understand that this world is not the goal for which we should strive.

In announcing these consequences of sin, God never cursed Adam and Eve. He cursed the serpent and He cursed the ground, but He did not curse Adam and Eve. Eve would bear the pain of childbirth and Adam would bear the misery of a cursed ground, but they themselves were not cursed. Because Adam and Eve were the whole human race at that time, had God cursed them then all of mankind would have lived under His curse. It is yet another of God's mercy that He did not curse Adam and Eve directly.

Even in the results of sin we can still find God's grace and mercy: Pain in childbirth yields God's great gift of a child. Pain in childbirth for one mother (Mary) would lead to God's ultimate gift-God's Son incarnate. Death is a consequence of sin, but for a child of God it becomes the gateway into eternal life.
After announcing to Adam and Eve what the results of sin would be in their lives, God again demonstrated His love in two more ways. First, He provided clothing for them and secondly, He drove them out of the Garden of Eden. God cast Adam and Eve out of the Garden so that they would not eat of the Tree of Life and live forever in their sinful condition. Instead, even though they would die, yet through their coming Savior, Jesus, they would live forever.

Additional Scripture:
Romans 5:12-21
Resources:
Bible History Commentary, Franzmann - pp. 37ff
Bible History References, Rupprecht - volume 1 p. 13ff
The People's Bible - Genesis, Jeske pp. 42ff

STUDENT PRAYER

Heavenly Father, thank You for promising and then sending Jesus to be our Savior from sin. I know I sin every day. Forgive me and help me to run away from sin in the future. Make my faith strong so that I am not tricked by the Devil. Amen.

PRESENTATION

Law & Gospel:
This story so wonderfully rich in both Law and Gospel that the teacher will not find it hard to bring both into the presentation. Adam and Eve's disobedience, God's curses, and the lasting consequences of sin show the law very well. God's love and mercy throughout the account and especially in the promise of a Savior show the Gospel.

Frequently Asked Questions:
Why did Adam and Eve not die on that day? God could certainly have stricken Adam and Eve dead, and rightfully delivered them to hell for eternal judgment. However, in His mercy He gave them a time of grace on the earth even as He continues to do for all people. Each lifetime is a time of grace for an individual to hear the Gospel, be brought to faith, and receive salvation through Christ Jesus. God's warning to Adam and Eve was nevertheless correct, because they DID die that day. They died *spiritually*. Temporal and eternal death flow out of spiritual death (See discussion in notes above).

If God knows all things then He knew Adam and Eve would sin. But if He knew this, why did He create the tree and then tell them not to eat from it? We cannot determine nor understand every part of God's reasoning in this nor any other matter because we simply cannot fully understand God's ways. However, what we can say is this: God created the tree and gave the command so that Adam and Eve would have a way of showing their love to Him. God created Adam and Eve with a "free will" - the ability to obey or disobey Him. God *could* have created Adam and Eve without the ability to sin, but He didn't want love from his creatures that was forced and automatic. God desires actions of love that flow from *real* love, so he created them (and the tree) in the way He did. Since the fall into sin, mankind no longer has the will to choose to obey God. We are born in sin, enemies of God, and by nature have only a will that opposes God. Jesus has redeemed us from this. Now, the New Man which the Holy Spirit creates does obey God. Just as Adam and Eve had the opportunity to show their love for God by keeping His commandments, so we too show our love to Him by conforming our lives to His Word.

What kind of fruit was it? In spite of the typical artist's impression that the fruit was an apple (Luther also referred to it as an apple), we don't know what kind of fruit it was. It could have been a banana, a pear, etc. or even a fruit that is unknown to us today. The kind of fruit is not important to the account. Therefore, God did not identify it.

APPLICATION

By this sin we all stand condemned. This story shows the beginning of our "original sin." Original sin is the sin we inherit from our parents and can be traced here. After sinning, Adam and Eve gave birth to sinners (cf: John 3:6), who gave birth to sinners, who gave birth to sinners…etc. Everything that is true concerning Adam and Eve's sin is also true for us. This counters the worldview that "there is a little good in everyone." Such a statement is simply NOT true. ALL are born sinful, totally corrupt, and enemies of God. Only by being brought to faith in Christ by the Gospel does that change.

Through this Savior we all have forgiveness. Ever since the beginning of time, Satan has been tempting people to sin. However, God is more powerful than Satan. Through Jesus, God's Son, we have the way to escape Satan's hold over us. Jesus has lived His life to fulfill what God demands of us in His Law. By His death, Jesus has bought us back from the punishment in hell which our sins deserve.

Peer pressure: Peer pressure can be both a positive and a negative force. There are many warnings in our day against negative peer pressure, and rightfully so. The pressure to sin which is directly or indirectly placed on an individual by others is similar to the Devil's words to Eve. Had Eve clung to God's Word (as Jesus did when tempted by the Devil, cf: Luke 4:1-13) she could have resisted the pressure the Devil was placing upon her with his temptations. For Eve temptation came saying, "If you eat of the tree you will be like God." Temptation now comes in the form of "If you do _____ or say _____ or have an attitude like _____ you will be _____." The blanks are filled-in differently throughout the years, but the temptation remains the same.

Instant gratification: Eve saw that the fruit was good for food and pleasing to the eyes, and her desire turned away from pleasing God to pleasing herself. In our world, instant gratification and self-pleasure are far too often the guiding forces in life. Wanting to please our "selves" on demand will surely lead to danger and spiritual harm because our "selves" are sinful. Rather than fulfilling our self desires, we should seek to fulfill and follow God's Word.

Temptation: A thorough study of Satan's temptation of Eve teaches that he uses the same tools (deception, half-truths, lies, making something wrong appear pleasing, believe God is unfair, etc.) to tempt us today. Knowing the weapons of the enemy is the first step in holding off his attacks.

Twisting God's Word: The Devil twisted God's Word for his purposes. Under the influence of the Devil's deception, Eve likewise molded God's Word to fit her desires. Today, many change God's Word to make God seem unfair and thus create a "reason" to sin; or they make God's Word seem lenient enough to allow for their sin; or they simply ignore God's Word altogether. When someone either changes or ignores God's word, the Devil has already won a huge victory.

Withholding something is <u>not</u> necessarily unfair or a lack of love: Our prosperous times and society's materialistic/humanistic attitudes have created a sense of entitlement in many. It is shown in the attitude that I am entitled to have everything I want. Or, "I am entitled to have at least the same kind of finances, benefits, advantages as someone else who is similar to me." Discontent and jealousy rule in many hearts. Christians need to stand watch against these attitudes. If God, parents, teachers, or others refuse to give something to us-something that might have been given to others else-it is not necessarily unfair. "Love" at times includes NOT giving. Also, the feelings of discontent often grow out of a failure to truly see how richly God HAS blessed us.

God's Word of promise creates and sustains faith. God's Gospel promise in Eden is what created faith in Adam and Eve to believe that a Savior would come. Still today, God uses the Gospel to create and sustain faith. This is what makes it so important to know and to share the Gospel. If Genesis 3:15 were never spoken by God in the Garden of Eden, Adam and Eve would have been left in despair. So too, God's Gospel promises sustain us.

PASSAGES

These passages can be assigned as memory work or simply discussed in class as to how they fit the lesson.

Lower
1 Corinthians 15:22 - "For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive."

Romans 6:23 - "The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord."

Middle (either of the above and…)
Genesis 3:15 - *"*I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head, And you shall bruise His heel."

Upper (any of the above and…)
Romans 3:23-24 - *"*All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus."

Romans 5:12 - "Just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned."

HYMN CHOICES

God Loved the World So that He Gave - TLH #245
All Mankind Fell in Adam's Fall - TLH #369
Grace! 'Tis a Charming Sound - TLH #374

STORY
Cain and Abel - *Genesis 4:1-16, 25-26*

TEACHER PRAYER
Heavenly Father, as I study sin and its wickedness and the power it has in this world, I am struck with sadness and fear. When I think of how that sin lurks within me and how it wants to live and grow in me it is a sobering thought indeed. What joy! What comfort! to also hear of Your mercy and grace through Christ Jesus Who chases away the fear and sadness. Enable me to lead the children to see the very real danger of sin and to equip them with the Gospel so that they may "rule over sin" and live godly lives out of faith and love for You. Bless me in my preparation and presentation of Your holy and saving Word. Amen.

VOCABULARY
Jehovah (v.1ff) - Throughout this lesson, God uses His name "Jehovah" (Lord in NKJV) to identify Himself. It is the name of God that emphasizes that He is the "God of Promise," the "Covenant God," the God who delivers His people.

Respected (v.4) - Because of the way in which the word "respect" is used in our modern everyday speech, it may sound strange to hear that the Lord "respected" Abel's offering. God's action toward Abel's offering was much more than "respect" in our usual usage. God "accepted/looked with favor upon" Abel's offering–He received it as an act of faith from a child of God.

Countenance (v.5) - Cain's countenance <u>fell</u>. In the Aaronic benediction we hear God's blessing, "…*the Lord <u>lift up</u> His countenance*…" "Countenance" can also be translated as "face." A fallen countenance is a face that shows disappointment, irritation, anger, pouting, etc. A fallen countenance won't look at another person but be downward glancing with sorrow/anger in the eyes.

OUTER AIM
Cain murdered his brother Abel

INNER AIM
Sin begins in the heart but righteousness begins with Christ

BACKGROUND
In the last lesson we witnessed sin's entrance into the world. Once sin entered the world it didn't take long for it to grow and show its ugly effects. There are a number of intervening years between the fall into sin and the story of the first murder. (The exact number is unknown, therefore the ages of Cain and Abel are also unknown.)

There was, without doubt, *daily* evidence of sin in the family life of Adam and Eve. However, Cain's murder of Abel is the first time that sin grew into the taking of a life. Through this lesson God shows the progress and growth of sin. He shows how sin rules in the world (cf: James 1:14-15). The story of Cain and Abel teaches that sin grows *inwardly* by showing how the sin began and then matured in Cain. The next lesson (the Flood) will teach that sin grows *outwardly* by showing the outward manifestation of sin in the people of Noah's time. Genesis chapters 3-8 are God's instruction in the reality of sin…but also of His grace.

The story of Cain and Abel reflects the change that sin produced. God had created man in His

image; but since sin entered the world, the offspring of man would forever be born in his (Adam's) image (cf: Genesis 5:1,3).

This story clearly illustrates what Jesus said to Nicodemus, "*That which is born of flesh is flesh…"* The story also illustrates the second part of what Jesus told Nicodemus, "*That which is born of the Spirit is spirit"* (John 3:6). The only thing that can truly solve the sin in mankind is the working of the Spirit through the good news of the Savior. While watching sin grow we also see God's tender and constant mercy toward sinful mankind.

TEXT COMMENTARY

vv.1-2

"***I have gotten the Man, the Lord***" vs. ***"…together with the Lord I have produced a man."*** Eve's statement after the birth of Cain can be translated in either of the above ways. Martin Luther understood it in the first way, namely, that Eve believed that this son was the promised Savior. In either case, Eve's faith is evident. Eve referred to God by His name, "Jehovah" (Lord in most English translations). Jehovah is the name of God that emphasizes that He is the "Covenant God" or the "God of Promise." Simply by calling God "Jehovah" Eve was confessing her faith in the salvation and deliverance which God had promised after the fall into sin. Adam and Eve were the first sinners but they were also the first believers.

"Cain" means "acquired." "*I have acquired a man. . ."*

It was after the fall into sin that Adam and Eve had their first children. Sexual intercourse is a blessing of marriage, and God had commanded Adam and Eve to "be fruitful and multiply." In view of this and since there was no child conceived in Eden, we can conclude that the time between creation and the fall into sin was quite short. Note how tactfully Scripture speaks of sexual relations. *"And Adam knew his wife..."* The biological process is evident and clearly presented in Scripture; however, it is done without the graphic and lustful detail that a secular writer would feel "obligated" to include.

Abel was Adam and Eve's second son. His name means, "breath, mist, vapor, etc." The difference in age between the brothers is unknown. (Luther thought they were twins, but that cannot be proven.) Cain was a farmer and Abel was a shepherd. These occupations clearly disprove the evolutionary theory that man learned to make tools and then developed occupations over eras of evolutionary progress.

vv. 3-5

Cain and Abel each brought offerings to God from the fruit of their occupation. At this time, no specific offerings or sacrifices were commanded by God. The Old Testament ceremonial laws which God would give much later on Mount Sinai would be pictures of Christ. Cain and Abel's offerings were not pictures of Christ. The offerings of Cain and Abel did not come as the result of a command by God, but were purely an expression of thanksgiving and offering of a gift to God, the giver of the blessings received.

It is clear that both Cain and Abel were instructed in the Word of God (not the written Word because that did not yet exist, but rather, directly from God) by their parents. Being believers, Adam and Eve took the parental responsibility of instructing their children (cf: Ephesians 6:4) in the Word of God.

The offerings which Cain and Abel made are comparable to our prayers of thanksgiving and our offerings which we give at church-thank-offerings to God!

There was a difference between what Cain offered and what Abel offered. However, the difference was not what made Cain's offering unacceptable and Abel's favorable. They were both bringing an offering out of the blessings which God had given them (…*let each one of you lay something aside, storing up as he may prosper…"* 1 Corinthians 16:2).

The difference between the offerings was not what was on the altar, but rather what was in the heart. Hebrews 11:4 says, "*By **faith**, Abel offered to God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain. . ."* Abel's offering was made out of love and faith toward God. Abel showed his love by choosing the very best of his flock for the offering. Cain's offering was not given from faith and thus the difference in God's reaction. The same is true today. There is nothing of value in any "good thing" which we do. However, when good things are done out of love for and faith in Christ, then, because of what Christ has done, God sees our works as "good." Without faith and Christ's redemptive work, God would not respect our offerings either. *"Without faith it is impossible to please God"* (Hebrews 11:6; see also 1 Peter 3:2).

There is an emphasis on the quality of Abel's offering. Abel brought the *firstborn* of his flock. He didn't keep something back for himself, but rather first offered a thank-offering to the Lord and *then* lived from the rest. Abel also brought an offering "*of their fat*." Not only was his sacrifice from the firstborn it was from the BEST of the firstborn. God doesn't give any additional information on the quality of Cain's offering other than that it came from the field (his occupation). We cannot rightly conclude that the fruits, grains, etc. which Cain brought were of inferior quality– they could have been good as well. However, we can learn a proper approach to stewardship from Abel's example.

In some way, God made it known to Cain that He was not pleased with his offering. Cain understood that God did not accept his offering and for that reason was angry. Cain's *"countenance fell."* Cain was seized by anger and jealousy so that his disposition and everything about him was affected. Cain was seeking God's favor by the outward action of offering a sacrifice. When his outwardly "good" actions were rejected because of a lack of faith, he became angry. This is true of all who seek God's favor by what they do: "What do you mean, it's not enough, God?! Haven't I led a good life?! Didn't I do all sorts of nice things?!"

vv.6-7

God came to Cain to warn him about his sin and the danger which that sin held (cf: Jesus' warning to Peter on the night he denied Jesus, Matthew 26:31ff). God warned Cain to put away the sinful thoughts and anger lest he fall into still greater sin. Sin was at the door and God warned Cain not to let it in, but rather to rule over it, get away from temptation, repent and turn to God. Instead Cain multiplied his sin and killed his brother.

vv. 8-16

Cain killed Abel while they were talking in a field. After the murder, God approached Cain asking him about Abel. This is similar to God's questioning of Adam and Eve after they had sinned. In both cases God knew what sin had been committed. In both cases God already knew the answer to His questions,

but He asked the questions in order to bring the sinners to a confession of their sin and repentance. We can learn from this example when it is necessary for us to confront someone because of his sin.

When Adam and Eve were approached by God, they did not deny their sin although they did try to place the blame in places other than themselves. However, when God approached Cain, he denied knowing where his brother was and what he had done. Not only did Cain deny his sin, he became defensive about it and said, *"Am I my brother's keeper?"* God replied, *"Listen! Your brother's blood cries to me from the ground."* It was as if Abel's spilt blood cried out to God making known the deed.

Cain's contention that Abel's whereabouts and well-being was none of his concern is certainly sinful. Cain's statement is in complete contradiction to Philippians 2:3-4 and other similar Scripture passages. **LUTHER**: "There is a common proverb: 'What is it to the Romans that the Greeks die?'" For we think no dangers but our own concern us. But how does this idea agree with the commandment of God that He wants all of us to live together as brethren? Therefore, by saying that the care of his *brother* was no concern of his, Cain brings a heavy charge against himself." (*What Luther Says,* Ewald Plass, CPH, #4088).

Sin had spread and led to this first murder. The accounts in Genesis demonstrate how quickly sin spread because, just a few generations after Cain's murder, not only did Cain's great-great-great-grandson (Lamech) kill another man, but he **boasted** about it as well (Genesis 4:23-24).

Cain's curse: God cursed Cain because of what he had done. God had earlier cursed the serpent (Genesis 3:14) and the earth (Genesis 3:17) but this is the first time that God places a curse upon a PERSON. "This fact alone stresses, as perhaps nothing else could, God's earnestness over against sin. However, this curse is carefully defined as to what it includes, for it is not a curse that bars Cain from the possibility of salvation. It merely involves two things: a) being driven away from the cultivated and arable portion of the land and winning his sustenance under the greatest difficulties; and b) being compelled to shift and stray about in the earth." (*Exposition of Genesis,* H.C. Leupold, The Wartburg Press, p. 206)

The curse affected Cain greatly because he was "a tiller of the ground." No longer would the ground (already effected by sin) yield its full potential for Cain (a potential already limited by sin). Furthermore, Cain would be a vagabond with no rest on the ground. Luther described it as, "insecurity where you are and uncertainty where you are going."

God's intent: There was surely forgiveness for Cain through the coming Savior. God's desire for Cain was that the punishment for his sin would cause him to realize his wrongdoing, recognize the punishment as the consequence of his sin, repent, and look to the promise of God for forgiveness. In this way, God's mercy is evident even in judgment.

Cain's rejection of God's mercy: Instead of turning to God in repentance, Cain complained about his punishment. *"My punishment is greater than I can bear. . . anyone who finds me will kill me."* Cain turned to despair rather than true repentance and trust in the Lord. Instead of pleading, "God be merciful a sinner!" Cain complained, "It's not fair!" It is the attitude of a hardened sinner to deny all sin and its rightful consequence.

God's continuing mercy: God told Cain that if anyone killed him, seven-fold vengeance would be that person's punishment. God promised and gave to Cain a time of grace on earth in which to repent and return to the Lord. God gave Cain a sign to assure him of this promise. The King James, New King

James, and other translations of the Bible say that God "put a mark on Cain." The original Hebrew does not indicate that God put some kind of mark **on** Cain but rather that the sign was **for** Cain. There are various other times when God gave signs both to believers and unbelievers (cf. Judges 6:36ff, Isaiah 7:10ff, etc.). We don't know the nature of the sign which God gave to Cain.

Cain then left the region of Eden and lived in the land of Nod.

vv. 25-26
We don't know how many children God gave to Adam and Eve, but it was without doubt a great number. They would have certainly had many more children at the time of Abel's murder. The other children aren't mentioned simply because they are not important to the account which Scripture wishes to present. Since Cain feared someone would kill him, there had to be others who would be able to kill him (as well as sisters to marry, since Cain had children too cf. 4:17ff).

Adam and Eve's son Seth was born after Abel was murdered. "Seth" means "appointed." After Seth's birth, Eve said, *"God has appointed another seed for me instead of Abel whom Cain killed."* Eve had other "seed" as well but Seth was significant because it was from the descendants of this son that the Savior would one day be born (cf. Luke 3:38). God's mercy continues to show itself in that He provided a "replacement" from whom His promise would be kept.

Seth also had a son whom he named "Enosh." "Enosh" means "frail one, mortal." In naming his son this way, Seth shows his understanding of the truth that this lesson teaches.

"Then men began to call on the name of the Lord." The name of the Lord is everything that God has revealed to us about Himself (cf: 2nd commandment; 1st petition). We call upon the name of the Lord when we proclaim what God has told us about Himself (cf: Exodus 34:5-6), when we praise Him for who He is and what He has done, and when we come with our needs and requests in prayer (cf: Psalm 50:15). In other words, "calling upon the name of the Lord" can be used to describe worship.

Adam, Eve, Abel, Seth, etc. had all worshipped the true God, but it was a personal private family type of worship. Now, the population had increased…Now, there were people in the world who were not believers…Now, the faithful people of God began to worship and proclaim the true God in a public worship setting.

ADDITIONAL SCRIPTURE:
1 Samuel 16:7; Zephaniah 3:9; Matthew 15:7-9, 19; Mark 7:20-23; Hebrews 11:4; 12:1-3; 12:24; James 1:14-15; 1Peter 5:8; 1 John 3:11-15; Jude 11; Revelation 6:9-11 (Abel would be among the martyrs);

RESOURCES:
Bible History Commentary, Franzmann - pp. 55.
Bible History References, Rupprecht - volume 1 p. 19ff
The People's Bible - Genesis, Jeske pp.58ff

STUDENT PRAYER
Dear Jesus, thank You for coming to die for the sins of all people. Teach me to know whenever a new sin begins in my life, and then help me to get rid of it before it grows. Make my love for You stronger each day. Amen.

PRESENTATION

There was a time when the thought of brother murdering brother was a shocking idea. Among our children, prayerfully, it is still so. However, in an age when Cain's action against Abel is part of our daily living (in the news, etc.) it is important to create/maintain/re-create a sensitivity to sin in the hearts of our children (and ourselves). Children should be led to see the grave nature of sin and its consequences.

In our present society, there is also a tendency to downplay the "less serious" sins. There is no such thing. Sin is sin and is serious! What seems like a small sin can so quickly take root in our hearts, grow and mature-even if it doesn't lead to some great outward sin such as murder. When can you easily pull up an oak tree? When it is just a sapling. Once that tree has planted its roots deeply and grown thick and gnarly it can no longer be easily pulled up. So it is also with sin.

Law & Gospel: It is quite easy to find the law in this lesson; God's warning against Cain's sin, Cain's breaking of the law, and God's judgment on Cain's sin. HOWEVER, the lesson is likewise filled with Gospel; God's patient calling out to the fallen sinner, His promise and mercy shown to Cain, and the forgiveness for even the sin of murder that is given through Christ Jesus.

Frequently Asked Questions

1. How did Cain know his offering was not accepted? We do not know by what means God made it known to Cain that He was not pleased with his offering. Early illustrators showed the displeasure by having the smoke of the offering go downward, but that is only a human idea. It is enough to know that God conveyed his displeasure to Cain and acted in mercy toward him.

2. What made Cain's offering so bad? It was not the content of the offering, but the content of his heart.

3. Who would kill Cain? Whom did Cain marry? We shouldn't necessarily think of Cain or Abel as young boys. We don't know their ages, but they were almost certainly young men and perhaps even older. Therefore, they would have had several of siblings (We might assume Eve gave birth to a child each year.) Cain's fear was of his siblings (or their descendants) seeking revenge. He married a sister (or niece, etc.). While today such a marriage would be sinful, in the very early days of time it was God's way of populating the earth. As the population grew, the acceptability of a marriage between close relatives changed because it was no longer necessary.

4. What kind of mark was put on Cain? There was no mark on Cain (see notes above).

5. Why did God not kill Cain? In Genesis 9:6, God commands that whoever sheds man's blood by man shall his blood be shed. God could have struck Cain dead because of his sin. However, for reasons not totally known to us (but assuredly just and right for they are God's) God chose to spare Cain's life and give him an additional time of grace. It is another example of God's abundant mercy. There are a number of other speculations as to why God would not kill Cain, but these ideas can be called nothing more than speculation because God has seen fit not to explain to us the details of this action toward Cain.

APPLICATIONS

Offering/thanksgiving/good works (cf: Hebrews 11:4,6)**:** Our response to God flows from faith. We do what is pleasing to God out of love for Him and for one another. Our love for one another flows and grows out of our love for God. Without faith in Christ the best things we do (outwardly) mean nothing to God. Our good works are not a way to gain acceptance from God (as Cain thought) but are a way to show our thanks for God's gracious acceptance through Christ (as demonstrated by Abel). This applies to whatever service we give to God or to one another.

Stewardship: Proper Christian stewardship of the gifts which God gives is prompted by faith in Christ and love for God. Christian stewardship includes not only the monetary offerings we give to the work of God's Kingdom, but also involves so much more! Christian stewardship includes the way I use every gift God has given me. Am I giving him the best/firstfruits…or just whatever is left over after I serve myself? Am I giving it out of love for Him? Am I giving it joyfully? Abel provides an example for us in our stewardship.

"Saving faith is more than just knowing/believing that God exists. Cain didn't deny God's existence– he talked to Him! However, Cain was not trusting in the coming Savior, was not following God's Word out of love for Him. James tells us that even the devils believe that there is one true God (James 2:19). It is important for all Christians to understand what saving faith is. Many are misled into believing that "belief in God" is enough, but they never hear/learn/believe the saving Gospel.

The unbelieving world will hate believers. Abel was the first martyr for the Christian faith. Cain killed Abel essentially because Abel was a believer. The "world" was a lot smaller in Cain and Abel's day, but their relationship is an example of the unbelieving world hating/opposing the believers. We should expect nothing different: John 15:18-25, 2 Timothy 3:12.

We cannot hide from God nor fool Him: Adam and Eve thought they could hide from God after they sinned. Cain thought he could fool God by denying any knowledge of his sin. Neither plan worked. We can't fool God into thinking that we are His children by what we do outwardly– He knows our hearts. We can't hide any of our sins– He knows them all, even those we don't know.

Rule over sin: As children of God, our desire is to rule over the sin that infects us. This conquering of sin is accomplished only through Christ. He has conquered sin and death for us and the only way we can conquer sin and rule over it in our lives is to be armed with God's Word and with Christ fighting the battle for us. The Holy Spirit uses the Word of God to create faith in our hearts, to help us withstand temptation, and to flee temptations. This battle remains constant for a child of God during this lifetime because of our Old Adam. See: Romans 7:15-20; 8:13-14; Galatians 2:20; 5:16-26; Ephesians 6:10-17.

Response to correction: How do we respond when we are corrected in sin? When Cain was caught in sin he complained about the punishment instead of repenting of his sin and humbly accepting the consequence. When a child is disciplined by a parent or teacher, is the reaction one of sorrow and acceptance of the consequence or is it a self-centered despair, "That's not fair!" We seek to lead our children (and ourselves) to a God-pleasing response to correction.

Sin is never harmless: Cain's overt sin was against the fifth commandment that began with bitterness in his heart. Our youth are faced with a mighty battle with temptation and sin against the sixth commandment. All the media and other worldly influence in regard to sexuality and lust is no small matter. Lead the youth to see that it DOES MATTER what they watch, read, and hear. It DOES MATTER how physically involved they become with a boyfriend or girlfriend. Young people might respond, "I know those things are wrong and I would never do them. I know where to draw the line." BEWARE! Sin is crouching at the door!! Knowledge of what sin is not the same as fleeing from it. Cain's sin did not begin out with murder…young and older take heed!

If we allow hatred, jealousy, and other sin (or temptations to sin) to grow in our hearts as did Cain, that growth will eventually show itself in what we do. Yes, hatred, a bad attitude, a feud with an "ex-friend," etc. are all sins that, when given a fertile field and nurturing, will grow and thrive.

5th Commandment: Sins against the fifth commandment are not only murder and other outward harm to our neighbor. The fifth Commandment also governs our words and thoughts. Also, it is not just the prohibition against harming our neighbor but also the command to help and be a friend to him in every bodily need. Yes, we are our brother's keepers.

Family faithfulness does not equal personal faith. Being the offspring of faithful believers (as Cain was) does not assure salvation. Salvation is a matter of the heart for each individual sinner.

PASSAGES

These passages can be assigned as memory work or simply discussed in class as to how they fit the lesson.

5th commandment

Lower
1 Samuel 16:7 - *Man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart.*

1 John 3:15 - *Whoever hates his brother is a murderer and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him.*

Middle any of the above and...
1 Peter 5:8 - *Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour.*

James 1:15 - *When desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death.*

Upper any of the above and...
Matthew 15:19 - *Out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies.*

Galatians 2:20 - *I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God who loved me and gave Himself for me.*

HYMN CHOICES

Glory be to Jesus - TLH #158
That Man a Godly Life Might Live - TLH #287 (st.6)
O Holy Spirit, Enter In - TLH #235(st.7)
Rise My Soul to Watch and Pray - TLH #446
My Soul, Be on Thy Guard - TLH #449

STORY
Noah and the Flood - Genesis 6-9:17

TEACHER PRAYER
Dear Father in heaven, guide me as I present this lesson to the young people in my class so that I may bring to them the truths You would have them learn from it. Help them to retain and benefit from this lesson on their journey toward eternal life. Help them to grow in faith in the gracious God Who has sent them forgiveness and salvation through Your Son, Jesus Christ. Amen.

VOCABULARY
gopherwood - apparently a variety of cypress
pitch - a gummy, waterproof substance from a coniferous tree
cubit - approximately a foot and a half, 18 inches
covenant - an agreement, especially one God makes with men

OUTER AIM
God cleansed the earth which had become corrupt and violent.

INNER AIM
The evil world around us is always ready to help Satan lead believers away from God. By God's grace we are able to resist those temptations and continue to trust in our Savior Jesus Christ for salvation.

BACKGROUND (Rupprecht *Bible History References, Vol. 1*, pp. 26-35)
As the human population increased, unbelief and sin also increased. When believers married unbelievers, the believers were led away from faith in God. Because of the wickedness of the people, God decided to destroy them. God spared Noah and his family and told him to build an ark. Into this ark Noah was to take his family, a pair of every creature on earth, and food to feed them all. God sent a flood which covered the highest mountains. All land creatures and birds not in the ark died. Just over a year later the earth had dried and all in the ark came out. God promised never to send such a flood again.

Chapter 6
vv. 1-4 Marriages between believers and unbelievers resulted in gifted, but unbelieving children. Their wickedness was so great that God determined not to put up with it for more than 120 years.

vv. 5-7 Because of the great wickedness of the people, God decided to destroy them along with all land creatures and birds.

vv. 8-10 Noah was the exception to the wicked people. He believed in God and tried to do His will. He had three sons: Shem, Ham, and Japheth.

vv. 11-13 God revealed to Noah his intention to destroy the earth with its corruption and violence.

vv. 14-16 Noah was instructed to build an ark according to the dimensions God revealed to him.

vv. 17-22 The destruction of every living thing on earth would be by a flood. Noah, his family and pairs of every land creature and bird were to be saved in the ark.

Chapter 7
vv. 1-4 Noah was commanded to enter the ark with his family and the creatures who were to be saved.

vv. 5-10 The designated passengers entered the ark and waited for seven days.

vv. 11-16 Noah was 600 years old when the flood began. Water fell from above and gushed up from below the earth for 40 days and nights. All in the ark remained safe.

vv. 17-24 The water rose until it covered the highest mountains. All the creatures on land died. The flood continued at that level for five months.

Chapter 8
vv. 1-5 God sent a wind and the water began to recede. The ark came to rest on a mountain in Ararat. Later, the tops of the mountains became visible.

vv. 6-12 Noah sent out birds to learn what it was like outside the ark. A raven did not return. A dove was sent out at weekly intervals. It did not return the third time.

vv. 13-14 On the first day of Noah's 601st year, he opened the ark. About a month later, the earth's surface was dry.

vv. 15-19 After receiving permission from God, Noah, his family and all the creatures left the ark.

vv. 20-22 Noah built an altar and offered a thankoffering to God. God promised never to send such a disaster again.

STUDENT PRAYER

Opening
Gracious heavenly Father who has said, "As I live, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live," keep us from living a wicked life. Help us to do Your will and, when we fail to do so, lead us to repent and look to Your Son, Jesus Christ, for forgiveness. Keep us trusting in Jesus as our Savior so that we may be saved eternally. Amen.

Closing
Dear Heavenly Father, we see that we sin much every day. We know that we deserve death as a punishment. Thank you for sending Jesus, whom you punished in our place on the cross. Fill our hearts with the Holy Spirit that we may learn to obey you. Thank you for giving us eternal life through Christ Jesus our Lord. Amen..

PRESENTATION

Introduction
(Hold up picture of Timothy McVeigh. See last page.) This man killed many people. The angry judge said, “You deserve to die?” This man was put to death as punishment for killing so many people. In our Bible story today we will hear about a world that was filled with bad people such as this man. (Feel free to substitute a more timely picture, but stress here the fact that God is not pleased with any sin, not just mass murder. No one escapes the judgment of God except by God’s grace and faith in our Savior Jesus.)

Suggestions for telling the story

1. Use a play boat and animals in a dishpan. Use Play Dough to make mountains. Pour water from a sprinkling can or pitcher for rain. Be sure to cover the Play Dough mountains with water.
2. Act out certain parts of the story. Hammer and saw boards, pint pitch, pretend to be animals. Make rain sounds and wind sounds.
3. Show pictures.
4. Pace off the size of the ark in front of your church. (It was huge. One pace equals about one yard. The ark was about 150 yards long (1 ½ football fields), 25 yards wide and 15 yards tall (45 feet tall.)
5. Make the paper plate visuals form the Level 1 student's page in advance to help explain the story and application.

The Story

This is written out in the Level 1 and Level 2 children's pages.

Review

- We are going to learn two important words today. The first one is "judgment." It reminds us of an angry judge who says, "you are guilty. You have done wrong. You must be punished?" (Show picture of judge here. See last page)
- What was wrong with the people of Noah's day? (They were very wicked . [bad])
- What did god decide He would have to do because of their sin? (Destroy them with a flood.)
- Did God love all these people? (Yes!)
- Why didn't God save their lives instead of killing them? (Jesus died fro their sins also, but these wicked people didn't want to have anything to do with God or His forgiveness through Jesus.)
- God, in His Love, knew He could not let their wickedness grow and grow. It had to be stopped! (Think of what a scary place to live that would be with all those murders and beatings.)
- Why did God decide to save Noah and his family? (Noah believed in God. Galatians 3:6)
- Did Noah ever sin? (Yes)
- Then why didn't god let Noah and his family die in the flood? (By God's grace, Noah was sorry for his sins. Noah believed in God's forgiveness through the promised Savior, and so was saved. Don't let believing in Jesus sound like a good work. Even our faith is a gift of God. Ephesians 2:8-9)
- This bring us to our second new word, "mercy." Mercy means God loves us and makes a way to save us.
- How did God save Noah and his family? (He saved them in the ark.)

Inner Aim

Here's something for us to remember: *Along with God's judgment always comes God's mercy.* God punishes sin, but He also saves. (Ezekiel 33:11 As I live, says the Lord, I don't want the wicked man to die; I want him to repent and live. Turn, turn form your wicked ways!)

APPLICATION

Do we sin? (Yes, every day.)
What do we deserve because of our sin? (The wages of sin is death.)
God is the judge who said our sins have to be punished.
Does God punish us for our sins? (No)
who did God punish for four sins in our place? (He punished Jesus; Jesus died on the cross.)

(Show a picture of Jesus dying on the cross.)
There is Jesus being punished for all of your sins and mine. But first Jesus had to live a perfect life in our place. Did Jesus ever sin? (No)

Since Jesus never sinned, He always did everything right. We call this His righteousness.
All those right things Jesus did become ours when we believe in Him as our Savior.

Just like Noah was saved in the ark, we are saved through Jesus. This saving work of Jesus becomes ours through our baptism. “Baptism now saves you.” 1 Peter 3:21. When we are baptized , the Holy Spirit gives us the power to live a New Life by obeying God and His Word. He also gives us eternal life. What will our life be like after we die? (Briefly discuss out resurrection and life with Jesus in heaven.)

PASSAGES

These passages can be assigned as memory work or simply discussed in class as to how they fit the lesson.

Romans 6:23 For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of god is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. (A possible illustration: Show one sealed envelope that says “Your paycheck (wages)” on the outside. Open it up and take out a 3x5 card. On one side it says, “For the sins you do, you deserve...” and on the other side write, “death (hell).” Now take out a wrapped present that is sealed and says, “gift” on the outside. Open it and take out a 3x5 card that says on one side, “I was punished for you. Instead of death, I give you...” On the other side write, “eternal life with Me in heaven. Love, Jesus.”)

Ps. 5:4 For You are not a God who takes pleasure in wickedness, nor shall evil dwell with You.

Ps. 34:8 Oh taste and see that the Lord is good; blessed is the man who trusts in Him.

Prov. 1:10 My son, if sinners entice you, do not consent.

Mark 16:16 He who does not believe will be condemned.

Eph. 2:8 By grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God.

2 Cor. 6:14 Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers.

HYMN CHOICES

I Lay My Sins on Jesus TLH #652:1 and 4
God Loved the World So That He Gave TLH #245
All Mankind Fell in Adam's Fall TLH #369
All That I Was, My Sin, My Guilt - TLH #378
Rise, My Soul, to Watch and Pray - TLH #446:1-5

STORY
The Tower of Babel - *Genesis 11:1-9*

TEACHER PRAYER
Lord Jesus, I am an earthen vessel to whom You have entrusted the responsibility of teaching Your lambs. Keep me from ever becoming self-reliant in my teaching or in any part of my life. By Your Gospel, preserve in me a humility that understands my need and a confidence that trusts my Savior. The world promotes and in many ways encourages a self-pride. This is a temptation for us all. Equip me to bring Your Word to the children concerning this temptation and lead them to boast only in You and Your salvation. Lord Jesus, bless us today! Amen.

VOCABULARY
Asphalt (v.3) - bitumen; children may think of the asphalt on our streets which, on a hot summer day turns somewhat soft. The bitumen used for building Babel was an oil/pitch that bubbled out of the ground and would become very hard when baked by the hot sun. For this reason it would serve as the perfect mortar for long lasting construction. The region in which Babel was built (present-day Iran/Iraq) was/is rich in bitumen so the building materials were readily at hand.

OUTER AIM
God confused the languages and dispersed the people.

INNER AIM
Human pride opposes God and will be brought to nothing.

BACKGROUND
Bible History Commentary, Franzmann - pp. 89ff
Bible History References, Rupprecht - volume 1 pp. 35ff

God destroyed the world in the Flood because of its sin. However, the eight souls whom God kept alive in the ark were also sinners. Therefore, even though the sinful, unbelieving world was destroyed, sin lived. Following the Flood, the very next account in Genesis relates the sins of Noah and of his son Ham (Genesis 9:18ff). The motives that lay behind the building of Babel also reveal the same root of sin. As we see the events unfold at Babel, there is no doubt about the accuracy of God's declaration: "*The imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth"* (Genesis 8:21).

Sin would not be conquered until Jesus, the Son of God, came and fulfilled His work of redemption. Even now, after Christ has come and redeemed us, sin still thrives in the world, but through faith we know that sin's guilt is washed away in the blood of Christ.

This lesson is the last account in Genesis which traces the "general" history of mankind. From this point forward, the Scriptures follow the history of the Messiah's family line through Seth to Abram, Isaac, etc.

v. 1
Based on Genesis 10:25, we can conclude that the events at Babel took place very shortly before Peleg's birth and for that reason Eber named his son as he did (Peleg = "division"). The genealogy recorded in 11:10ff shows that Peleg was born 101 years after the Flood. So, the events at Babel occurred about 100 years after the Flood.

Noah and Seth were both still living at this time.

- The world's population would not have yet been extremely large, but within a hundred years the population could quite easily have been 20-30,000 (any suggestion of an exact population would be speculation).
- **Literally**: "one (set of) words" and "one lip" Not only were the people speaking the same language/vocabulary, but there was also one unified dialect.

v. 2

- KJV and NKJV both translate this verse, "…as they journeyed **from** the east…" It is translated more correctly as, "…journeyed **eastward**…" The people's migration was actually southeast, but the Hebrew language makes use of only the four directions, unlike English which makes use of combinations.
- The people migrated from the region of Mt. Ararat where the ark came to rest and settled in the land of Shinar - an area between the Tigris and Euphrates rivers.
- "Dwelt" implies settling down and establishing a permanent residence. The people found the Plain of Shinar inviting and decided to cease migrating. A city and a tower also implies permanency (especially the tower).

v. 3

- Come! - this is the first of three imperatives to "Come!" used in this account. Someone came up with the idea of making these building materials and as the idea spread everyone "jumped on board" saying, "Come on! Let's make bricks…" You can sense the excitement.
- Moses, by inspiration, is led to record the detail of how the people planned to build their city and tower. It would not be built with stones. Nor would it be built with the typical sun-dried bricks. Rather, this city and tower would be made with "well-burned" (literally), kiln-baked bricks. Their mortar would not be simply mud or clay, but asphalt (see vocabulary). Luther believed that this was the first time this type of construction was used and had been unknown to previous generations.
- The type of construction which the people chose would normally be very long lasting and would coincide with their purpose. There are ruins of ancient buildings of this type still in existence today.

v. 4

- Come! - this is the second of three imperatives to "Come!" used in this account. Again the sense is one of excited purpose and plans. "We've decided on the building materials, now come on! Let's build!"
- ***"..whose top is in the heavens…"*** The text does not indicate that the people believed they would build the tower so high as to reach heaven-God's dwelling place. They intended to build a tower reaching to the heavens, i.e., a very tall tower reaching far into the sky with "heavens" being the opposite of "earth." (cf: Deuteronomy 1:28, 9:1)

THE PEOPLE'S SIN REVEALED

-- The sin of the people was not simply in the construction of a city and tower. Neither of these would have been sinful in themselves. The sin lay in the motive behind the building of the city and tower.

-- **Motive #1**: MAKE A NAME FOR OURSELVES…The people wanted to make a name for themselves. They were seeking to satisfy their own prideful longings for fame. They were seeking the things of themselves rather than the things of God. They wanted people to hear about THEM and to come and see the magnificent city and tower THEY had built. Solomon's wisdom and wealth, his name, and city became famous. The Queen of Sheba heard of Solomon's fame and had to come and see if all that she had heard were really true. This is undoubtedly the kind of name and fame the people of Babel wished to achieve by building their city and tower. However, there is a large difference. Before returning home, the Queen told Solomon, *"Blessed be the LORD your God,*

who delighted in you, setting you on the throne of Israel! Because the LORD has loved Israel forever, therefore He made you king, to do justice and righteousness" (1 Kings 10:9). The people of Babel wanted their name and fame for themselves. In his prayer at the temple dedication, King Solomon noted that heathen people would hear about the Israelites and their God and be brought to faith (1 Kings 8:41-42). Isaiah prophesied that many would come to "Zion" and be blessed by her (Isaiah 60:1ff). In both of these cases the name that was made and glorified was that of the Lord and of His salvation. The people at Babel wanted to make a name for themselves-to glorify themselves rather than God and that is SIN.

-- **Motive #2**: **"Lest we be scattered abroad…"** In these words the people's sin is bold and clear. After Noah and his family left the ark, God spoke clearly what His will was for them when He blessed them and said: *"Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth"*(Genesis 9:1). God had blessed them with fruitfulness in offspring so that they could fill the earth. The people were building a city and tower "LEST we be scattered abroad" - the exact opposite of God's desire. The people's pride and self-interest led them down a path completely contradictory to God's will, and that is SIN.

v. 5

- **BUT**…man's plans are one thing, but God would not allow their plans to be fulfilled. "*Unless the Lord builds the house, they labor in vain who build it…"* (Psalm 127:1).
- God describes Himself as the "**LORD**" - Jehovah/the Covenant God/the God of Promise to remind and impress the people that as God "came down" to bring their plan to an end, it was in their souls' best interest that He was doing so.
- **"…came down to see…"** God was certainly well aware of what the people were doing and why they were doing it. God is described as "coming down to see" as a way of conveying to human readers that now God was going to do something. Compare this to parents sitting in the downstairs of their home where they can hear their children upstairs jumping on the beds and then onto the floor. The parents know full well what is going on, but there comes a point when they will go "upstairs to see" what their children are doing and to take appropriate action. God had allowed the people of Babel to go this far, but then no further.
- "**Nothing they propose to do will be withheld from them"** God does not suggest that unless He would stop this project, man could do anything. Regardless of what the people would plan and/or do, they would ever remain sinful human beings–creatures of the Creator–and thereby limited in what they could accomplish. Rather, God is noting that if the people were allowed to continue in one unified language pursuing their own plans, they would continue to follow after sin. The people had arrogantly and smugly despised God's command and had set their minds so firmly on their own thoughts that they would not turn from them, *"now nothing they do will be withheld from them."* Left to their own devices, the people would bring swift destruction upon themselves-in time and eternity. So, the LORD/Jehovah, intervened for the salvation of souls.

v. 7--9

- "Come!" This is the third and final "Come" of the account. The previous two were calls to action for the people. Now comes God's call to action. The results of the action clearly demonstrate who is God. "Us" is an allusion to the triune nature of God. God's confusion of language led to confusion (and probably anger and hostility) among the people. No work could be done because no one could understand one another. Living together in one place no longer held appeal because they now had much less in common and what they did have in common, they couldn't share with each other! There are now more than 5,000 thousand languages in existence (*Genesis*, The People's Bible, Jeske, p.107). God's one act of confusing the languages accomplished what the people had planned would never happen (lest we be scattered…) Scattered is literally, "to break or dash into pieces." What the people did not want to do ("lest we be scattered, v. 4) and the thing against which they worked, was now done by God and they

were scattered. The location of the city and tower became known as "Babel" by the time Moses was inspired to write Genesis. It was named "Babel" because "Babel" means "Confusion." It is also the word from which we derive "Babylon" - a kingdom which was located in the same region. Martin Luther viewed God's action at Babel a much more horrible judgment than even the Flood. Luther said that the Flood wiped out only a single generation of humanity; but confusing the languages at Babel, however, has bred confusion, suspicion, and hatred ever since, right down to the present day (Luther's day and our own).

Additional Scripture:
Daniel 4:28-33; Psalm 2; Proverbs 3:5; Proverbs 16:9; Jeremiah 9:23-26; Jeremiah 17:5-8; 1 Corinthians 10:31; Galatians 6:14; Philippians 3:8-10; 1 John 2:15-17.

STUDENT PRAYER

Heavenly Father, thank You for all the gifts You give to me. Remind me day by day that all that I am, all that I can do, all that I will receive comes from You, without any worthiness in me and without any contribution from me. Forgive the times when I am self- reliant and proud and all the other sins my pride may produce. Remove all pride from me and deepen my trust in You so that my boast will always be in the God of my salvation. Amen.

PRESENTATION (1)

The previous story (The Flood) provides excellent background and a bridge to this lesson. After the Flood, the world's population consisted of 8 people…now what? God's plan was that they be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth. To accomplish His plan, God blessed Noah and his family. Man's plan was different from God's and opposed God's plan.

Students should be led to see the human pride involved with the building of Babel and how that opposed God's will. From a recognition of the pride and sin involved at Babel, lead your students to see how the same self-will and sinful pride infect each of us in what we choose and what we do. Lead the students to see that human pride is sinful and at odds with God. We can't follow God and our sinful selves at the same time. Lead them to see that pridefully following one's own way does not lead to salvation. We cannot be proud of ourselves and still be trusting Jesus as our Savior. Faith recognizes our failure and relies completely upon Him for salvation and ability to do what pleases God.

Throughout the story and application, a resounding truth should become clear: GOD IS GREATER THAN MAN. All the planning in the world can't succeed unless God blesses it or at least allows it. All the best building materials used together in the best possible manner will wash away like a sand castle, if God so desires. The greatest marvel of all is in God's use of language. Consider how the various languages became a barrier for the people to accomplish their plans. Then consider how God has used human language to convey to us the glorious Truth concerning Himself and the Salvation He has provided for us. Consider how God made use of many different languages at Pentecost so that His Word would spread far and wide to the people using many varying tongues. The confusion of languages at Babel stopped the sinfully motivated building project but it **did not and can not** stop God's plan of bringing salvation to the world! The Gospel news of salvation is the same in any language. The people wanted to remain one unified whole for their own honor and glory. God wanted them to scatter and caused them to do so. The different peoples of the world would be unified again but not in the sense that the people on the plains of Shinar had originally imagined. Years later, God sent His Son Jesus to die for the sins of all people. Those who believe in Him are united in Him through faith no matter what nationality they are or what language they speak.

PRESENTATION (2)

If the teacher can converse in a foreign language, perhaps the lesson can begin in that foreign language. The students will not be able to understand the lesson and that will become an illustration in the story presentation when God confused the languages. Ship captains, airline pilots, etc. are REQUIRED to have at least a working knowledge of English because that has become the universal language of commerce. Have students consider what might happen if there was no such universal language. Use that as an illustration of what probably happened at Babel. (Also consider how Greek was the language of commerce in the early New Testament period. This is surely one reason why God had the New Testament Scriptures recorded in Greek-it facilitated the spread of the Gospel.) Use the story of Pentecost as a New Testament link. The many different languages spoken by the disciples were begun at Babel. Of what did the disciples speak when they had the ability to speak in foreign tongues? Were the disciples acting like the people of Babel? Why or why not?

"Were people given their different colors of skin and racial appearances at the tower of Babel?" In Scripture, there is no mention that God did anything further than confuse the peoples' languages. Therefore, to suggest that there were also changes in appearances is pure speculation. The various racial characteristics are, however, quite easily explained in connection with this account. Genesis chapter 10 describes the divisions and the various peoples that came from Noah's three sons. Within the three "branches" of Noah's family tree there would already be some differences. When the languages were confused and small pockets of people spread across the earth and grew into their own societies, further division was made. Over time, each of these societies would have easily developed characteristics different from other societies. It is not difficult at all to see God's use of the "natural means" of genetics and reproduction within the separated peoples after Babel to Accomplish what we now recognize as differences in appearance among cultures/ peoples.

"Where did the people go?" The various civilizations of the world and their locations are the result of God's dispersion at Babel. People have wondered how the American Indians could have come to the Americas when all of "known civilization" was in Europe, Asia, and Africa. There are many evolutionary explanations. Scripture's plain truth is the simplest and best. As groups of people migrated from Babel, over time they reached what we now know as the Americas and developed as a civilization.

"What language did the people speak before Babel?" There is no mention of a particular language and we have no way to know. Since God's design was to totally confuse the people's languages so that they were forced to divide and spread, it would *seem* likely that the pre-Babel language didn't even continue to exist after Babel.

APPLICATIONS

The people of Babel defined their lives in terms of themselves rather than of God. Discuss the many ways in which peo ple today (ourselves included) define their lives in terms of themselves and then consider the better outlook through Christ. God today intervenes at times as He did at Babel. God intervened at Babel because without the intervention, the people would only have grown in their sin and continued their sinful ways. God intervened to accomplish His will which is always the salvation of souls. Likewise, today, God may at times bring hardship and/or catastrophe to direct people away from the things of the earth and to seek Him through the Scriptures. Loss of man-made possessions because of storms, earthquakes, etc. reminds one that our treasure is not in earthly things but with our Savior. Sin is rebellion against God. Discuss the various sins into which we may fall and how this is rebellion. (Students may not be willing to concede, at first that every sin is rebellion against God. However, an examination of what sin is and how each sin breaks God's will lead to that conclusion.) David showed sinful pride when he ordered a census (1 Chronicles 21:1ff). Peter proudly said he would never deny the Lord and then stood in the High Priest's courtyard where temptation would be strong (Matthew 26:33,69). We show the same kind of pride every time we rely on ourselves, give glory and honor to ourselves, or when we boldly enter tempting situations thinking we won't be affected, when we strike out to do

things “our way” and fail to consider “God’s way.” Discuss with the students the ways in wh ich pride affects their lives. Discuss how every aspect of life is an opportunity to give glory to God and not to ourselves. Explain/consider how we do or do not give glory to God in the many things we do and say in day-to-day living. Discuss the Gospel and how Christ did not show pride but humbled Himself…how there can be no room for human pride in the heart of a child of God’s heart both because of what he is (a sinner) and because of what Jesus has done (everything for our salvation without our help). Reassure the student that the sins of pride are also forgiven in the blood of Christ by emphasizing God’s gracious plan even in His confusing of the languages at Babel.

The world’s concept of “self-esteem” continues to be promoted widely. A lack of the world’s concept of “self-esteem” is often touted as the cause for problems. The Tower of Babel shows that the world’s concept of self-esteem is actually sin because it gives man a higher position than is rightfully his. Children in the public schools will almost certainly face a false concept of self-esteem in a variety of ways. ALL children need to know and understand from where their true worth is found, namely, in their Savior.

Agree or disagree: The skyscrapers and big cities of the present world are in many ways modern towers of Babel. Discuss.

Project: Have the students spend a week or two reading newspapers/magazines and looking for articles that demonstrate or report upon the same kind of attitude/motivation as the people of Babel and discuss what they find.

PASSAGES

These passages can be assigned as memory work or simply discussed in class as to how they fit the lesson.
Lower
Proverbs 3:5 - Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding.
1 Corinthians 10:17 - He who glories, let him glory in the Lord.
Middle any of the above and...
Proverbs 16:9 **-** A man’s heart plans his way, but the LORD directs His steps.
Galatians 6:14 - God forbid that I should glory except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.
Upper any of the above and...
1 John 2:15-17 - Do not love the world or the things that are in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world-the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life-is not of the Father but is of the world. And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever.

HYMN CHOICES

“When I Survey the Wondrous Cross” (TLH #175)
“Just as I Am Without One Plea” (TLH #388)
“Savior I Follow On, Guided by Thee” (TLH #422)
“What is the World to Me” (TLH #430)
“Thy Way Not Mine O Lord” (TLH #532)

STORY
God gets Abram started in a new life - Genesis 12:1-9 and 13:1-18

TEACHER PRAYER
O LORD, God of Abraham and my God due to Your favor given me in Jesus Christ, I adore You for getting Your plan of salvation moving forward by salvaging Abram from his heathen background. Always help me to present You to my students as You really are: full of generous compassion to those lost in the sinfulness of their human nature, and willing to put Your hand out to lead and nurture people like me. I praise You for this now and forever. Amen.

VOCABULARY
Place names such as Bethel, Ai, Negev, Zoar should be located on a map.

OUTER AIM
God's hand in Abram's life led him to earthly prosperity and eternal treasures.

INNER AIM
God's hand supports and saves those who put their trust (faith) in Him.

BACKGROUND
(cf. also Rupprecht Bible History References, Vol. 1, pp.46-53)
The titanic event of the Flood had faded in memory and its lesson lost; within two hundred years the human race had deserted God's grace to Noah and had suffered its confrontation with Him at Babel. In the fallout, family units became tribal sheikdoms in the Mid-East. Abram was born in Mesopotamia (Ur of the Chaldeans), in the tenth generation after the Deluge. Abram married his half-sister Sarai; his brother Nahor married a neice Milcah, daughter of the other brother Haran, who died early, leaving his boy Lot in the care of uncle Abram. Terah and tribe left their homeland for Canaan, arriving at a place 600 miles NW from Ur and 400 miles NE of Canaan, naming the place Haran in memory of the deceased son. What prompted a family of idolaters (Joshua 24:2) to emigrate into the unknown? Perhaps it was due to a carry-over influence from Noah. Abram could have heard the account of the Deluge directly from Shem, who in turn had learned the account of Adam and the Garden from Methuselah. It is important to us to know what God DID with Abram; Scripture is replete with references to this man who stands as the premier example of God's ways with sinners--the way of salvation prompted by God's grace (without human deserving), produced by the Seed of Abraham, and received by faith (without
human contributions).

Following are notes on verses of the account from Genesis 12:1-9 plus entire chapter 13.
v.1
(The KJV helping verb "had" is intended to harmonize with Acts 7:2.) This is Jehovah Who thrust His hand into a heathen family and reactivated His salvage operation for victims of Satan.
Three levels of sacrifice are here required of Abram: separation from his homeland, from his tribal relatives, and from his father's household. All this was in Abram's best interests, of course, so that he be rescued from idolatrous influences (Satan's hands). For all these perceived losses, God compensated with His blessings for Abram's well-being.

vv.2-3
Seven blessings are poured out on Abram and on others via Abram:
- God will make of Abram a great (earthly) nation
- God will bless him personally, in earthly and eternal ways
- God will make his name great (Gal.3:6-9)
- "And be thou a blessing" - he should do what he could to benefit others
- God will bless those that bless him - whoever treats him well will be favored by God
- God will curse him that curses Abram - his personal favor with God makes his enemy to be God's enemy
- God will bless all the families of the earth in and through Abram

This closing blessing surpasses the others because it reaches out to all sinners of all time; thus the saving effect of Messiah intends to go beyond Jewry with no racial, geographic, or time limits. (cf. John 8:56 and Mt.8:11)
v.4
Abram's faith-living produced obedience; his nephew shared in this venture of faith into the unknown. At age 75, Abram was "middle-aged," a time to settle down , but off they went on a 350 mile journey with servants and flocks.
v.5
Abram as patriarch was respected; his household had already become prosperous; Canaan had also been the goal of his father Terah; Abram walked "by faith, not by sight" toward whatever God had in store for him (cf.Heb.11:8).
v.6
The first locale worthy of record is Shechem in the center of Canaan, 34 miles N of Jerusalem; everywhere they encamped they were the foreigners in a land farmed and ranched by resident Canaanite tribes. No directions came from Jehovah as to how Abram was to cope with them.
v.7
It was time for Jehovah to become more specific about Abram's property rights in Canaan. God let him know that it was intended for his descendants ("seed"). Abram wanted to thank God and give a public testimony to his God's mercies (already received as well as pending) by building this altar, a place of worship to Jehovah.
v.8
Onward to Luz, ten miles N of Jerusalem; It received the name Bethel ("house of God") from Jacob. Again Abram gave public testimony to his God amidst the heathen Canaanites.
v.9
As nomads did, he regularly "pulled up stakes," moving southward to the Nebev, an arid region (where little noteworthy seems to happen in today's news).

Ch. 13, the entire chapter brings us back again into Abram's God-promised homeland.
vv.1-4
Following his dismissal in disgrace from Pharaoh, Abram with retinue returned to the southern section of Canaan, back to the site marked by the altar, where Abram felt prompted again to "call on the name of the LORD." (cf. Gen. 4:26; this phrase means public worship of Jehovah.)
vv. 5-7
The flocks, etc. of Lot were distinct from Abram's, and due to expansion they could no longer coexist on the same range. The shortage of resources would also affect the resident population.
vv.8-9
Abram took the lead in offering a brotherly solution that would benefit both; it would mean, however, that they separate, an unwelcome prospect for Abram whose only "seed" at present was Lot. Knowing that the LORD would not let him be the loser, Abram gave Lot freedom to choose the direction of his own future.
vv.10-11
Lot made a selfish choice, and they separated--family ties broken, futures divergent.
vv.13-14

The problem was--as it always is--that bad companions corrupt good morals. Lot's soul was endangered by people "exceedingly wicked and sinful against the LORD" as his companions and friends. The LORD did not permit Abram towonder if this was a change in His blueprint.
vv.15-16
On the contrary, regardless of Lot's actions, God had put Abram's name on the entire map; this was Abram's personal land (a new detail) and was to belong to his progeny "a long time"-- another detail added to the promise of 1:7.
As to Abram's potential "seed," he would have progeny "as the dust of the earth"; that is, innumerable. In this we see a reference **not** to the Jewish race, but to the Christian Church, the true sons and daughters of Abram, who from Adam to the last Day are Abram's seed (Gal. 3:29).
vv.17-18
God wanted Abram to experience his new homeland so as to embrace it totally, with all his senses. So as this man of faith walked also by sight into the reality of God's promises, he again stopped to honor Him and publicly praise Him.

STUDENT PRAYER

God of Abraham and my God also in Jesus, I thank You for introducing me today to Abraham, one of my wonderful grandfathers whom I will get to know better in our heavenly Canaan. Thanks for leading him onward and forward in his life so that he could stay close to You and learn to depend on You always. Do so for me, too, please, in Jesus' name. Amen.

PRESENTATION

- As introduction: does the student know anyone who has taken a vacation/tourinst trip to Palestine? It's called the state of Israel today, though it is NOT God's Israel at all. Tourism there is not a new thing; Abram did it too, but only because the LORD told him to go there and look it over, end-to-end and side-to-side, for it was going to belong to him and his children. So his tour was a sightseeing trip to get acquainted with his new homeland. More importantly, other things God told him affect us today: especially the news that he would have innumerable "children" and that God would channel His best blessings to the whole human race through this one person, the "father of all believers" in God's Christmas gift for sinners.
- Because place names are sprinkled throughout the account, here's the time to help students develop a map sense of Bible lands. Use a large chart or overhead projector. An outline map of Wisconsin or other state (New Jersey is comparably sized) superimposed on a projection of Canaan will provide a sense of comparative distances and spaces.
- Have students check other Scriptural references to Abraham in the New Testament in order to gain a fuller impression of his value to us.

APPLICATIONS

1. Nobody with any heart of love will choose to separate from his mother and father for a selfish or trivial reason. It's only the heart of love for Jesus that can do so IF AND WHEN that becomes necessary in order to be faithful to Him and to protect oneself from Satan's errors. That's why the CLC came into existence (Luke 19:29-30, Rom.16:17-18).
2. When we live and function as God's children, we become channels for His blessings to our neighbors and friends, because God favors those who favor us. On the other hand, anyone who is hostile to God's child gets into trouble with Jehovah Himself.
3. Public worship and personal testimony as to the Savior are ways of bringing salvation within reach of lost souls. "Calling on the name of the Lord" is the exact opposite of using His name in a careless, non-respectful way. A child of God lets people know that's the way he lives.
4. A child of God can afford to be generous with friends, relatives, neighbors, and strangers. And that's simply because we CANNOT be losers by loving others as our Savior did.

5. Especially troublesome for youngsters is the problem of peer pressure. Just as germs spread by contact, so do bad morals, sinful attitudes, ungodly talking, dirty jokes, etc. Choose your friends as if your life depended on it!

PASSAGES

These passages can be assigned as memory work or simply discussed in class as to how they fit the lesson.
Lower
Hebrews 11:8 - *By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to the place which he would afterward receive as an inheritance. And he went out....*
Matthew 10:37 -*"He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of me."*
John 8:56 - "*Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day, and he saw it, and was glad."*

Middle any of the above and...
Luke 12:29-30 *"Assuredly I say to you, there is no one who has left house or parents or brothers or wife or children for the sake of the kingdom of God who shall not receive many times more in this present time, and in the age to come everlasting life."*
Galatians 3:29 - *And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.*

Upper any of the above and...
Romans 16:17 - *Now I urge you, brethren, note those who cause divisions and offences, contrary to the doctrine which you have learned, and avoid them.*
I Peter 2:11-12 - *Beloved, I beg you as sojourners and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul, having your conduct honorable among the Gentiles....*

HYMN CHOICES

"I'm But a Stranger Here" (TLH #660, 1-4)
"God Bless Our Native Land" (TLH #577, 1-2)
"Lo, Many Shall Come from the East and the West" (TLH #415)
"Lord, Thee I Love with All My heart" (TLH #429)
"A Pilgrim and a Stranger" (TLH #586, 1.4.7)

STORY
The Promise of a Son - Genesis 15:1-18:15

TEACHER PRAYER
Dear Lord God, You have promised in Your Word that You will give us all things we need in this life. You have promised to guard and watch over us. Even when things look bleak and discouraging, we can trust in Your Word. I know that You have promised me everlasting life through faith in Jesus. Help me to trust Your promises completely as Abraham trusted You, that You would give him a son in his old age. Lead me to be a good example of a faithful, trusting child of God for my children. I ask this in Jesus' name. Amen.

VOCABULARY
Covenant- a mutual agreement or promise between two or more persons

Circumcision- cutting of the foreskin of the male organ done when the male child was 8 days old

OUTER AIM
God keeps all His promises.

INNER AIM
Our faith is strengthened by God's repeated promises in His Word.

BACKGROUND (Rupprecht *Bible History References Vol. 1*, pp. 56-59)
When God first came to Abraham and asked him to leave his home and family, He promised to be with him and to bless him. In our story today we see how the Lord kept this great promise which strengthened Abraham's faith.

Genesis 15:2
Abraham reminds God of the promise He had given him.

In Old Testament times it was considered a curse and a shame to not have children.

For Abraham, this was even a greater burden because of the promise that God had given him concerning the Messiah coming from His seed.

v. 4
God repeats His promise He had made earlier to Abraham.

It won't be Abraham's servant, Eliezer, but the heir will come from Abraham's body.

v. 5
God gives Abraham a visible sign of His promise--the stars in the sky.

v. 6
Abraham put his trust in God's Word, His Promise.

Paul calls Abraham, "the father of all those who believe." (Romans 4:11)

Abraham was justified in the eyes of God, not because of his works, but by faith in the promised Savior.

We see that the Old Testament believer is saved the same way the New Testament believe is--through Jesus. (Acts 15:11)

Genesis 17:1

Many years have gone by since that first promise. Abraham is now 99 years old and still has no son.

With God nothing is impossible. He is able to fulfill all His promises.

Abraham walked in faith in the promised Savior.

Abraham was righteous in God's eyes because of his faith in Jesus.

v. 3
In worshipful reverence, Abraham throws himself down on the ground before his Lord.

v. 5
Abraham means "father of a multitude" or "father of many nations."

His new name was another outward sign to strengthen Abraham's faith.

vs.10-13

Circumcision is the seal of the righteousness of faith and a type of Baptism--the seal of the forgiveness of sins promised in the Gospel and made ours through faith. (Romans 4:11)

v.15
Sarah means "princess." Not just Abram's princess (Sarai="my princess"), but a princess of nations, eventually of Jesus Himself.

18:1
Mamre was a district of Hebron, 20 miles south of Jerusalem. (See Rupprecht p. 57)

v. 2
One was the Son of God who had assumed the form of a man. The other two were angels in human form.

vs.3-5
Abraham was a very gracious host even to these strangers (two angels and the Son of God), this being fruits of his faith. (Hebrews 13:2)

v. 10
God calms Abraham's fears and doubts, even though it had been 24 years since that first promise. God's words, "I will certainly return to you...your wife shall have a son," gave to Abraham the confident assurance of the fulfillment of that promise. This promise would be fulfilled within the next year.

v. 12
Sarah doubted. She looked at her aged body and that of her husband and she could not believe it would happen. "Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." (Hebrews 11:1) God does answer all of our prayers, sometimes it is many years before we see or realize the answer. Never doubt HIS PROMISES!!!

v. 13-14
The LORD repeats His promise also showing Sarah that He is omniscient
and knows what is in her heart.

v. 15
Sarah denies that she laughed and is convicted of her sin when the LORD
says, "No, but you did laugh." (Hebrews 11:11) "Through faith Sarah herself also received strength to conceive seed, and she bore a child when she was past the age, because she judged Him faithful who had promised."

STUDENT PRAYER

Holy Spirit, the devil, the world, and my flesh are against my listening to Your voice and following You. Keep me in the faith that trusts in Jesus and His word. Remind me of what my God has said, whenever I am tempted to sin. I ask this in the name of Jesus, my Savior. Amen.

PRESENTATION

1) God used His Word, His Promises to make Abraham's faith stronger. God makes our faith stronger in the same way: through His Word which we hear in church, read at home, and learn in Christian Day School, Sunday School, Confirmation and Bible Class.

2) There are times when our faith, like Abraham's and Sarah's becomes weak and we begin to doubt God's love and His promises toward us. This is when we especially need to remain in the Word. ONLY GOD'S WORD CAN MAKE OUR FAITH STRONGER! Proverbs 3:5 - "Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding."

3) The keeping of this promise of a son was so important because from Isaac the Messiah--Jesus--would come who is the Savior of all people.

4) Our salvation is by faith alone, by faith alone in Jesus as our Lord and Savior. Believers in Jesus are righteous before God because by faith we have accredited to us Christ's perfection. Righteousness is not by our own works, but by faith - trusting, resting
upon God's promises! Faith in God's Word, His Promise of a Son, Savior, Forgiveness, Salvation! This faith is also a gift of God worked in us by the Holy Spirit. Ephesians 2:8-10; I Corinthians 12:3

PASSAGES

These passages can be assigned as memory work or simply discussed in class as to how they fit the lesson.

Lower

I Corinthians 12:3b - "...and no one can say that Jesus is Lord except by the Holy Spirit."

Middle any of the above and...

Ephesians 2:8,9 - "For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is a gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast."

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

Upper any of the above and...

Galatians 3:11 - "But that no one is justified by the law in the sight of God is evident, for The just shall live by faith."

Romans 4:3-5 - "For what does the Scripture say? 'Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.' Now to him who works, the wages are not counted as grace but as debt. But to him who does not work but believes on Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is accounted for righteousness."

HYMN CHOICES

By Grace I'm Saved, Grace Free and Boundless - TLH #373
Not What These Hands have Done - TLH #389
The Gospel Shows the Father's Grace - TLH #297

STORY
Sodom and Gomorrah - Genesis 18:16- 19:29

TEACHER PRAYER
Dear Lord God, protect me from the many dangers of body and soul that are all around me in this wicked world. Let Your holy angels guard me so that no harm comes to me. I pray this also for my students that You have called me to love and teach. In these formative years do not let this sinful world attract them and lead them astray. Help them learn Your Word so that the message of Your love will keep them safe and secure in Your flock. I ask this in Jesus' name. Amen.

VOCABULARY
righteous - one who believes in Jesus as Lord and Savior

OUTER AIM
God answered Abraham's faithful prayer and showed mercy to Lot by rescuing him from wicked people.

INNER AIM
God shows mercy to us by rescuing us from Satan and this sinful world.

BACKGROUND
Today's lesson is a continuation of last week's lesson. The three men (two angels and the Son of God) are now about to leave Abraham. God had decided to destroy the wicked cities of Sodom and Gomorrah because of their great wickedness. Their sins sent a great cry to heaven. What was their sin? Not inhospitality--but homosexuality--a sin against God's law of man and woman sexual relationship. Cf. Romans 1:26-27 "For even their
women exchanged the natural use for what is against nature. Likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust for one another, men with men committing what is shameful, and receiving in themselves the penalty of their error which was due."

v. 23-25
Abraham's bold faith - not cocky or presumptuous but taking God at His Word; trusting His mercy and grace.
Luther's address to the Lord's Prayer: "with all boldness and confidence ask our dear Father."
James 5:16 says "The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much."

v. 27
Note Abraham's humility as he realizes what he is before God

v. 31
How willing God is to withdraw His punishing hand and to forgive if the sinner will only turn from his evil ways! The Lord wants "All men to be saved."(1 Timothy 2:4)
2 Peter 3:9 God is "not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance."
Exodus 34:6-7 He is a "compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness."

v. 32Not even for ten? Nothing could have shown more clearly than thesewords that God would much rather bless than punish.
It is because of the believers even now that the word still stands and is not burned up by God

v. 2-3
Lot is like his uncle in that he is hospitable to the strangers.
Knowing the evil intent of the men of the city Lot encourages them not to sleep in the streets.

v. 4
The wickedness permeated both the old and the young. Total corruption is seen.
We see the extreme danger of putting ourselves into temptations.
Not only was Lot's faith tested daily, but his life was in danger. II Peter 2:7-8

v. 10-11
The Lord saved Lot by means of a miracle of His grace. II Peter 2:9
First article states "defends me against all danger, guards and protects me from all evil."

v. 14
Lot's daughters were pledged to be married to unbelievers.
They thought Lot was a fool. "Hell, it doesn't exist! End the world, you've got to be kidding!" We still hear that today. "God will punish. NO WAY!"

v. 15-16
Even Lot shows his weakness, at dawn he hesitates.
He was led out by the hand. Hebrews 1:14 calls angels "ministering spirits."
Abraham's fervent prayer had not been in vain. The believers were spared.

v. 17-20
Lot again shows his weak faith by not obeying the angels and does not go into the mountains. Would not the Lord protect, provide and sustain him there as well?

v. 24
How did the cities burn? The sulphur from heaven ignited the mineral pitch mines - burned to ashes as stated in 2 Peter 2:6.
Sudden destruction upon an unsuspecting people.
The end of the world?

v. 26
Lust of the world, materialism had taken such a strong hold upon Lot's wife that she could not stand leaving -parting from all she called her own. She took one last look - punishment was instantaneous. What a serious warning to us ALL, especially in this materialistic society. "You cannot serve both God and mammon (riches)." 1 John 2:15-17, Luke 17:28-33

STUDENT PRAYER

Dear Savior, help me be more and more aware of the many temptations and dangers that are all around me. This world is not a friend to us Christians. I thank You that through Your holy angels You are always watching over me and all of Your children and protecting us daily from harm. I pray You keep my heart in Your Word ruled by the Holy Spirit so that all that I think, say and do may be to Your glory. Lord, help me do this. Amen.

APPLICATION

1. The effectiveness of prayer. Encourage our children to pray every day for all people. To continue to pray and take God at His Word - He will answer according to His Will.

2. The Justice of God over against sin: God is a jealous God punishing those who reject Him, who refuse to submit to His will. His justice must be met. IT HAS BEEN MET BY CHRIST!

3. The mercy of God toward All: God is also a loving God willing to forgive and save to the uttermost. May we cast ourselves with repentant hearts upon God's mercy in Jesus Christ. It is because of Jesus' payment of our punishment that we are under God's grace.

4. The serious danger of worldliness - materialism: it leads us to live only for this life and not for the eternity of perfection and joy that Jesus has earned for us.

5. The warning especially today against homosexuality: about twenty years ago AIDS was just beginning, it wasn't heard of much. Today it is one of the biggest plagues earth has seen. God will allow only so much of man's haughty, proud rebellion. It is not God who makes a homosexual but the person allows his sinful lusts and desires to take over his body.

6. The destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah is a type or picture of Judgment Day. It will be total and unexpected by all.

PASSAGES

These passages can be assigned as memory work or simply discussed in class as to how they fit the lesson.

Lower

Psalm 145:18 - "The LORD is near to all who call upon Him."
Luke 17:32 - "Remember Lot's wife."

Middle

II Timothy 2:3-4 " - ...God our Savior, desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth." I John 2:15 - "Do not love the world or the things in the world."

Upper

James 5:16 - "The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much."
II Peter 3:9 - "The Lord...is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance."
Hebrews 1:14 - "Are they not all ministering spirits sent forth to minister for those who will inherit salvation?"

HYMN CHOICES

Come, My Soul, Thy Suit Prepare - TLH #45
The Man Is Ever Blest - TLH #414
And will the Judge Descend - TLH #610

STORY

Isaac's Birth; Abraham offers Isaac - Genesis 21:1-7; 22:1-19

TEACHER PRAYER

Lord God, use me to bring to my students a deeper concept of what You have in mind for us. Help them to comprehend more deeply how You think and operate with us, and lead us to place our lives into Your hands, from which we receive such wonderful blessings. Amen.

VOCABULARY

Seed in the KJV, or descendant in NKJV is the same Hebrew word (offspring, child). Locate geographic names on a display map for students.

OUTER AIM

God strengthened Abraham, Sarah, and Isaac to live their lives dependent upon Him.

INNER AIM

One small step for God/one large step for mankind as Jehovah brought Abraham to revere, love, and trust in Him above/before anyone or anything else.

BACKGROUND *(Rupprecht Bible History References, Vol.1, pp.66-69)*

The point of reviewing God's ways with Abraham is to reveal how God operates. This is not a story of two old people who had a baby and the old man almost killed him, but a revelation of the original pattern of salvation: People are saved by God, into Whose hands they entrust their lives, their futures, and their eternal souls. Abraham and Isaac are original patterns of the *way God thinks about humans and how He operates with us, which is the prime purpose of religion, after all.* (How *we* think and operate with God is secondary.) Thus Abraham's biography contains milestones in God's routing to outmaneuver the enemy Satan.

After a lot of ups and downs (chs. 14-20) in Abram's life, the great event arrived. By now Ishmael was fourteen, but he was NOT the "one and only" special child the Lord had promised.

vs.1-3

It took special miracles to procreate this baby; for Sarai had never become pregnant during her fertile years and was now in menopause. Miraculously, the LORD saw to it that Sarai and Abram could engender a baby. After a normal pregnancy she gave birth, exactly as the LORD had promised them in 17:16-19, the "one-and-only" son to bear the covenant-promise: *But My covenant I will establish with Isaac* (not with Ishmael), born to Sarah (not to Hagar).

vs.4-7

Additional details: There was a specific requirement for a person to be included in the covenant of grace: a minor operation on the loose skin of the penis. Abraham performed the requirement. This was an external sign of internal, personal dedication of self to the LORD, ch.17:13. Isaac meaning "he laughs," now a source of rejoicing to an aged woman and the 100 yr. old father.

vs. 8-9

Isaac's passing from infancy to childhood was celebrated in the traditional way.

Hagar's teenager thought it ridiculous that he as firstborn would lose his spot to the new baby.

The sacrifice of Isaac, Ch. 22: 1-19

Secure against Ishmael's threat, Isaac grew into adulthood sheltered in the love of his parents.

v.1

We deduce that the LORD was not toying with Abraham, but that this test was necessary for Abraham's soul-care. The father's love for his one and only son needed adjusting lest it displace his love and respect for the LORD.

vs.2-5

There can be no doubt as to God's intent, for He spelled it out in detail. Thus Abraham was not in trouble with God (5th and 8th commandments) in telling his servants that the lad would return, for he was fully convinced that after he killed Isaac, God would raise him back to life (Heb.11:17-19).

vs.6-8

Although Isaac was perplexed, Abraham's loving response helped him maintain the highest trust.

vs.9-12

Step by step, Abraham moved forward with faith in the LORD; Isaac submitted out of confidence in his father. It was no game-playing for Abraham to build the altar, bind Isaac upon it, and raise the knife for a fatal stab. The LORD has seen into his heart: *Now I know* speaks of knowledge based on the evidence, just as His final judgment will be based on evidence of actions. (Deeds are the product of motives, which are engineered in the powerplant-heart; and the engineer for spiritual activity is the LORD.) Jehovah had won over Abraham's heart to love and revere Him above and beyond even his dearly beloved one and only son.

vs.13-14

The substituted animal, providentially provided, was returned to the LORD as a thank-offering for all His goodness. (Jesus had no such substitute, for the stakes were too high to allow it.)

By time Moses wrote this account, it had become a proverbial saying full of Messianic meaning: "In the hill of Jehovah provision is made."

v.15

The Angel of the LORD, identifying Himself as God (both here and in vv.11-12), took an oath on Himself. This level of assurance occurs only twice elsewhere in Scripture! He reaffirmed the blessings of ch.12, reaching the zenith in "*all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in your seed,*" the seed identified as Jesus in Galatians 3:16.

v.16 As this chapter in his life closes, Abraham is at home in Beersheba, chastened and strengthened by the experience on Moriah, the child of God who has become the hero of faith, the exemplar for every generation of God's sons and daughters.

STUDENT PRAYER

Dear Lord Jesus, I would really like You to direct me just as you did Abraham. I probably don't need a vision or a direct visit, so I'll try to content myself with Your words given me in the Bible. Help me to learn how to apply Scripture to my life, just as I apply Your love to my life. Thanks for everything. Amen.

PRESENTATION

Abraham's Faith

This is not the story of an old man who almost murdered his boy, nor is it a Jewish legend of a blood-thirsty God who enjoyed torturing people. Rather, we see here that our LORD was following a faith-building program to strengthen and toughen Abraham to depend on **His** best judgment in all situations. (Modern bodybuilders understand the value of stressing muscles in order to strengthen. Olympic-class athletes get there by heroic exercise regimens.) These two selected episodes from the chronicles of Abraham will be understood and properly evaluated (at least by the teacher, maybe also by the student) only by rehearsing some of the other highlights in God's program of strength-training for Abraham--chapters twelve through twenty-one.

That is, when he left his fatherland with its familiar comforts...when he gave up his ties to family and tribe...when he endured the privation of childlessness...when he lost contact with nephew Lot...when he lost Ishmael as the potential "chosen seed"...(plus a lot more) each step of the way the LORD assisted, nurtured, and assured Abraham that He would take care of the whole program, even in the details, so that by the time of the sacrifice of Isaac, Abraham had been strengthened enough (in relying on the LORD) to be able to give up his one-and-only boy, if God so requested it.

God's Promises

Promises are meant to be kept. A promise-maker is obligated for two reasons: to prove the promise-maker reliable, and to benefit the person receiving the promise. That's how God works--whether in small or large promises; God does not make a promise He won't or can't keep; so when He pledges Himself to do the job of saving our souls and to be our Helper in all earthly needs, we can bank on it that He will keep His word.

Human Limitations

Perhaps one of your students has a handicap. Can God turn a handicap into a good tool in His service? Certainly! (I have seen a preacher severely handicapped with cerebral palsy deliver a tremendous sermon entitled: "I'M NOT O.K.; YOU'RE not O.K.") Every child of God has his/her limitations; even the apostle Paul had a severe one, and God let it bother Paul all his life because Paul had enough of God's grace to carry him past/over/around his handicap to become the greatest soul-winner in the early Christian Church.

APPLICATION

1. Why do we spend time learning about Abraham and Isaac? Through such examples we can learn how God functions. Just as we learn the laws of gravity, electricity and magnetism, light and heat, the ecosystem, etc., so that we use and make applications of these laws to ourselves, so we learn of God's ways with sinners in order to apply His rule of grace to our own salvation.

2. Since there are notable correspondences between Isaac and Jesus, a special reason for placing this OT episode into the series is to help us concentrate on our Savior. Some similarities are:

- each was the "one-and-only" son of the father;
- each was long-promised and long-awaited;
- each bore the promise of bringing blessings to all nations;
- no human substitute dare take his place (not Ishmael for Isaac/not anyone imperfect for Jesus);
- each submitted obediently to the father's will (as a lamb to the slaughter);
- each to be sacrificed on Moriah (the site of the temple in Jerusalem);
- Isaac was as good as dead until the third day; Jesus physically dead until the third day;
- each returned to his father to carry out his life's purpose.

In these ways Isaac is a type of Jesus, and Jesus is the prototype for Isaac.

3. It's a miracle when a baby is born (and it is the sin of murder to choose to abort); Isaac's birth was almost as big a miracle as the virgin birth of Jesus. This demonstrates that God ignores human limitations when He chooses to do so in order to get His salvation program moving forward or to pass it on from one soul to another.

PASSAGES

These passages can be assigned as memory work or simply discussed in class as to how they fit the lesson.

Lower

John 3:16 - *For God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.*

Matthew 3:17 - *And suddenly a voice came from heaven, saying, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.*

Galatians 4:28 - *Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are children of promise.*

Middle - any of the above and ...

Hebrews 11:17-19 - *By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises offered up his only-begotten son, of whom it was said, "In Isaac your seed shall be called," that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead....*

accounting

Hebrews 11:1 - *Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.*

Phil. 2:13 *for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure.*

Upper - any of the above and ..

Hebrews 6:13 - *For when God made a promise to Abraham, because He could swear by no one greater, He swore by Himself, saying "Surely blessing I will bless you, and multiplying I will multiply you."*

Hebrews 12:5-7 - *My son, do not despise the chastening of the LORD, nor be discouraged when you are rebuked by Him; For whom the LORD loves He chastens, and Scourges every son whom He receives." If you endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom a father does not chasten?*

HYMN CHOICES

"My God, My Father, While I Stray" (TLH #418: 1,3,4,7)
"From God Shall Naught Divide Me" (TLH #393: 1,3)
"I Will Sing My Maker's Praises" (TLH #25: 3,6)
"Commit Whatever Grieves Thee" (TLH #520: 8,10)
"The Will Of God Is Always Best" (TLH #517:1,2)

STORY

Isaac's Marriage to Rebekah - Genesis 24

TEACHER PRAYER

Lord Jesus, as You proved Your integrity to Abraham and Isaac, so I ask You to demonstrate to me also Your dependability. I need Your support every day in every way as I present You to my students. Bless my efforts with good results, as You did with Your servant Eliezer. Amen.

VOCABULARY

Place names (Mesopotamia, Haran, Hebron) to be located on map; personal names (Isaac, Eliezer, Rebekah, Laban) to be written on the board

OUTER AIM

The LORD led Isaac and Rebekah into marriage for His saving purposes.

INNER AIM

In order to carry forward the family tree of the Seed-Savior, the LORD joined Isaac with Rebekah.

BACKGROUND

(*Rupprecht Bible History References, Vol. 1, pp, 71-75)*

Chapter 23 is bypassed in this series, reporting Sarah's death, burial, purchase of cemetery plot. Of what importance is this step in Isaac's life for God's plan of salvation? Since Sarah had been selected to be the mother of the chosen lineage, and Isaac was her only child, it must follow that the Promise will be carried on through Isaac--and thus he must marry and sire a child.

This chapter presents the LORD's handling of Isaac's approach to marriage.

Ch. 24: v.1

Abraham had lost his wife and was well into his "golden years"; the LORD had blessed him with a respectful and loving son, food, shelter, house, home, wealth, etc.; his faithful servant Eliezer ("God is a Helper") will become a major player in Isaac's future.

vs.2-4

This oath was more serious than a handshake; since Abraham's health would not allow him to undertake traveling to Haran, he commissioned a trusted friend to do it. The substance of the commission was double: Negative side: NOT a wife from the heathen Canaanites; Positive side: DO get a girl who would share his religion and confess the Savior with him. This was worth a lot of effort to find the special person (not a concubine or "valley girl" to entertain him) for his special son's welfare, future blessing, and for continuing the family tree of the Savior.

v. 5

Potential problems: perhaps she would figure the losses (no more family visits; friends left behind; end of her individuality and virginity) as a poor trade for what had to be more than a "blind date." She would need blind faith that there is a God who controls such things as preparing you for a spouse...and that a pre-arranged marriage could lead to love and happiness. If she declined, should Eliezer come back, get Isaac, then make a second round trip so that he and she could meet each other? (What if they found out they didn't even *like* each other?)

vs.6-8

Abraham was not going to take the chance that if Isaac left, he might be tempted to never return, and thus lose the future which the LORD had promised him IN the promised land. So he was depending on help that could not and would not get this situation messed up--by putting it into God's hands and leaving it there. And if--even with an angel overseeing the mission--the girl chosen did not become convinced that this was the LORD's will, then Eliezer need not feel that he had failed in his mission, because it was not *his* job to make it work.

vs. 9-10

With this clarified, the servant was willing to bond himself to the mission. "Thy will be done." There are no data noted for us re. the month-long 500 mile trip by camel caravan.

vs. 11-14

Women servants would come to the village well for the family's daily water supply.

The secret of success in seeking a spouse is devout prayer to the LORD God, the One who delights in helping His children. Eliezer depended on the LORD having this all programmed for Isaac; he as helper would seek a girl having an attitude of generosity, service, and hospitality.

vs. 15-16

And how did it work out? The LORD sent a cousin of Isaac, a girl unaware that her future hung in the balance, doing her regular chores of service to others. Though she was *very beautiful*, she did not display her sexual attractiveness to arouse lust; she had graciously been spared the degradation of pre-marital sex, pregnancy without marriage, etc.

vs. 17-20

Like a movie scenario, each step follows verbatim. She was good at being thoughtful, eager to be helpful. [She had to drop the bucket down 50+ ft., get it to tip, let it fill, pull it up, empty it--maybe twice per camel--which adds to 20 or 25 repeat exercises--a lot of heavy muscle work!]

vs. 21-25

It was almost too good to be true that she would meet the qualifications.

She was given an extra-ordinary reward for her generosity. Meeting the family would reveal whether the LORD had been guiding the whole process. [He was, of course!]

vs. 26-27
The LORD had done the planning and arranging, so God deserved the credit: "*who has NOT forsaken His mercy* (in caring about and caring for*) and His truth* (dependability/integrity /faithfulness) *even when I was going ahead in blind faith...."*

vs. 28-31
The young woman (still not named) ran home to tell her experience, and her brother Laban took over the privilege of being the host for a stranger *"blessed by Jehovah."*

vs. 32-41
After they had freshened up, and with the meal ready, Eliezer needed to get to the reason for his visit; so he reviewed with them the whole background, especially as it was connected with Abraham.

vs. 42-48
Then the meeting at the well and his prayer were rehearsed.

vs. 49-54
Finally, it was their turn to react--*either good or bad*--so that Eliezer could proceed.
Father and brother recognized that it was the LORD's doing, but it was out of their hands, so they had no advice one way or the other. [Did they perhaps have some small reservations?] When they did submit to the arrangements, a dowry was given to Rebekah and family. Eliezer would be ready by first light the next day to start the return trip with Rebekah and her retinue.

vs. 55-61
If Rebekah was entirely willing, they were agreeable to part--with a ceremony and a blessing.

vs. 62-67
Isaac was ready, waiting, and praying that this big step in his life would not be a mistake, but remain in the hands of God--first, last, and always.
The caravan approached; she dismounted, evidently feeling that this was going to be THE GUY; she checked it out...and then the curtain is drawn between us and them as they became marriage partners. They got to know and to love one another and to be comforted from feeling alone.

STUDENT PRAYER

O LORD, now that I have heard how important marriage is to Your purposes for every generation, I ask You to prepare me even now for my future. Give me good Christian friends so that I may find the one You intend for me. I trust You to guide and direct, help and support me along the way. Sincerely Yours, in Jesus' name. Amen.

PRESENTATION

Though the text is lengthy, be sure to read it aloud (and get student-readers to assist) because it reads like a suspense novel; stop and explain things <u>during</u> the reading; teach the lessons of the story during this first-and-only class-time reading.

There are two purposes for this lesson in our selection of items from OT Bible history:

1) to see how the LORD reaches His hand into human events--guiding us in matters such as finding a spouse--so as to bless us.

2) to show how the LORD brought it about that Isaac would become one of the ancestors of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

APPLICATIONS

1. When the child of God thinks ahead to dating and getting married, s/he must consider what qualities are valued in a friend and for a life-partner. Shall it be good looks, popularity, intelligence, wholesomeness, sense of humor...? What about mutual concern for Christian values and devout approach to life?... what about respecting parents...what about being hospitable, helpful? Does the person have a Christian background and family life? Would the person be approved of by my parents as a good influence? Is it someone I can love for a whole lifetime? Is it someone who shares my love of God's Word...of worship...of prayer?

2. What is a good process (program) in preparing for marriage?

- what's the purpose of dating? ... of being "best friends"? ... of engagement?
- what's the value of having God involved in working on this with you?
- what's the way you are going to get God to help you? - how to get started?

PASSAGES

These passages can be assigned as memory work or simply discussed in class as to how they fit the lesson.

Lower

Romans 8:31b - *If God is for us, who can be against us?*

Matt. 21:22 - *And all things, whatever you ask in prayer, believing, you will receive.*

Eph. 6:2-3 - *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."*

Middle any of the above and...

Ps. 103:1-4 - *Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless His holy name! Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits: Who forgives all your iniquities, Who heals all your diseases, Who redeems your life from destruction, Who crowns you with lovingkindness and tender mercies....*

Romans 8:28 - *And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose.*

Philippians 4:6 - *Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanks-giving, let your requests be made known to God.*

Upper any of the above and...
Prov. 18:22 - *He who finds a wife finds a good thing, and obtains favor from the LORD.*

Col. 3:18-19 - *Wives, submit to your own husbands, as is fitting in the LORD; Husbands, love your wives and do not be bitter toward them.*

I Cor. 7:38 - *A wife is bound by law as long as her husband lives...*

Eph. 5:25,28 - *Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved he church and gave Himself for it. So husbands ought to love their own wives as their own bodies; he who loves his wife loves himself.*

Isaiah 65:24 - *It shall come to pass that before they call, I will answer, and while they are yet speaking, I will hear.*

HYMN CHOICES

"While Yet the Morn is Breaking" (TLH #544 1,2,5)
"O God, Thou Faithful God" (TLH #395 1,2,5)
"May We Thy Precepts, Lord, Fulfil" (TLH #412 1-3)
"Oh, Blest the House, Whate'er Befall" (TLH #625 1-5)

STORY

Jacob Receives the Blessing - Genesis 25:19-34 and 27:1-40

(Note: this lesson and #10 are so closely connected that the teacher does well to prepare for both simultaneously; some of the Teacher's Notes are interchangeable between the two lessons.)

TEACHER PRAYER

Dear Father, my God through the life and work of Jesus, incline Your ear to my prayer. I ask for Your Spirit to enable my mind and heart and tongue to glorify You in my life as a teacher of Your children. Empower Your Word to produce Your will in all of us gathered here below. Enliven the hearts and wills of my students to be thrilled over Your hand in their lives. Amen.

VOCABULARY

seethe pottage = boil lentil soup; lentils belong to the bean (legume) family of vegetables

venison = savory food, broiled or baked meat of wild game such as deer, antelope, pheasant, duck *genealogy* = a portion of the family tree showing ancestors and descendants

OUTER AIM

The family tree of Jesus was carried forward through the branch of Jacob.

INNER AIM

God outmaneuvered the "sting operation" of Rebekah and Jacob in order to carry forward His blueprint for the family tree of Jesus' ancestors (from Abraham to Isaac to Jacob to ...).

BACKGROUND

(Rupprecht, Bible History References, Vol. 1, pp. 75-82)

Since our last lesson, Isaac's mother has died, Abraham has remarried (Keturah), has sired a large number of children and grandchildren but has "sent them eastward, away from Isaac his son," and has died. Abraham showed that he was passing on the special blessings to Isaac, and to Isaac alone (even his good son Ishmael was bypassed).

Ch. 25: 19-20

This is the genealogy of Isaac Isaac becomes the focus of the narrative, and we are going to see the hand of God in this chosen person's life as the bridge that will lead to Jesus.

vs. 21-22

Rebekah had been barren for nineteen years of her marriage. What did God have in mind with this tribulation? To bring their concerns to the LORD. A reminder: children are a gift from God; even in our day of "genetic engineering," conception and human life are in God's hands.

v.22

Rebekah could feel the jostling in her womb and she was concerned that something was awry in the way the blessing was arriving. *"If it be so, for what then am I destined?"* (Leupold, p.702)

v.23
There was a cause, of course: she was mothering two separate and distinct forces/futures/ destinies of nations: the *older* to *serve the younger* was a reversing of the cultural norm; this is important, for in God's kingdom the carnal mind should yield to the spiritual, and in His kingdom the stronger should serve the weaker so as to bring blessings (as Jesus did for us).

vs.24-26
The first twin to emerge was a red, hairy baby (we would call him "Red" or "Harry").
The second baby got a grip on the heel of his twin, and because of this he was called a usurper, a replacer, a "tripper-upper" = the name Jacob. (Isaac was by now sixty years old.)

v.27-28
So the boys grew! Esau, the first born, became a skilled outdoorsman, a toughened survivalist.
The younger twin, Jacob, developed social skills and a sense of the continuity between himself and Abraham and the Promise.

Each parent had a favorite: Dad bonded with tough and hearty Esau; Mom bonded with mild and sensitive Jacob. This was OK, but because Rebekah was concerned for the promised Seed, she was drawn to support God's choice of the younger of her two boys.

vs. 29-34
Esau came with the modest request that Jacob share his supper stew; Jacob took advantage of his brother's vulnerability, and instead of being generous, he was selfish.

Jacob bargained for the special place of "firstborn," which at the time was a big deal (the oldest boy got the farm when Dad died, or the resources to carry on the family tradition and become head of the tribal family). It was a miserable conversation once Jacob got greedy. (Reminder: manipulating people for self is never God-pleasing.)

Esau was cheated because he did not seem to care about carrying on the family tradition. Heb.12:16 calls him a "profane person" who had no interest in a father's special place in God's plans for the tribe and the world.

There was selfishness on both sides, since Isaac should have been willing to help his brother in his bodily need as well as encourage him to appreciate his legacy and inheritance.

(Ch. 26 is skipped, where the LORD required Isaac to stay in Canaan during a famine--with the Promise repeated. Isaac lied about Rebekah being his wife--a sin his father had done with another Abimelech, years earlier. Nonetheless, the LORD blessed Isaac as He had promised.)

Ch. 27:1-40 Which of the twins would be selected as the bridge to the Messiah? Isaac wanted to bless Esau, but Rebekah and Jacob carried out a sting operation in an attempt to "improve on" God's plan and God's methods.

vs. 1-4
Isaac was not heeding God's will when he intended to select the first-born(Esau) for his parting (ultimate) paternal blessing.

vs. 5-10
Rebekah caught the drift that Isaac intended to transfer God's choice away from Jacob. Instead of reminding her husband of God's will, she resorted to deceit/trickery in a misguided attempt to "aid God's hand."

v. 8
She even laid it on Jacob's conscience (as a matter of the 4th commandment) to do as she said; thus she used a selfish "religious" tactic that could produce great spiritual harm.

vs. 11-18
Jacob objected to some of the mechanics and the potential harm when he should have objected to the entire deceitful project. Mother and son collaborated in this conspiracy of deceit.

vs. 19-24
Next came outright bald-faced lying (a subject on which our Lord focuses in James 1:14).
Even when cross-examined, Jacob stuck to his lies including the blasphemous lie that the LORD was behind his claim.

vs. 25-29
When Isaac's justified suspicions had been dispelled, he gave the coveted blessing to Jacob.
In substance, the blessing covered earthly prosperity, ethnic ascendancy, and superiority of his blood line over Esau's. The LORD's support was invoked on the entire blessing but what is apparently missing is any obvious Messianic prophecy.

vs. 30-32
The deception needed to last only a few minutes; Esau's arrival burst the bubble.

vs. 33-35
Here is a scene overcharged with emotion! With trembling Isaac seemed to be catching on that a) his attempt to bypass the LORD's choice of Jacob had backfired on him, and b) that all the double-dealing (with God and with one another) had <u>not only not</u> detoured God's plans for Jacob, but had in fact had accomplished the opposite. These actions had brought calamity to their own household.

vs. 36-40
Although Esau's pleading for a fair portion of blessing from his father (and from the LORD who stood behind Isaac) did not induce Isaac to repudiate Jacob's status (cf. Hebrews 12:17), Isaac did assure Esau of earthly well-being, albeit at the price of subservience to Jacob (until a future day of successful rebellion from Jacob's control).

STUDENT PRAYER

Dear Father, Whom I love and wish to serve, today as I ponder how Your hand protected Jacob even when he did not deserve it, I often puzzle over how I shall survive my mistakes in life. Then I remind myself of how You outmaneuvered the sinful strategies of Isaac, Rebekah, and Jacob. I praise and honor You for Your hand in their lives--and in mine, too. Amen, in Jesus' name.

PRESENTATION (Helps and Hints)

1. The teacher needs to be conversant with sections which were bypassed: Abraham has lost Sarah, married Keturah, and their boys (TEN of their descendants are named!) were sent away as non-participants in the special (ch.25:1-18) lineage of the Messiah; Abraham died; Ishmael's tribe is traced and by-passed, as are Isaac's dealings with Abimelech, ch.26.

2. See Notes for the next lesson also.
Since this lesson covers 55 verses, the teacher will abbreviate the text to suit the class level.

3. Maintain focus on the essentials with an outline such as this:

I. God produced a promised heir (Jacob) to Isaac; then the other children of Isaac were bypassed from the Messianic family tree.

II. God blessed Jacob by outmaneuvering human strategies :

- Isaac's favoring of Esau was a selfish mistake
- Rebekah's trick to favor Jacob was a sinful strategy
- Jacob's selfishness made him sin against his father and twin brother III God played along and managed to outmaneuver these human strategies.

4. Combine appropriate and applicable Bible truths and passages during the presentation to emphasize and reinforce the truth that God had a loving hand in Jacob's life.

APPLICATIONS

1.This is God's record of how He manages our affairs even in spite of the mistakes that humans make due to their selfishness. So Isaac and Jacob were hand picked by God, were raised by His hand, and were kept in His hand so that God would be recognized as the Author and Finisher of our salvation.

2. God takes Fatherly care of His erring children, lest we fall victims of our own sinful attitudes, schemes, and manipulations. Yet we receive painful consequences to bear in our interpersonal relationships when we give in to our sinful inclinations.. We become our own worst enemies when we hurt someone else, for we may lose a friend for life. That creates a double loss, for he has lost me, and I have lost him.

3. Recognize greed, selfishness, and ego in your own heart when Satan urges you to think: "But what about ME?" Answer: "Well, what about me? God cares for me, and He is not going to be so cruel as to deprive me of all I need if I just go ahead to be loving, generous, and sharing."

4. In all cases where we have a Word of God to guide and direct us (as Rebekah did), we should be bold to remind ourselves and others of God's Word on the matter. We also need to resist the temptation to resort to human (intellectual or psychological) devices to cause God's will to be done."

PASSAGES

These passages can be assigned as memory work or simply discussed in class as to how they fit the lesson.

Lower

Heb. 11:20 - *By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau concerning things to come.*

James 1:14 -*...each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires....*

Middle any of the above and...

I Jn. 3:15 - *Whoever hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him.*

James 1:13b-15 - *...nor does He Himself tempt anyone. But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed. Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin when it is full-grown, brings forth death.*

Upper any of the above and...

II Cor. 7:10 - *For godly sorrow produces repentance to salvation, not to be regretted; but the sorrow of the world produces death .*

Eph. 2:16 - *...that He might reconcile them both (*Jew and Gentile*) to God in one body* (the Church) *throught the cross, thereby putting to death the enmity.*

(Note: Also use Rom. 9:6-16 as background for God's choosing Jacob, but explain the Calvinist error of using this passage to deduce that God hated Esau even before his birth.)

HYMN CHOICES

"Take My Life And Let It Be" (TLH #400 1-6)

"Oh, That the LORD Would Guide My Ways" (TLH #416 1-4)

"My God, My Father, While I Stray" (TLH #418 1-4)

STORY
Jacob Flees from Esau; Jacob's Dream - Gen. 27:41 - 28:22

TEACHER PRAYER
Dear Lord, strengthen me in desire, in skill, and in all gifts of the Spirit so that the good work You have begun in me will be carried forward for Your glory and blessings to Your kingdom. As always, in Jesus' name. Amen.

VOCABULARY
Padan Aram - "The tableland of Aram" = Mesopotamia

Beersheba - city at the southern limit of Palestine

Haran - Abraham's home (after he left Ur), north of Palestine

Bethel - "House of God," city in central Palestine

Heth - son of Canaan, forefather of the Hittites

Bethuel - father of Rebekah and Laban

Ishmael - Abraham's son by Hagar

OUTER AIM
When Jacob had to flee from his angry brother, God stayed with him.

INNER AIM
In God's master plan, for saving sinners, He makes all things work together for good, because He can overrule our counterproductive sinful mistakes.

BACKGROUND (Text commentary)
Ch. 27 tells us which twin would be the transmitter of the Messianic promise. Isaac sinned in wanting it to be Esau; Rebekah and Jacob also sinned in using lies and deception to outsmart Isaac, which is not the way in which the LORD opens His hands to bless us.

Ch 27: vs.41-46
(This section shows that there was plenty of guilt to go around.) Naturally, Esau was irate at having been outmaneuvered by Jacob, even though he had already sold his birthright to Jacob (26:29-34). Evidently he said something that reflected his evil plan-(We detect no sign of repentance on the part of Esau, or of Jacob, or of Rebekah, or of Isaac.)–so Rebekah thought that she could smooth over the troubled waters if Jacob was out of sight for a while. (By the way, she died before Jacob ever got home again.)

The way she made the request of Isaac was another half-truth, a subterfuge that Isaac might swallow. Surprisingly, the text gives no hint that he perceived the strife between his sons.

Ch. 28: vs. 1-5
Isaac agreed with the plan that Jacob should marry a cousin.

Isaac repeated some of God's blessings carried over from Abraham, especially to settle in Canaan, which was part of the Messianic blueprint.

So Jacob, aged seventy-one, left his mother, father and revengeful brother. He went all alone on a dangerous 500-mile trek, perhaps wondering if his selfish actions had ruined his future.

vs.6-9
Esau was willing to stay at home. Trying to find a way to recoup his losses by ingratiating himself in his father's good favor, he married an Abrahamitic girl.

vs. 10-22 This episode is a watershed for Jacob's spiritual renewal, fitting him for God's hand.

v.10-12
By time Jacob had traveled a few days, he came to a spot twelve miles north of Jerusalem. The ladder pictures an access route for angels to come and go on God's business with humans. Some interpret it as a Messianic symbol, the grand staircase of open access to the Father.

vs.13-15
We note that there is no scolding, no reprimand, no LAW! So apparently Jacob was repentant over his cheating of Esau and his deceiving of Isaac.

At that juncture, God gave him good news for the future: His promise regarding the land, the increase of progeny, and the Seed--all due to His loving guidance and protection. Evidently Jacob needed this assurance that the LORD God was on his side and had not abandoned him in his needs.

vs.14-16
He is wonderfully surprised that Jehovah has been at his side all along, even under the scary and shameful conditions under which he had left his father's house.

Afraid = overawed, almost benumbed at such a miracle of grace. [Jacob jumped to the conclusion that geography was an issue behind the LORD's appearance, but we recognize that just then he needed a place to call "home."]

Evidently Jacob also needed the sevenfold assurances of grace that God gave him:

- Clear identification of the LORD as being the same God of Abraham and Isaac;
- Clear indication that this location was destined for Jacob's descendants [thus he could deduce that Esau would not murder him, for God promised him future children!];
- Assurance that his family tree would become innumerable and spread in all directions;
- The Jacob-sired family tree would produce the Savior ("bless all nations");
- God would be close to Jacob no matter where he went as an exile;
- God would manipulate Jacob's future to get bring back home again (to Canaan);
- God would provide His supportive presence during the time of fulfillment.

vs.18-22
This is the first voluntary vow recorded in Scripture; in this dedicatory ceremony Jacob changed the placename from Luz to Bethel ("house of God"), pledged himself to the LORD for his life, his future, his church, and his stewardship.

(Since the King James translation sounds too "iffy" to exhibit Jacob's good attitude, we prefer Leupold's Commentary here: "***If*** *God will be with me...in this way which I am going...and I shall return in peace...and Yahweh will be God to me--**then** this stone...shall be a house of God."* That he carried out this vow is reported in ch. 35:1-7.)

STUDENT PRAYER

My Father in heaven, I am just beginning my journey in life. I know I have already made mistakes in the way I have treated my Mom, Dad, brother, sister. So I realize the value of having Your blessing to fix my mistakes. Since I do not know what awaits me in life--but You do--please take me and my future into Your hands. In Jesus' love I am safe. Amen.

PRESENTATION (Helps and Hints)

1. The teacher will use his/her skills to preserve the aliveness of the Scriptural narrative. Jacob's life (lessons #9 and #10) crackles with human drama. In reading the text aloud, practice the craft of dramatic presentation (rising/falling intonation--as in music--with dramatic pauses, etc., to reveal the nervous tension between Jacob and Esau, or to portray the ominous nature of Rebekah's "sting operation."

2. In upper classes, perhaps capable students could be given the "roles" of Isaac, Rebekah, Jacob, and Esau in order thus to get more deeply in touch with them. (Teacher can be the voice of the LORD!)

3. Nonetheless, maintain a focus on Jacob is becoming the next section of the Messianic bridge ("From Abraham to Bethlehem to Calvary" form some Scriptural ABC's).

APPLICATIONS

1. God keeps His promises: "If you abide in Me, and my words abide in you,, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you." Jn.15:7, etc.

2. The loss of a brother's/sister's good will is a bitter fruit on the family tree--and can sour relationships for years to come. (Any teacher anecdote here...?)

3. An intelligent and resourceful child can fall into the sin of playing one parent against the other, especially in order to gain advantage over a sibling. What result can be expected?

4. Anger, the fun of hating, the pleasure of despising others are some of Satan's best tools to ensnare teens into sins they can't ever cure. The Columbine massacre is but the tip of a familiar mountain range from which a volcano can erupt.

PASSAGES

These passages can be assigned as memory work or simply discussed in class as to how they fit the lesson.

Lower
Ps. 91:11 - *He shall give His angels charge over you, To keep you in all your ways.*

Jn. 1:51 - *"Hereafter you shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man."*

Middle any of the above and...
Ps. 91:9-10 - *Because you have made the LORD, who is my refuge, even the Most High, your habitation, No evil shall befall you...For He shall give His angels charge over you, to keep you in all your ways.*

I Tim. 2:5 - *For there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.*

Upper any of the above and...
Heb. 1:14 - *Are they [angels] not all ministering spirits sent forth to minister for those who will inherit salvation?*

Ps. 50:14-15 - *Offer to God thanksgiving, and pay your vows to the Most High. Call upon Me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you shall glorify Me.*

Ps. 121:7-8 - *The Lord shall preserve you from all evil; He shall preserve your soul. The Lord shall preserve your going out and your coming in from this time forth, and even forevermore.*

Deut. 31:6-8 - *"Be strong and of good courage, do not fear nor be afraid of them; for the Lord your God, He is the One who goes with you. He will not leave you nor forsake you."*

Heb. 13:5 - *Let your conduct be without covetousness, and be content with such things as you have. For He Himself has said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you."*

HYMN CHOICES
"All Depends On Our Possessing" (TLH #425, 5)
"Commit Whatever Grieves Thee" (TLH #520, 3-5)
"Built On the Rock The Church Doth Stand" (TLH #467, 1-3)

STORY
Jacob returns to Canaan - Genesis Chapters 32, 33 & 35

TEACHER PRAYER
Dear Heavenly Father, I know that You care for me better than I could ever care for myself, for You alone know what is best for me. I ask You now to give me the ability to teach this truth to my students and to create in their hearts an unshakable confidence in You as their Protector and Provider. Grant that through the teaching of this lesson they might come to realize that just as You were with Jacob and brought him safely through many adversities, so You will always protect and provide for each one of Your children. Bless my presentation of this truth, in Jesus' Name I ask. Amen.

VOCABULARY
Edom - means "red"; a name given both to Esau and to the country he inhabited. Esau was called "red" both because he was covered with reddish hair and because he sold his birthright for some red stew. The land known as Edom (also called *Idumea*) is so named for its unusual red sandstone formations. It is located southeast of Israel.

Sojourn - to stay as a temporary resident

Staff - a walking stick used in the Middle East for shepherding and for defense

Appease - to calm or pacify; to bring to a state of peace

Ford of the Jabbok - a popular point at which to cross the Jabbok River. The Jabbok winds some 60 miles through the country east of the Jordan River and eventually empties into the Jordan about halfway between the Sea of Galilee and the Dead Sea.

Socket of the hip - the area disabled on Jacob - either the joint of the hip itself, the sciatic muscle located near the hip, or the corresponding tendons in that area.

Israel - Name given to Jacob and later to all of his descendants. It is variously translated as "*struggles with God*," "*having power with God*," "*God's fighter*," "*ruling with God,*" and "*prince with God*."

Succoth - means "booths." A city east of Shechem and the Jordan River and north of the Jabbok. So named because Jacob erected booths for his animals there. Later also the site of Solomon's copper mining and smelting operations. (Not to be confused with the Succoth near Egypt where the Israelites camped the first night after the Exodus.)

Terebinth tree - a small tree of the sumac family, known for producing turpentine.

OUTER AIM
Jacob returns to Canaan and is reunited with his brother Esau.

INNER AIM
God makes Jacob realize that it is He who has preserved and blessed him.

BACKGROUND
When Rebekah first sent Jacob to Laban, she told him to remain there until she sent for him (Genesis 27:45). Jacob is now returning without having received word from his mother and is therefore uncertain and fearful of how his brother Esau might receive him. Scheming and manipulating have been part of his entire life and he is afraid the sins of his past are about to catch up with him. With this

fear in his heart he prepares to meet Esau, the twin brother he had once cheated and exploited.

Chapter 32

- Jacob has had many years to contemplate how he might appease his brother. As always he comes to rely on subtle scheming, resolving first to send messengers ahead to test the waters and prepare Esau for his arrival. In a subtle way he seeks to let Esau know that he is not powerless against an attack, instructing his messengers to tell Esau that he has male and female servants. He also calls Esau "lord" and himself "your servant Jacob." His words intend to indicate strength, but humble submission and non-aggression.
- Jacob expected his messengers to be gone many days, for the trip to Esau's home was long. He was terrified when they returned well before the appointed time to tell him that Esau was coming to meet him with 400 men. His first reaction was to plan and scheme, dividing his possessions and family into two camps. He must have quickly recognized the futility of the move, and for the first time (recorded) since leaving his homeland he approaches God in prayer. In that prayer he holds God to the promise Hehad made to him.
- Although his prayer certainly was heartfelt and genuine, Jacob still cannot resist the temptation to take matters into his own hands and seek to finesse. He sends herd upon herd and flock upon flock ahead of him in an attempt to pacify his brother. He strategically spaces each herd and flock to multiply the effect in Esau's eyes, again instructing his messengers to call Jacob "servant" and Esau "lord."
- The account of the wrestling with "a Man" is difficult to fully comprehend and has been explained in many different ways. Jacob obviously believed that the man with whom he wrestled was God in human form. We have no reason to doubt that it was. Luther said that God probably shrouded the event in mystery because mystery invites further reflection. The best explanation is that God wanted to teach Jacob a valuable lesson. Jacob had been "wrestling" his entire life. God here demonstrated that wrestling *against* God is futile. Man cannot prevail *against* God, but can only succeed *with* God.
- The fact that "the Man saw that he did not prevail" is not a sign of God's lack of power. Instead God came in a form that could be challenged, but demonstrated his power by a single touch. This was all a sign that God has bound himself to be affected by the faithful who wrestle with Him in prayer. He draws a distinction between the physical and spiritual by ending the physical struggle with a touch that dislocated Jacob's hip. Perhaps also the muscle was permanently affected, leaving Jacob with a reminder that his struggle is with God and can be successful only through faith and prayer. No man by force of his own will or strength can oppose God. This lesson Jacob needed to learn. God held his future in his hands.
- The "man" renames Jacob to Israel (see note above), yet he will not tell Jacob his name. This, to Luther, further deepens the mystery and invites our continued contemplation. Some suggest that "the Man" thus indicates that Jacob should have already known who He was from what He had said and done.
- The limp remains as a reminder, at least for a time. We don't know for how long.

Chapter 33

- Again Jacob demonstrates his shameless favoritism by ranking his children according to his affection - the least favorable placed forward in the greatest danger. Certainly his conduct must have had a profound effect on the less favored women and children and may well have contributed to future jealousies and the resultant selling and enslavement of Joseph.
- Jacob demonstrated rare courage and forthrightness by going on ahead of the women and children to meet Esau alone. He demonstrates his utter humility in Oriental fashion by bowing seven times to the ground, but Esau had been blessed by God and demonstrates no ill will

whatsoever toward the brother. All Jacob's scheming and his lavish gifts had been unnecessary. God had been at work in Esau's heart. Note that though Jacob called Esau "lord," Esau called Jacob "brother."

- Whether out of guilt or joy, or perhaps as an attempt to prevent Esau from changing his mind and making a claim against him in the future, Jacob insisted that Esau accept the lavish gift offered to him. What he gave to him was something of a fortune, perhaps a payment for the blessing and birthright he had stolen and extorted.
- Jacob still did not trust Esau and again demonstrated some of his old scheming. He refused to travel with Esau (using the excuse that Esau would travel too fast for the young ones) and urged him to go on ahead. He even refused Esau's offer of some of his armed men as an escort, indicating that Jacob probably had no intention of ever going to Esau's homeland, Seir. Finally Jacob lied to his brother, promising that he would come to him in Seir. Instead he traveled in almost the opposite direction and lived for a time in Succoth–a makeshift town of booths he built east of the Jordan.
- Some time later Jacob crossed the Jordan River and settled near Shechem in Canaan. There he bought a parcel of land and erected an altar there. He called the place, literally translated, "*God, the God of Israel*." This is the first indication in the Bible where Jacob referred to God as *his* God. Prior to this time he had always referred to Him as the God of his fathers, Abraham and Isaac.

Chapter 35

- After the incident with Dinah and Shechem, Jacob was told by God to move to Bethel (where Jacob first saw God when he fled from Esau). This Jacob did, but why he moved from Bethel, where God had told to live, and settled in Ephrath (Bethlehem) is not known.
- Before he made the trip to Bethel, Jacob commanded that all idols be put away and that his household purify both their bodies and their clothes. A significant spiritual change had obviously come over Jacob. Why he had allowed the foreign gods up until this point is not known. Certainly from this point on, however, the God of his fathers is now also *his* God.
- God appeared to Jacob yet again in Bethel and renewed the promise He had made to Abraham and Isaac. There God promised Jacob that "kings would come from his body." The greatest king, of course, was the King of kings and Lord of lords - our Savior Jesus Christ, who was born of the Tribe of Judah.
- In Verse 13 we read that *"God went up from him in the place where He talked with him."* This was in keeping with God's original promise to Jacob in Genesis 28:15, *"I will not leave you until I have done what I have spoken to you."* Though God surely kept watch over Jacob in the years to come, we have no other record that he ever appeared to him as He had done at Bethel and at the Ford of the Jabbok.
- Jacob's beloved Rachel died in childbirth near Bethlehem and was buried there. In death she gave birth to Jacob's final son, Benjamin.
- By sleeping with Jacob's concubine, Reuben was attempting to lay premature claim to his inheritance as firstborn. This was an insolent, prideful sin and it later cost Reuben his rights as firstborn (cf. Genesis 49:3-4).
- Good and faithful Isaac was reunited with his son Jacob before he died. Isaac lived 180 years and was buried by his sons, Jacob and Esau. It is not known if Jacob and Esau kept in contact, other than when they buried their father Isaac. Though Esau's descendants bore hostility toward the Children of Israel, we have no record that Esau himself held a grudge toward his brother.

STUDENT PRAYER

Dear Jesus, whenever I am tempted to put my trust in myself remind me always to put my trust in You. Let me never forget that You are my strength and that You are always with me and will never leave me. Apart from You I can accomplish no good thing. Strengthen the faith with which You have blessed me and help me to always trust in You as my Savior and Provider. In Jesus Name I ask this. Amen.

PRESENTATION

This account is much too long to read in class. It would be wise to assign the reading of this section to the older students a week ahead of time. Parents should also be encouraged to read these chapters to the younger children during the week prior. During class-time tell the story in your own words, making notes of the special points you want to be sure to include. It might be easiest to skip any mention of Chapter 34, as well as 35:22.

APPLICATIONS

1. All of man's scheming and planning will always come to naught unless the Lord is working for us. Make the student see that Jacob was only successful because God had determined that he should be successful. Above all stress the role Jacob played in God's master plan for our salvation. God preserved and blessed Jacob because He had promised to send the Promised Savior through the family of Jacob's son, Judah. Note how long-suffering and patient God was with Jacob because of His promise.

2. It is a mistake to try to justify the conduct of Jacob. Jacob was often a deceitful manipulator. It is to God's praise and glory that He makes use of such raw human material to accomplish His goals. It should be a great comfort to each of us to know that God does not cast us away because of our weakness and sin. Have the students list examples both of how they have sinned and also of how God has nevertheless blessed them day by day. We are no better than Jacob.

3. God surely wants us to work, and work hard, but lead the children to see that it is God, not our own strength and intelligence, Who provides all that we have.

4. Jacob's hip reminds us that God sometimes leaves us with painful reminders of lessons He wants us to remember. Have the children think of examples (e.g., someone who drinks and drives may sustain permanent injuries in a crash, etc.).

5. God wants us to "wrestle" with Him in prayer and, like Jacob, will bless us for it.

6. The effect of sins often lives on for many years. Note how the sins Jacob committed against his brother Esau came back to haunt him after many years had passed. In the same way the pain and sorrow we cause by our words and actions today can linger in the hearts and lives of our neighbor for many years.

PASSAGES

These passages can be assigned as memory work or simply discussed in class as to how they fit the lesson.

Lower
Matthew 6:11 - *Give us this day our daily bread.*

1 Peter 5:7 - *Cast all your care upon Him, for He cares for you.*

Psalms 37:5 - *Commit your way to the LORD, Trust also in Him, And He shall bring it to pass.*

Psalms 50:15 - *Call upon Me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you shall glorify Me.*

Middle any of the above and...
Philippians 4:19 - *And my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus.*

Psalms 145:15 - *The eyes of all look expectantly to You, And You give them their food in due season.*

Psalms 33:18 - *Behold, the eye of the LORD is on those who fear Him, On those who hope in His mercy.*

Psalms 37:5 - *Commit your way to the LORD, Trust also in Him, And He shall bring it to pass.*

Upper any of the above and...
Psalms 121:1-2 - *I will lift up my eyes to the hills; From whence comes my help? My help comes from the LORD, Who made heaven and earth.*

Psalms18:2 - *The LORD is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer; My God, my strength, in whom I will trust; My shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold.*

James 1:17 - *Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning.*

HYMN CHOICES

"All Depends On Our Possessing" TLH #425:1 & 5 "I Am Trusting Thee, Lord Jesus" TLH #428:1, 4, 6
"Jesus, My Truth, My Way" TLH #433:1, 4-6

STORY
Joseph Sold into Slavery - Genesis 37

TEACHER PRAYER
Dear Heavenly Father, there are times in my life when I am timid and fearful. I feel at times that my life is out of control and that I am powerless to help myself. I pray that You would use these occasions to remind me that I am *never* in control of my life, You are. Teach me never to trust in my own power or wisdom, but always and only in You. When "bad things" happen to me, grant that I might always acknowledge Your wisdom and goodness and seek to recognize Your love in all that You allow to come into my life. Help me also now to present this vital truth to the students You have placed under my care. To this end bless my presentation of this lesson, in Jesus' name I ask. Amen.

VOCABULARY
Bilhah - Rachel's maidservant, Jacob's concubine, the mother of Dan and Naphtali

Zilpah - Leah's maidservant, Jacob's concubine, the mother of Gad and Asher

binding sheaves - tying the stalks of grain into bundles at harvest time

Shechem - a city at the foot of Mt. Gerizim north of Jerusalem where Jacob first bought land and resided after having worked for his Uncle Laban in Horan

Dothan - an ancient city about 15 miles north and west of Shechem, noted for its excellent grazing land. This was also later the site where Elisha was surrounded by the army of Aram and where the hills beyond were filled with fiery chariots and horses of God (2 Kings 6).

Ishmaelites - nomadic descendants of Abraham's son Ishmael by Sarah's maid, Hagar

Midianites - also at times translated Medanites. Midian and Medan were also sons of Abraham by his wife Keturah.

Shekel - monetary unit used in Israel. Twenty shekels equaled about 8 ounces, and later was set as the amount paid for a youth of Joseph's age who was dedicated to the Lord (Lev. 27:5).

Sackcloth - coarse, rough cloth worn as a symbol of mourning or repentance.

OUTER AIM
Joseph is envied by his brothers and sold into slavery in Egypt.

INNER AIM
God begins His plan to rescue the family of Israel and keep His promise to send the Savior through their ancestors.

BACKGROUND
Jacob showed obvious favoritism among both his wives and his children. Joseph was clearly his favorite, and Jacob's preferential treatment contributed to the sin of his sons. At this time Jacob was living in "the Valley of Hebron." He evidently moved there from Bethlehem after the death of his father Isaac. Jacob had extorted the birthright from his brother Esau and had thus inherited the land previously owned by his grandfather Abraham and father Isaac.

Verses 1-4

- Joseph at this time was 17 years old. It is hard to judge the character of the young man at this point in his life. He was obviously gifted and handsome, trustworthy and well loved by his parents. It is also true, however, that Jacob used the boy to keep tabs on his other sons. Some have condemned Joseph as a tattletale for "bringing a bad report" to his father about his brothers. Yet we have no way of knowing if Joseph was simply carrying out his father's command to observe and report back the truth. The fact that he would report back to Jacob obviously alienated Joseph from the rest of his brothers.
- The bad report Joseph brought to Jacob involved Dan, Naphtali, Asher, and Gad.
- The subject of the "coat of many colors" is widely misunderstood. It has long been thought that Joseph's brothers were simply envious that he had received a handsome coat from his father and that they had not. The brothers were not that petty. The term translated "coat of many colors" is more literally translated "long tunic that reached to the ankles and wrists." Such a garment was worn by royal children of nobler rank, which explains why it angered the brothers so much. By giving Joseph such a garment, Jacob was placing him over the brothers as their superior. This also served to exacerbate Joseph's later dreams of supremacy, as well as his "spying" and reporting back to Jacob.
- "*Hate*" is often best translated as "to love less." In this case, however, it seems clear that the brothers hated Joseph in the more modern understanding of the term, since they could not even "*speak peaceably to him.*"

Verse 5-11

- It is hard to determine if Joseph was simply immature and naive in telling his dreams to his brothers, or if he was exhibiting some cruelty by "rubbing it in" concerning his favored position. The youth was probably naive rather than cruel.
- Though all eleven of Joseph's brothers eventually *did* bow down to him, we have no record that his father and mother ever did so. It is certainly true, however, that Joseph was later honored by all for saving the family from starvation.

Verses 12-17

- Though Jacob and his family had moved (fled) from Shechem after the shameful incident with Dinah, Jacob evidently maintained ownership of the land he had purchased there and used it to pasture his extensive flocks and herds. He may also have purchased land around Dothan, about 15 miles to the northwest, since he also pastured his flocks and herds there.
- Jacob, placing great trust in Joseph, sends him out again to check up on his brothers and the flocks and to report back. Jacob thus causes great stress in the relationship between Joseph and his older brothers. He also takes something of a risk in sending a 17-year-old boy out alone to make the dangerous 45-mile trip to Shechem.
- Joseph is not quite up to the task, for he is found wandering in a field near Shechem and must get help from a stranger. A more experienced man would probably have known to search in Dothan when he did not find the brothers in Shechem.

Verses 18-28

- The hatred of most of the brothers toward Joseph is very great, even to the point of plotting to murder him. It is hard to imagine what family life among Jacob's sons must have been like for the brothers to hate Joseph that much. Perhaps all of the years of favoritism, the ranking in order of affection enroute to meet Esau, etc., were all coming to a head there in the remote fields around Dothan.
- Reuben, both now and later, displays some strength of character and tries to rescue Joseph from his brothers. He was apparently not present when the others sold Joseph into slavery. In fact we have no record that Reuben was ever told exactly what the others had done to Joseph.
- It was Judah's idea to sell Joseph. He was obviously loath to kill his own brother, but despised him

enough to sell him into slavery. We know from their words later (Genesis 42:21) that Joseph, "in great anguish of soul," pleaded with his brothers for his life–to no avail. The hatred and resentment of the brothers ran deep, but so did their guilt after selling him.

Verses 29-36

- Perhaps the greatest cruelty of all was when the brothers allowed their father to believe (for many years) that his beloved Joseph was dead. Jacob mourned for Joseph for several reasons. Not only was he his favorite, Jacob also very likely felt blame and guilt for sending his young son to his death.
- The fact that Jacob refused to be comforted was an indication not only of his love for Joseph, but also of a weakness of faith on his part. It is not right for even a parent to choose to refuse the comfort of knowing that a dearly loved child is safe and at peace with the Lord. Such a prolonged rejection of comfort can easily become a rebellious rejection of the will and wisdom of God.

STUDENT PRAYER

Dear Jesus, whenever something unfortunate happens to me in this life, help me to think about Joseph and all of the difficult things that happened to him. Remind me that just as You never abandoned Joseph, so You will always be with me. Help me to remember that You will allow in my life only that which You will also work out somehow for my spiritual good. Let me to never stop trusting in You alone. In Jesus' name I ask this. Amen.

PRESENTATION

This account is short enough to read in its entirety during the class. Certain parts lend themselves well to acting out (such as when the brothers sold Joseph into slavery and he pleaded for his life).

APPLICATIONS

1. Playing favorites seldom does any good. Those that are preferred can become arrogant and haughty; those who are loved less can develop serious emotional problems and learn to resent those that are loved more. Help the children to apply this truth to their own friends and family. (How would your dad feel if you told him you loved your mom much more than him?

2. Discuss the difference between a tattletale and a conscientious friend. It is not always wrong to "tell on" someone when it is done out of loving concern. Matthew 18 also applies to children. A tattletale, on the other hand, enjoys seeing others get into trouble. Motive is key. Discuss what a child should do or say when a friend says, "I'll tell you something if you promise not to tell." (In general, encourage your students to never accept such conditions. Love might dictate that they do tell.)

3. Show the students that although the dreams Joseph told his brothers were true and real, he showed tactlessness by sharing them. Lead the students to think about others before they speak– to consider how their words might unintentionally hurt someone else.

4. It is never good to let anger turn to hatred nor to allow that hatred to fester in our hearts. Discuss with your students various ways to deal with their anger. (Prayer, talking to the person who has wronged you, getting help from parents or your pastor, etc.)

5. Most importantly, lead your students to recognize that God allowed hardship to come into Joseph's life because He had a master plan in mind. Joseph could not at first see that plan. We often cannot see God's plan. The only solution is to trust God at all times and to constantly remind ourselves that God knows what is best.

PASSAGES

Lower
Luke 6:27 - *But I say to you who hear: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you.*

Colossians 3:9 - *Do not lie to one another, since you have put off the old man with his deeds.*

Psalms 27:14 - *Wait on the LORD; be of good courage, and He shall strengthen your heart.*

Middle any of the above and...
Luke 6:27 - *But I say to you who hear: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you.*

Colossians 3:9 - *Do not lie to one another, since you have put off the old man with his deeds.*

Psalms 27:14 - *Wait on the LORD; be of good courage, and He shall strengthen your heart.*

Upper any of the above and...
Matthew 5:44 - *But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you.*

Isaiah 40:31 - *But those who wait on the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint.*

Romans 6:22, 23 - *But now having been set free from sin, and having become slaves of God, you have your fruit to holiness, and the end, everlasting life. For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

HYMN CHOICES

"Jesus, I My Cross have Taken" (TLH #423:1-2)
"I Am Trusting Thee, Lord Jesus" (TLH #428:1-3)
"My God, My Father, Make Me Strong" (TLH #424:1-4)

STORY
Joseph Goes to Egypt - Genesis 39-41

TEACHER PRAYER
Lord Jesus, please be with me and bless me as I prepare and present this Bible truth to the Lambs You have placed in my care. Help me to always remember that, like Joseph, You always watch over, protect, and guide me and all Your children. Grant to me an extra measure of Your Holy Spirit that I may present the precious treasure of Your love and concern for all to my students in this lesson. Help me to realize that even things I may see as sinful and cannot explain, You will work for good in my life. In Jesus name I ask this. Amen.

VOCABULARY
pharaoh: the king of Egypt. He was also worshiped by his people as a god
lie with me: Potiphar's wife wanted to commit adultery with Joseph (see 6th commandment)
gaunt: thin and bony; angular; emaciated, haggard
famine: a time during which crops failed to grow
magicians: priests in Egypt who were able to perform "magic" by the devil's power (see the section on the plagues)
wise men: scholars trained in the temples and schools of Egypt

OUTER AIM
God watched over and blessed Joseph's life

INNER AIM
As God guided and blessed Joseph's life, so our Lord does for us. Our God watches over and blesses the lives of His children. God guides our lives for our good.

BACKGROUND
Joseph in Potiphar's house (Genesis 39:1-18)
We cannot help but be amazed at the grace of our God. How merciful is our Lord to consent to make use of us completely sinful human beings to carry out His gracious promises. This truth is certainly evident in connection with Jacob and his family. Most families have problems, but the self-inflicted moral problems of Jacob's family were almost beyond compare. One cannot help but wonder if Jacob's moral deficiencies were taught by example to his older children, who were then made to bear the consequences of their sins. Consider just a partial listing of their family crises, which ought to serve as a warning to all of us: Reuben, Jacob's firstborn, commits incest with Bilhah, Jacob's concubine, the mother of Reuben's half-brothers Dan and Naphtali. A local prince sexually assaults Dinah, the daughter of Jacob and Leah. In retaliation Simeon and Levi murder all the male inhabitants of the city of Shechem, and the entire family is forced to flee from their homes. God puts at least two of Jacob's grandchildren to death when Judah's two oldest sons prove too evil to live. Judah then fathers a child by his daughter-in-law Tamar, thinking she was a prostitute.

Yet through all of this we dare not sit in judgment over this family, but rather give praise and glory to God for his great mercy. In His eyes, ***"all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God."*** This Bible story gives evidence of how God turned another great sin on the part of Jacob's sons into a life-saving blessing for all mankind. We rejoin Joseph, who has been sold into slavery by his own brothers.

Joseph was sold to Potiphar, an Egyptian military officer, and was quickly given control of Potiphar's entire household. It was clear even to the Egyptians that the Lord was with Joseph, greatly blessing him.

Though Joseph was a handsome, attractive man, he resisted the temptations that had caused his brothers such misery and shame. When Potiphar's wife tried to seduce Joseph, he gave us a fine example by fleeing from the temptation. Joseph, a faithful servant of both the Lord and Potiphar, gave three reasons for not committing the sin of adultery with Potiphar's wife. 1) He did not want to betray the trust Potiphar had in him. 2) He had no right to take what did not belong to him (Potiphar's wife). 3) Most importantly he would not commit this sin because it was ultimately a sin against his Lord. ***"There is no one greater in this house than I, nor has he kept back anything from me but you, because you are his wife. How then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?"*** Each one of us would do well to contemplate these words of Joseph when tempted to sin.

Though Joseph did the right thing and remained true to both His God and Potiphar, still he was made to suffer. God had plans for Joseph, and Joseph here gives us another fine Christian example by remaining humbly obedient even in the face of such hardship and unjust treatment.

Joseph in Prison (Genesis 39:19-23)
The grace of God demonstrated in the fruits of Joseph's faith cannot be overemphasized here. Though one bad thing after another is visited upon Joseph, still he seeks to serve faithfully whatever his circumstances. Even in prison the Lord was with Joseph. He was shown favor by the jailer and was put in charge of the prisoners and the work they did. God gives us the strength to endure whatever He allows to come into our lives. He makes all things work for our good. Although Potiphar and the jailer are both called "captain of the guard" (literally: "chief executioner") Potiphar was very likely the head of the palace guards (Pharaoh's body guards), while the jailer was the man who both confined the prisoners and carried out the sentences upon the condemned. Those sentences could be terrible indeed, including hanging, impaling, beheading, and flaying alive.

Joseph the Interpreter of Dreams (Genesis 40:1 - 41:36)
Though the Egyptian magicians claimed credit and glory for themselves, Joseph consistently gave all glory to his God for all of the many blessings he had received. This included his ability to interpret dreams.

Again Joseph is wronged when Pharaoh's chief butler is restored to his position, but forgets all about him. He languishes another two full years in prison, and yet we are given no indication that he is anything but faithful to his God. It is often a relatively easy thing to remain faithful during times of brief hardship. Joseph here gives example of patient, humble service in the face of prolonged, terrible, and unjust affliction.

Joseph had to shave his beard prior to appearing before Pharaoh. To come before Pharaoh with a beard would have been an offense. The Egyptians allowed their beards to grow only when in mourning, while the Hebrews shaved their beards only when in mourning.

It took courage for Joseph to tell Pharaoh that God will give him an answer to his dreams since Pharaohs typically regarded themselves as gods.

Joseph as Second in Command in Egypt (Genesis 41:37-57)
Because of his demonstration of wisdom in interpreting Pharaoh's dreams, Joseph was given a position second only to Pharaoh himself. (We might compare his office to Britain's Prime Minister, who is subject only to the King or Queen.)

God gave Joseph not only the ability to interpret dreams, but also the wisdom to rule Egypt. Thus Joseph was finally allowed to see why God had allowed such hardship to come into his life. Countless lives were saved through his actions, most notably the life of his family, through whom the Savior would be born.

STUDENT PRAYER

Lord Jesus, I know You are always with me, guiding me, protecting me, and making all things work out for my good. Please give me strength to overcome temptation, for without You I am helpless against the attacks of the devil. Please help me to give all glory to You for the gifts and abilities with which You have blessed me. Please forgive me all my sins and keep me forever as Your child and heir. In Jesus saving name. Amen.

PRESENTATION

The Bible account presented today is too long to read in class. Assign the reading of this lesson to the students the week before it is presented, and then tell the complete story to your students in your own words. Emphasize how Joseph was a faithful servant (a Christian). Emphasize that it was God who gave Joseph the faith to resist Potiphar's wife, that God gave Joseph the ability to interpret dreams, that God blessed Joseph even while he was in prison; that it was God's plan to make Joseph a ruler in Egypt, and that God guided and blessed Joseph's life according to His plan for the salvation of mankind. ***"For it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure."*** **(Philippians 2:13)**

APPLICATIONS

1. God's grace is at the forefront of this Bible truth. We see again how our great and mighty God always provides for all our needs just as He cared for Joseph. We see His love not only in the forgiveness and salvation He has won for us, but also in His gracious mercy upon us each day of our lives. Our God always provides for all our needs. Our God always guides our lives for good. In this section of Holy Scripture, emphasize to the students especially God's power and grace in their lives. The key phrase in this section which should be emphasized repeatedly is: ***"The LORD was with Joseph."*** That same Lord is also watching over and providing for us!

2. Note that Joseph's entire experience is a picture of the experience of all of Israel in Egypt. As Joseph arrived in Egypt alone and in need, so also did the small family of Israel. As Joseph was first made to thrive and prosper in the house of Potiphar and then unjustly imprisoned, so the nation of Israel first prospered (growing from 70 to over 2,000,000) and was then placed under unjust bondage. As Joseph enjoyed the favor of the people during the good times, so Israel at first enjoyed the favor of the Egyptians and the abundance of Goshen. As the Egyptians were made to recognize the wisdom and power of Joseph's God through God's gift of dream interpretation, so the Egyptians were made to see the power of God through Moses and the plagues.

3. Impress upon the students the constant danger we all face from temptation. Remind them of the terrible consequences of sin and the blessed forgiveness and strength we have in our Lord. Remind them that the best way to overcome temptation (especially sexual temptation) is to flee from it, as did Joseph. (1 Corinthians 6:18)

4. Doing the right thing may cost us dearly. Joseph left behind his coat rather than give in to temptation. More than that, he was sent to prison as a direct result of doing the right thing. Here we should recognize an opportunity to show our students that believers may be made to suffer wrongfully for following what our Lord tells us to do. They should expect to be ridiculed when they do not give in to peer pressure. In dealing with the section on the temptation of Potiphar's wife there is a practical problem how to explain this to the younger children. This topic should be handled in a delicate manner. Sex education should be left to the parents. Neither assume nor instruct sexual awareness. One commentator offers the phrase, "come, be like a husband to me" as a way to explain the temptation. Most follow-up questions should be directed to the student's parents.

PASSAGES

These passages can be assigned as memory work or simply discussed in class as to how they fit the lesson.

Lower
Philippians 4:13 - *I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.*

Hebrews 13:5b - *I will never leave you nor forsake you.*

Acts 17:28a - *For in Him we live and move and have our being.*

Genesis 39:9b - *How then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?*

Middle any of the above and...
1 Corinthians 10:31 - *Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.*

Philippians 2:13 - *For it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure.*

Hebrews 12:10b - *But God disciplines us for our good, that we may share in his holiness.* (NIV)

Upper any of the above and...
1 Corinthians 10:13 - *No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it.*

Romans 8:28 - *And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose.*

Acts 17:28a) - *For in Him we live and move and have our being.*

Isaiah 43:1b-3a - *Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by your name; You are Mine. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; And through the rivers, they shall not overflow you. When you walk through the fire, you shall not be burned, Nor shall the flame scorch you. For I am the LORD your God, The Holy One of Israel, your Savior.*

HYMN CHOICES

"In God, My Faithful God" TLH #526:1
"Jesus, Jesus, Only Jesus" TLH #348:4,5
"Let Us Ever Walk With Jesus" TLH #409:1

STORY
Joseph's Brothers Come to Egypt - Genesis 42

TEACHER PRAYER
Dear Father, I understand and believe that whom the Lord loves He chastens. Grant to me the faith and the strength to accept the discipline You give to me and to understand that it is given out of love for me and my spiritual welfare. Thankful for the forgiveness You have given to me, strengthen me that I might bring needed discipline to the lives of the young people You have placed under my care, and that I might do so with love. In Jesus' name. Amen.

VOCABULARY
calamity: **a**n event that brings terrible loss, lasting distress, or severe affliction; a disaster:
famine: a time when there is not enough food.
interpreter: one who translates orally from one language into another.
provisions: food and other material goods necessary to sustain life.
bereaved: suffering the loss of a loved one

OUTER AIM
The Lord disciplined Joseph's brothers to change their hearts and correct their sinful behavior.

INNER AIM
As the Lord chastened or disciplined Joseph's brothers, so the Lord also chastens or disciplines us because of His love for us. This chastening or discipline we receive from our Lord is a part of the unconditional love, forgiveness, and longsuffering of our God toward us. The Lord disciplines us because He loves us.

BACKGROUND
This story represents the first step in God's chastening of the ten brothers who had treated Joseph so shamefully. Joseph's actions toward his brothers were not done out of hate but love. Joseph, a God-fearing man, was deeply concerned for the spiritual welfare of his brothers. Joseph's acceptance of what God had allowed to come into his life, together with his loving forgiveness toward his brothers, serves as a model for all who would follow.

Verses 1-14
Because there was a great famine in the land, Jacob determined to send his sons to Egypt to buy grain. He did not, however, send Benjamin. Jacob continued to imitate his own father's shameless favoritism. As he had once showed favoritism to Joseph, so also now did he favor Benjamin.

Joseph recognized his brothers, but his brothers did not recognize Joseph. There are several possible explanation for this. 1) Joseph did not look the same, he would have changed much in the twenty or more difficult years that had passed. 2) His brothers never expected to find Joseph occupying such a position of authority. 3) While the Israelites were bearded people, the Egyptians were clean-shaven, often used makeup, and had dramatically different hairstyles and head coverings. 4) Joseph spoke harshly to them in a foreign language. 5) The brothers probably believed that Joseph was dead. Joseph had no doubt wondered often during the past 20 years just when the dreams of his youth would be fulfilled (Cf. Genesis 37:1-11). He recognized their fulfillment immediately when his brothers bowed down to him; yet, in great love, for a time he resisted the temptation to reveal himself and point out the fulfillment of his dreams.

What might at first seem like harsh behavior is, in fact, God using Joseph to chasten or discipline his brothers to bring them to repentance. The first part of this chastening was Joseph's feigned anger with the brothers. The brothers were naturally puzzled and probably quite fearful when Joseph did not accept their explanation that they had come to buy food. Why did this Egyptian ruler single *them* out when there were surely many other strangers doing just what they were doing? The pleading of the brothers was to no avail. How fitting a chastisement! Joseph had pleaded with his brothers to spare his life many years ago, and was rejected, so now the pleading of his brothers is rejected.

Verses 14-24
The brothers were to be tested. They would not be allowed to leave Egypt until the younger brother Benjamin was brought to him. Note the wisdom of Joseph's actions. He wanted to see Benjamin, his only full brother, but he arranged to see him through means that appeared wise and normal to the ten brothers. Joseph was demanding that they prove their whole story by verifying one small part. If they could produce Benjamin, their entire story would be validated.

The brothers were unjustly thrown into prison for three days. Later they would certainly learn that they had likely been held in the same prison where Joseph suffered for several years. Joseph was giving them time to contemplate their sin.

Joseph left them in prison only three days because he did not want his father's large household to suffer from hunger. He would send the brothers back with the exception of Simeon, who would remain as a hostage or prisoner to ensure the brothers return. The others would carry the muchneeded food back to his father's household.

Why Simeon, the second oldest, was chosen is not known, although we have no record of Simeon ever objecting to the harsh treatment of Joseph - as did the oldest brother, Reuben.

That this chastening awoke the consciences of the brothers was made clear when they confessed to each other their guilt regarding Joseph. They remembered how Joseph had pleaded and how they had shown no mercy. Because of their sin long ago, now they were suffering. They came to realize that what they had done to Joseph was no different from murder in the eyes of God.

Once Joseph realized that his brothers were truly sorry for their sin, he wept. His long heartache was finally at an end. He was allowed to see the fruit of God's work in his life. We are hereby reminded that our sins can have far-reaching consequences. Sins don't simply go away. Time does not heal sins, Christ does. How important for us to understand that we daily sin much and are in constant need of forgiveness. We also see here the longsuffering of our merciful and gracious God. He still loved the ten brothers and wanted them brought to repentance. What comfort there is in this fact for each of us. Our Lord loves us and chastens us because He is not willing that any should perish.

Verses 25-38
See here again the loving wisdom of God at work through Joseph. He sent provisions for his brothers so they would have no need to look in their sacks until well on their journey. By returning their money to their sacks, Joseph was seeking to create in them the same sense of helplessness he must have once felt. Again, revenge was not his motive, but a loving concern for their souls. The brothers needed to learn that they did not control their destinies. God did. When life seems unfair, the only course of action is to trust our merciful God.

Reuben tries to put his father at ease and demonstrate his full devotion by offering his two sons as a pledge. It seems obvious to us that, should Jacob lose his son Benjamin, killing two of his own grandchildren could never

give him any comfort. Jacob refused to let Benjamin go, in effect, sentencing Simeon to death. Apparently selfish even in his old age, Jacob was in effect sentencing his whole family to death rather than face the possible loss of Benjamin and the resulting grief he would suffer.

We see here the temporal effects of sin in the lives of Joseph's brothers. What they had done twenty years or so earlier is now causing them great grief. We need to be reminded of this fact as well. The consequences of our sin can be devastating not only in the present but also in the distant future. Yet the Lord is merciful and gracious, we see His mercy in this chastening or disciplining of the brothers. Through these events, the Lord would bring them to repentance and forgiveness. We are once again reminded of what our Lord tells us; "And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose." (Romans 8:28) While we leave Jacob and his sons for now in a state of bitter anguish, the Lord in His grace will turn these events into a most joyful blessing.

STUDENT PRAYER

Dear Jesus, in this Bible truth you have shown me how much I am loved by my Father in heaven. You have shown me that when I am disciplined by my heavenly Father it is done out of love. Help me to accept this discipline and repent of all my sins knowing that in Jesus I have forgiveness. Help me to remember at all times that no matter what I have done wrong, God the Father has freely forgiven me of all my sins for Jesus' sake. Grant me an extra measure of Your Holy Spirit to turn me from my sinful ways to follow You. In Jesus' name I ask this. Amen.

PRESENTATION

The account is probably too long to read. You may prefer to tell this Bible truth in your own words using the written account as your guide. Emphasize that sin does not right itself with the passage of time. God in His wisdom used the famine as an opportunity to discipline Joseph's brothers to bring them to the knowledge and repentance of their sin.

Additional Teacher's Aids

Introduction (Guide listening of story)
(Teacher could come up with an example from his/her life when the Lord brought them blessing through and event the seemed unpleasant at the time.)

Explain to the students some things that are good for us – don't always feel that way at first. Discipline is a prime example of this.

(Ask the students to think (privately) of a time they were in trouble for doing something sinful.)

Yours was probably not a pleasant situation – but it's very important the correction takes place. Sin can separate us from God. Sin is dangerous to our souls. Our sin must be pointed out so we can repent and have it removed through forgiveness.

This process of correction doesn't usually ***feel*** good – but we should realize how good this is for our spiritual health.

It is an act of love when God protects our souls from sin. In today's Bible reading your will hear of God using Joseph to help his brothers see their sins and seek forgiveness!

Answer the Questions

1. List three events from Genesis 42 that helped Joseph's brothers recognize their sins.

(Possible Answers:

1. Treated unfairly as they had treated Joseph, selling him into slavery.
2. Their lives threaten as they had put Joseph's in danger.
3. Simeon bound as Joseph was into slavery.
4. Money being return filled them with fear, as it would look as though they didn't pay for the grain.
5. Brothers pleaded for mercy…like Joseph had.
6. The fact they were to bring the youngest, their father's favorite and endanger his life would certainly remind them of their sin of betraying and hating Joseph.)

2. Quote evidence from Scripture that the brothers recognize their guilt and are being led toward repentance. Be sure to include a reference as well as key words from the passage/s.

(Genesis 42:21,22)

21 Then they said to one another, "**We *are* truly guilty concerning our brother**, for we saw the anguish of his soul when he pleaded with us, and we would not hear; therefore this distress has come upon us."22 And Reuben answered them, saying, "Did I not speak to you, saying, 'Do not sin against the boy'; and you would not listen? Therefore behold, his blood is now required of us.")

Discuss

1. If Joseph had simply revealed himself to his brothers what may have remained? (Perhaps they would've feared Joseph and not had godly fear repentance from their guilt.)

2. Discuss different ways in which you have been corrected in an attempt to identify your sin and move you toward godly repentance. (Spanking, grounding, bible passages, lecture, jail, removing privileges…)

3. Discuss these sayings from God's Little Instruction Book Volumes I, II, & III.
"Too many parents are not on spanking terms with their children."
Basis – Proverbs 13:24
"Whenever a man is ready to uncover his sins, God is always ready to cover them."
Basis – Proverbs 28:13

4. Discuss how radiation treatment of cancer can actually kills cells and makes people sick…but gets rid of the life threatening cancer. Discuss how this is like our inner aim. (The treatment feels bad, damages cells…but saves lives.)

5. Discuss how in muscle building the muscle cells are actually damaged before they come back stronger than they were before lifting weights. Discuss how this might be like our inner aim. (Cells are damaged; it hurts; yet we are stronger because of it.)

Concordance Activity
Search for passages that emphasize the Lord chastises those He loves. Search for passages that emphasize chastisement as a good thing.

Proverbs 3:11,12
My son, do not despise the chastening of the LORD, nor detest His correction;12 For whom the LORD loves He corrects, just as a father the son *in whom* he delights.

Titus 1:13
This testimony is true. Therefore rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith,

Hebrews 12:10,11
For they indeed for a few days chastened *us* as seemed *best* to them, but He for *our* profit, that *we* may be partakers of His holiness.11 Now no chastening seems to be joyful for the present, but painful; nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.

Proverbs 13:24
He who spares his rod hates his son, but he who loves him disciplines him promptly.

Proverbs 19:18
Chasten your son while there is hope, and do not set your heart on his destruction.

Proverbs 22:15
Foolishness *is* bound up in the heart of a child; The rod of correction will drive it far from him.

APPLICATIONS

1. As was the case with Joseph's brothers, our Lord does not give up on us. His love and patience toward us is abundantly evident.
2. It seems that people in our day have a very relaxed attitude toward sin. Emphasize to your students that sin is a terrible destroyer. This is evident in the Bible truth laid out before us. The sin of Joseph's brothers had farreaching effects. Their sin had not only destroyed the relationship between Joseph and his brothers, their sin had separated them from their Father in heaven. Our Lord in this Bible story leads us once again to understand the terrible consequences of sin. It doesn't just go away. If left unchecked it will destroy individuals, families, and most importantly our relationship with God and our salvation.
3. Our Lord demonstrates His love for all mankind in His chastening efforts to lead Joseph's brothers to repentance. The promised Messiah was to be born from this family, specifically from the tribe of Judah. In preserving this family, God was working to preserve all mankind.
4. God's grace is at the forefront of this Bible story. If God had not cared about Joseph's brothers He would not have chastened them. God disciplines us out of love. Our Lord may allow things to come upon us in this life to lead us to repentance, and to strengthen the faith He has created in us. God's disciplining of us is a blessing. God shows His love through his chastising. Parents are called upon to do the same. It has been said that one of the greatest forms of child abuse is lack of discipline. Parents are commanded by God to offer this same loving correction to the children God has entrusted to their care. You might also use this section to teach the students about true repentance, and the difference between confession and repentance. A man might confess a transgression without ever repenting of it. Godly sorrow over sin is more than sorrow over getting caught. True repentance involves a faithful turning *away* from sin and turning *to* God for forgiveness. Use Judas and Peter to contrast the difference between being sorry and confessing sin (Judas) and true repentance (Peter).

PASSAGES

These passages can be assigned as memory work or simply discussed in class as to how they fit the lesson.

Lower
Psalms 94:12 - *Blessed is the man whom You instruct, O LORD, And teach out of Your law,*
Hebrews 12:6 - *For whom the LORD loves He chastens, And scourges every son whom He receives.*
Revelation 3:19 - *As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. Therefore be zealous and repent.*

Middle any of the above and...
Proverbs 13:24 - *He who spares his rod hates his son, but he who loves him disciplines him promptly.*

Upper any of the above and...
Proverbs 19:18 - *Chasten your son while there is hope, and do not set your heart on his destruction.*

HYMN CHOICES

"Jesus Sinners Doth Receive" (TLH #324:1-2)
"Chief Of Sinners Though I Be" (TLH #342:1 & 5)

STORY
Joseph's Brothers Come to Egypt Again - Genesis 43-45

TEACHER PRAYER
Guide and bless me, dear Savior, so that I never forget that all things work together for good to those who love You. Bless me as I bring this truth to Your lambs. Grant me the faith, strength, and patience I need to be faithful in my calling to the lambs You have placed under my care. In Jesus' saving name. Amen.

VOCABULARY
famine: a time in which crops failed to grow and there was not enough food

surety: one who will be responsible for another; a guarantee

bereaved: to be deprived of something or someone, especially by death

repaid evil for good: to do something evil to someone who has done good to you; in this case stealing from a man who showed kindness

abomination: something that causes intense loathing or disgust in another.

divination: the act of foretelling future events

OUTER AIM
How God provided for Joseph's family to come to Egypt. Why God sent Jacob's family to Egypt.

INNER AIM
God sent Jacob and his family to Egypt to make a great nation of them. From this people (specifically Judah) the Savior Jesus would come. As God worked all things for the good of His people, so our Lord still does for us today. ***"And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose."*** **(Romans 8:28)**

BACKGROUND
The famine again brought the brothers to Egypt to buy grain. (Only ten brothers made the trip since Joseph and Simeon were already in Egypt). Unknown to the brothers their fate rested in the hands of Joseph, whom they had sold into slavery some twenty-odd years earlier. Joseph wanted to be certain that they had not only truly repented of their sins against him, but that they had also changed their sinful, selfish ways. He tested them by pretending to threaten Benjamin, their youngest brother. Joseph revealed himself to his brothers when they demonstrated that they would sacrifice themselves rather than see harm come to Benjamin. This was indication that a profound change had been worked in their hearts. The reunion that followed was therefore heartwarming and complete without reservation of any kind.

Certainly one will want to discuss the forgiveness the brothers received and the joy at finding out their brother was alive. What relief they must have felt in knowing that the sin that had been burning in their hearts was forgiven. Joseph certainly had the power and could have made his brothers suffer greatly for their sin. We see in Joseph a true man of God who was both loving and forgiving. The chastening of the Lord through Joseph had brought the brothers to repentance and forgiveness. The brothers could now see, by faith, that God had sent Joseph to save lives. The fact that God turned their evil plan to serve His purpose does not excuse the sin they committed. It does demonstrate to

us that our loving and gracious God is merciful and long suffering toward us all. God does not want anyone to die in unbelief.

Chapter 43
Jacob again demonstrates some of the same character flaws that marked his early years. He continues to allow one son, Simeon, to suffer in Egypt rather than risk his cherished son Benjamin in his mind the only living son of his beloved Rachel. He then blames his other sons for telling the truth to the "Egyptian ruler" (Joseph) when he asked them about other sons. Jacob then resorts to the tried and true tactic of gifting himself into the good favor of another (remember his attempt to pacify his brother Esau in Genesis 32). Finally Jacob realizes that he has no choice but to trust in the Lord and send Benjamin with his brothers. He is still wrestling with God.

Though Joseph invited his brothers to dine with him, they, the Egyptians, and Joseph himself were all actually served in different areas of Joseph's house to preserve proper protocol. It was an abomination for Egyptians to dine directly with foreigners.

The brothers were filled with wonder when they were seated according to age. They had evidently never revealed their relative ages to the Egyptians and very likely believed that "the Egyptian ruler" must have determined this by divination.

Joseph again tested his older brothers by showing favoritism to Benjamin. He was no doubt observing them closely for signs of the old jealousy he remember all too well.

Chapter 44
By implicating Benjamin for the theft of the ruler's cup, Joseph was arranging one final test for his brothers. He gave them the chance to escape with their lives if they would give up Benjamin. The brothers he had known in his youth would have gladly accepted Joseph's offer. His brothers now demonstrated the change that had been wrought in them by not only refusing to give up Benjamin but also by offering to take his place.

In Judah we see not only a changed man but also a picture of his most famous Descendant. As Judah was willing to sacrifice himself for the sake of both his brother Benjamin and his father, so Christ Jesus willingly sacrificed himself for all mankind.

Chapter 45
The moment of revelation was a private moment between Joseph and his brothers, therefore he orders all Egyptians from the room. Like Moses after him, living the life of a wealthy, powerful Egyptian had not changed Joseph's allegiance.

Joseph demonstrates no lingering animosity toward his brothers. He recognized the hand of God in what had happened and was thus able to truly forgive them.

There has been some attempt in modern times to characterize the land of Goshen as substandard land passed off to the Children of Israel as something valuable. This land was in fact very valuable and remains fertile to this day. The area was given to Joseph's family at a time when Joseph was at the height of his power in Egypt. All of Egypt, from Pharaoh on down, looked with grateful eyes upon Joseph as their national savior. It seems unlikely they would have rewarded him with poor land or that Joseph, second only to Pharaoh, would have accepted a poor region for his family. The picture of Jacob's sons revealing the news to their father that Joseph was alive is one of the

most poignant and heartwarming in all of the Bible. We should view this scene as but a small taste of the indescribable joy all Christians will one day experience in heaven.

STUDENT PRAYER

Lord Jesus, help me to remember always that You make all things work for the good of Your children. Make me realize the love and mercy You have for me. May I be ever grateful for all you have given me especially for the forgiveness and salvation through my Savior Jesus. Lord, strengthen the faith You have given me and keep me ever faithful. Fill me with Your Holy Spirit and grant me the courage to share the message of forgiveness and salvation with others. In Jesus name. Amen

PRESENTATION

The account is too long to read in class. It will be best if you tell this Bible truth in your own words using the written account as your guide. Emphasize that God worked all things for good for Jacob's family; and that He still does that for us today. God sent Jacob's family to Egypt to make a great nation of them. Above all, emphasize that it was from this nation, the Children of Israel (specifically the tribe of Judah) that the Savior of the world would come.

APPLICATION

1. God's grace is at the forefront of this Bible story. We see clearly the love and forgiveness He has for us and that we should have for one another. Emphasize in the first part of this lesson the repentance of the brothers (turning from sin and in faith turning to God for forgiveness). Emphasize the forgiving nature of our Lord and the excellent example provided by Joseph. To demonstrate how difficult it might be to freely forgive someone who actually does great harm to us, try to get your students to imagine how they would act and feel if they had been in Joseph's place. Because of our sinful nature we have a tendency to want to get even. Show the students how Joseph truly acted in a God-pleasing manner. Show them how in faith Joseph realized that what had happened to him God worked for the good of him and his family. Encourage them to look for God's hand in everything that happens to them, good and bad.

2. There are times when we can't understand how something can be working for our good (sickness, sadness, etc.) and when it is very difficult for us to understand why God allowed something to happen to us or to someone we love. In faith (believing what we cannot prove) we cling only to the promise of our Lord: ***"And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose."*** (Romans 8:28) We will probably not understand why God allows what He does allow until we arrive in heaven.

3. Impress upon the students that we are all members of a family through our faith in Jesus. Our Lord gives many wonderful blessings to us as part of His family. Have the children give examples (e.g., forgiveness, salvation, peace, comfort, fellowship, confirmation class, earthly blessings, etc.) When we are brought to faith in Jesus as our Savior, God becomes our dear Father and we His dear children. What a precious blessing it is to know that we are members of God's family through Spirit-worked faith in Jesus Christ.

4. Ask the children to think of a Christian love done who has" fallen asleep in the Lord." Remind the student that one day he or she will be united with that loved one in heaven. This is only possible because Jesus has paid for all of our sins on the cross.

Additional Teacher's Aids

What God's Word Tells Us - Discuss the following.
(Try to lead discussion of the Lord's hand in our lives turning things we thought we bad into good.)

(Examples: Woman is followed by a trucker in the middle of the night after she leaves a gas station. She can't seem to shake him even when she exits and reenters the highway. Finally she stops at another gas station and runs inside to call the police, as she does the trucker goes to the her car and pulls a man out of the back seat! She felt the trucker was bad…now she understands how he is good. Many events in our lives can be like this.

I can remember a difficult break up in high school. I felt empty, the only thing that seem to fill the void was the time I spent in devotion with my Lord. This bad break up definitely strengthened my relationship with the Lord. How about the man who was a slave, then falsely imprisoned, and ended up ruling…okay we're back to Joseph.)

Prayer ACTivity

Guide the students is writing a group prayer that reiterates main lessons of the day. This acrostic approach can help the students remember how to build a prayer.

ACTS

I've found it helpful to assign groups to work on each 'letter' of the prayer and then use an overhead projector transparency and have a leader from each group write their part of the prayer where everyone can see and pray it at the end of class. We also used a secretary to keep a log of each prayer we wrote and the reference it was based on with the intention of printing a class prayer booklet.

A (Acknowledge who you are praying to along with a characteristic) Ex -
Dear just and forgiving Father in Heaven.

C (Confess)
Ex. - We admit that we sinfully resist the correction Your Word. We at times lack the wisdom to see that it is out of love for our souls that You instruct our parents to punish us.

T (Thank)
Ex. - We praise You for Your indescribable love that led You to send Your Son to save us from our sins and for those you have placed over us to help us recognize our need for repentance. **S** (Supplicate - ask)
Ex. - We ask for the continued blessing of the Holy Spirit to lead us to confess and repent of our sins and that through Christ we may one day be with You in heaven. Amen.

PASSAGES

These passages can be assigned as memory work or simply discussed in class as to how they fit the lesson.

Lower
Psalms 103:8 - *The LORD is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in mercy.*

Romans 8:28 - *And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose.*

Galatians 3:26 - *For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus.*

Middle

Luke 6:27 - *But I say to you who hear: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you.*

Romans 8:28 - *And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose.*

Ephesians 4:32 - *And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God in Christ forgave you.*

Upper

Psalms 103:8 - *The LORD is merciful and gracious, Slow to anger, and abounding in mercy.*

Jeremiah 31:34 - *No more shall every man teach his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying,*

'Know the LORD,' for they all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them, says the LORD. For I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more.

Romans 8:28 - *And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose.*

HYMN CHOICES

"Oh, Blest the House, Whate'er Befall" TLH #625:1, 2
"Jesus, I My Cross Have Taken" TLH #423:3
"My Spirit On Thy Care" TLH #435:1 & 4
"With The Lord Begin Thy Task" TLH #540:1 & 4

STORY
Jacob and His Family Live In Egypt - Genesis 46-50

TEACHER PRAYER
Lord God, we thank You for showing us Your loving plan for our salvation. Though mankind, lost in sin, does evil things yet You continue to show mercy and turn evil into good for the sake of Your kingdom and our salvation. Oh Lord, fill us with Your Spirit as we study Your gracious Word together that Your name may be magnified in our hearts and that Your kingdom come to us all. In Your holy name we pray. Amen

VOCABULARY
Goshen - an especially fertile part of Northern Egypt located on the eastern side of the Nile River.

Israel - Prince with God - a name given to Jacob by God (Gen. 32:28)

lion's whelp - a young lion or cub (Gen. 49:9)

From the prey, my son, you have gone up - You are a conquerer and proceed from the battle victorious.

Shiloh - Prince of Peace

OUTER AIM
God directs Jacob to journey to Egypt

INNER AIM
God builds and preserves His chosen nation from which the Christ would be born.

BACKGROUND
(*Rupprecht Bible History References Vol. 1, pp.130-139)*
Many years had passed since Joseph had been sold into slavery by his brothers. Jacob (Israel) was now 130 years old. The Lord directed him to make the journey to Egypt because of the famine in his homeland. There the Lord promised to make of him a great nation. With Joseph as His key human instrument, God preserved alive His chosen people and builds the nation which would bring forth the Messiah.

Gen. 46 vs. 1-5; 26,27.
As Jacob worshiped at Beersheba, God spoke to Him directing him to go down to Egypt. God promised to be with him and bring him back to his homeland. Jacob's family (including Joseph and his family) numbered 70 souls.

vs. 28-30
The emotional meeting between Jacob and his son Joseph.

Gen. 47 vs. 1-12
Pharaoh, the Ruler of Egypt, granted Jacob's family the privilege to dwell in the most fertile part of Egypt, the land of Goshen, with all of their flocks and herds.

vs. 27-38
Jacob and his family prospered in the land of Goshen. Jacob asked Joseph to promise to bury him in the land of Israel together with his forefathers.

Gen. 48
Jacob, who was about to die, blessed the two sons of Joseph, Manaseh and Ephraim.

Gen. 49 (especially 8-12)
Jacob called his sons together and predicted what would befall them in the days ahead. The prediction for Judah, who would be the carrier of the promise of the Messiah, is especially significant.

Gen. 49:33; 50:1-9
Jacob died in Egypt. He was 147 years old. He was transported to Israel and buried there.

Gen. 50:15-26
Confession of guilt by the brothers and the assurance of forgiveness by Joseph. Joseph died in Egypt and was buried there. He was 110 years old.

STUDENT PRAYER

Heavenly Father, Your Word is so precious to us because there we see Your hand in the lives of Your people down through the generations. You have always made all things work together for the good of those that love You. As we see these things we pray that You will give us Your Spirit that we may recognize Your hand in our lives guiding, leading and blessing us each day. In Your loving name we pray. Amen

PRESENTATION

Briefly review the previous lesson especially since it naturally flows into this lesson. The first point of primary emphasis should be based upon those special and meaningful words of faith spoken by Joseph to his brothers: "You meant evil against me, but God meant it for good...." God watched over Joseph and in the face of the terrible Godless actions of his brothers, Joseph was blessed and became a human instrument through which God carried out His promise of the Messiah.

The second primary point of emphasis should be the blessing given to Judah found in Gen. 49:8-12. These words show the Messianic line carried on in Judah (cf. Mat. 1:2&3 and Luke 3:33&34) The Messianic promise is primary to the proper understanding and teaching of this lesson. Without that emphasis these five chapters in Genesis become merely a nice story about Jacob and his family. It is much more than that!

APPLICATIONS

God's plan of salvation for sinful mankind is carried out in spite of the evil intentions and actions of man. So it is today. God's continual care for His people in Christ Jesus is certain regardless of the opposition of Satan and a sinful world.

God's people are not perfect. Their sinful flesh prodded by Satan is constantly threatening to get in the way of God's good and gracious will. We all need God's forgiveness every day of our lives.. And just as God forgives us, so we should pray that our Lord will give us His Spirit and strengthen us that we may forgive as He has forgiven us.

PASSAGES

These passages can be assigned as memory work or simply discussed in class as to how they fit the lesson.

Lower
Romans 8:28 - *And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose.*

Matthew 6:12 - *And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.*

Middle any of the above and...
Ephesians 4:32 - *And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God for Christ's sake also forgave you.*

Proverbs 3:5-6 - *Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths.*

Upper any of the above and...
Luke 17:3-5 - *Take heed to yourselves. If your brother sins against you, rebuke him; and if he repents, forgive him. And if he sins against you seven times in a day, and seven times in a day returns to you, saying,' I repent,' you shall forgive him.*

HYMN CHOICES

"I Am Trusting Thee Lord Jesus" (TLH #428)
"How Firm A Foundation" (TLH #427)
"Lord Of My Life Whose Tender Care" (TLH #24)
"Jesus Lead Thou On" (TLH 410)

STORY
Early Life of Moses - Exodus 1:1 - 2:10

TEACHER PRAYER
Lord God, be with me, Your servant, as I bring Your Word of Truth to those placed into my charge. Fill me with Your Spirit that I may lead them to see Your great love for us all in this world of sin. Help me to show them Your wondrous love in Christ Jesus in Whom we are delivered from the bondage of sin. Thus, may Your name be glorified through me and Your kingdom come to many. In the name of Jesus Christ my Savior and Lord. Amen

VOCABULARY
Taskmasters - Overseers who dealt harshly
Midwives - A woman who aided another in child birth
Ark - Basket of reeds and water proofing material (pitch)
Midian - Midian was a son of Abraham by Keturah (Gen. 25:1-2)

OUTER AIM
God's people suffered under Pharaoh and the cruel taskmasters of Egypt

INNER AIM
God strengthens His people to do His will and wait with confidence and faith for their deliverance.

BACKGROUND
(Rupprecht Bible History References Vol. 1, pp. 146-151)
Jacob's family of seventy multiplied as God blessed them. A nation is brought into being. It is estimated that the descendants of Jacob now numbered between two and three million people. This became a deep concern of the Egyptian government. The people of Israel were good workers and provided an excellent work force for the Egyptians.

Nevertheless, there arose a fear that the people of Israel would become more powerful than the Egyptians and dominate them. This resulted in putting in place various work-related practices that grievously burdened the people of Israel. Besides, they tried to limit the growth of the nation of Israel or possibly bring it to extinction. All of the male infants were to be killed at birth. So God began His plan of deliverance of the people of Israel.

vs. 1-7
About 350 years had passed since Jacob's family entered Egypt.

vs. 8-14
Obviously the good relationship that existed between Joseph and Pharaoh was in the distant past. The Egyptian government began to fear the population growth of the people of Israel in the land of Goshen. Would they grow to such an extent that they would become a threat to the nation of Egypt? To make certain this would not happen the following practices were introduced:

- Cruel taskmasters were placed over them
- Work loads were increased
- Harsh treatment became extreme
- "Hard bondage-in mortars, in brick, and in all manner of service in the field" was their lot.

The ancient Egyptians are known for their genius in erecting massive structures. Some of these huge buildings are still intact and have stood for about five-thousand years. During their erection, thousands of men worked for many years.

Brick making was an extremely laborious task. Clay was dug out of the swamps, worked into large square bricks and placed in the sun to dry. Next, it is thought by some that they were placed into huge kilns and exposed to intense heat for several days. They became as hard as stone.

vs. 15-22

- Hebrew midwives were instructed to kill all of the male offspring
- When the midwives who feared God refused to kill the male offspring, Pharaoh commanded the Egyptians to cast every male child of the Hebrew people into the river.

This might seem strange, but we can well imagine the racist climate which could have been perpetuated by Pharaoh against the people of Israel, for the Hebrews worshipped the one true God and would not join the Egyptians in their idolatry. They likely stayed within their own community and married their own.

Not integrating with the Egyptians likely resulted in a natural resentment against them. It may have become quite easy to convince the Egyptians to carry out such atrocity against these "foreign" people.

2 vs. 1-10

- A man and wife of the house of Levi conceived and bore a son and hid him three months.
- When hiding him became impossible the mother made a little water tight basket, placed her son in it and nestled it in the reeds by the river bank.
- The baby's sister watched over the child from a distance.
- Pharaoh's daughter bathed in the river and spotted the basket and sent a maid to get it.
- They found the male baby. He wept. She felt sorry for the little Hebrew child.
- The baby's sister came and offered to bring a Hebrew woman who could nurse the child.
- Pharaoh's daughter agreed and so the mother of the baby was brought and became the one to care for her own son. The child officially became the son of Pharaoh's daughter who called him Moses.

STUDENT PRAYER

Lord God, You always hear the cry of Your people and come to deliver them. We praise You for coming to us by sending us a Child, Your Son, Christ Jesus. By Him You have delivered us from the bondage of sin, death, hell and the power of the devil. We thank You for this undeserved mercy. And we pray that You will fill us with Your Spirit that do not judge people by the color of their skin or their nationality. Help us rather to share Your love with all people. And so may we live a life of thankfulness by our words and actions. In the name of Jesus we pray. Amen.

PRESENTATION

Because we live in a sinful world, God's people may suffer under cruel and Godless people. We may have no choice but to bear the burdens placed upon us. As we pray to our gracious God we can rest assured that He will deliver us in His own way and time. (Cf. II Tim. 3:10,11) However, regardless of our circumstances we must always obey God rather than man no matter how that will affect us. The Hebrew midwives would not kill the male babies that were born. They were constrained to obey God rather than man.

God saw the mistreatment of His people and planned their deliverance. Notice how God works within the circumstances that exist. In spite of the Egyptian government, God moves people to do what is right. He enters into the very palaces of the Egyptian government to raise up a leader for His people.

APPLICATIONS

1. Today our government permits the killing of unborn infants. This is called abortion. We believe our government is permitting ungodly action. We oppose this in any way we can.

2. Discuss some of the ways that we can legally do this individually and together with fellow believers.

3. Unlike the Egyptian government our government does not require abortion. Should that ever become the case we would disobey our government.

4. **Examples of murder**
   a. *Abortion*: murder of an unborn baby
   b. *Mercy death*: ending the life of a person who is terminally ill--also called "euthanasia." *Lynching*: ending a person's life by taking the law into one's own hands.
   c. *Assassination*: violent murder of a prominent person or a government official for political reasons.
   d. *Homicide*: another word for "murder." "-cide" at the end of a word means "kill" (patricide, genocide, fratricide, etc). (Martin Luther's Small Catechism, Pastor Mike Sydow, 1988, p.54)

5. God planned our deliverance from the bondage of sin, death, hell and the power of Satan already in the Garden of Eden. In spite of all of the opposition of Satan, the unbelieving world and our sinful flesh God promised, planned and fulfilled His promise of our deliverance in Christ Jesus. We are not in His kingdom of grace and are looking forward to our final deliverance from this world of sin when we are ushered into the mansions of heaven prepared for us all in Christ Jesus.

6. We must realize how serious it is to judge others simply because they are different from us in some way. We need to ask ourselves, "Does God love them?" Well, if God loves them we ought to love them also.

PASSAGES

These passages can be assigned as memory work or simply discussed in class as to how they fit the lesson.

Lower
Exodus 20:13 - *You shall not murder,*
Acts 5:29 - *We ought to obey God rather than men.*

Middle any of the above and...
Romans 8:31b - *If God is for us who can be against us?* (Cf. Rm. 8:31-39)
Psalm 37:5 - *Commit your way to the LORD, trust also in Him, and He shall bring it to pass.* (Cf. Ps. 37:5-15)

Upper any of the above and...
I John 3:18 - *My little children, let us not love in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth.* Isaiah 41:10

HYMN CHOICES

"If Thou But Suffer God To Guide Thee" (TLH #518)
"If God Himself Be For Me" (TLH #528)
"Commit Whatever Grieves Thee" (TLH #520)
"A Mighty Fortress Is Our God" (TLH #262)

STORY
The Call of Moses - Exodus 2:11 - 4:31

TEACHER PRAYER
Lord God, I thank You that You have called me into Your kingdom and poured out Your blessings of forgiving love in Christ Jesus upon me. Now, as Your disciple devoted to You I desire to serve You with
my whole heart. Be with me, oh, Lord, as I serve You in leading the little children to You who have been placed into my charge as a teacher in Your kingdom of grace. Give me Your Spirit that I may serve You well in helping them to see You as their loving Savior and Lord. In the name of Jesus Christ my Savior. Amen

VOCABULARY
rod - shepherd's staff.
Angel of the Lord - Some believe this refers to the second person of the Trinity, the Son
I AM THAT I AM - The name given to God by Himself - the one unchangeable, ever-living and eternal God of heaven and earth.

OUTER AIM
Moses receives a special call from God.

INNER AIM
The Lord calls human instruments to carry out the work of His kingdom.

BACKGROUND
(Rupprecht Bible History References, Vol. 1, pp. 152-156)
Moses grew up in the palace of the Pharaoh. He was cared for like a son of Pharaoh's daughter. There he grew up amidst the gorgeous surroundings and atmosphere of princely living. He was given what was considered to be the best education available. Egyptian history, culture and religion was to be part of the life of Moses. He learned of the worship of false gods such as the sun god Ra and other deities that were invented by the Egyptians. We can only imagine the deep conflict which must have existed between what he was learning as an Egyptian and what his mother had taught him as a child. 2:11-15

Although he must have been aware of the situation under which his fellow Hebrews labored, yet we are told that when he was forty years of age (Acts 7:23) he observed the especially cruel treatment of one of the children of Israel. He became enraged by the beating which he observed and killed the Egyptian. When Moses became aware that Pharaoh heard of it, he left Egypt and fled for his life to Midian. Midian lies in Arabia near the northeastern arm of the Red Sea. Was Moses right in committing this murder? Certainly not. Even though coming to the aid of his people was evidently very strong in his mind and heart, he was approaching the matter, not according to the will of God but according to his own plan of action. (Acts 7:25) 2:16 - 22

Moses, who grew up in luxury, now found himself in the rural desert land of Midian. There he became a shepherd of the flocks of Reuel (also called Jethro 3:1; 4:18; Numbers 10:29) the priest of Midian and eventually married his daughter Zipporah.2:23 - 3:10. Forty years had passed (Acts 7:30) since Moses had left Egypt. He was now eighty years of age and continued as a shepherd. His shepherding led him southward as far as Mt. Horeb (Mt. Sinai). There God choose to speak to Moses out of a burning bush with one request: "I will send you to Pharaoh that you may bring My people, the children of Israel, out of Egypt." (Ex. 3:10) (3:11 - 4:17)

Moses had four serious considerations:
1. "Who am I?"
2. "What is His name?" ("Who shall I say has sent me?")
3. "They will not believe me."
4. "I am slow of speech." (Ex. 4:18 - 31)

Finally, Moses returns to Egypt as deliverer of the children of Israel according to the will of God. The people
bow their heads and worship their gracious God.

STUDENT PRAYER

Heavenly Father, I thank You for calling me into Your kingdom and blessing me with Your forgiveness and love. I pray that You will fill me with Your Spirit that I may gladly serve You in any way I can that Your name may be glorified and Your kingdom come to many. In Your holy name I pray.

PRESENTATION

From the birth of Moses and his discovery in the reeds by the Princess to his calling as deliverer of the Children of Israel the Lord God guides, leads and brings about happenings according to His will. Yet, Moses was not like a puppet on a string. He had his weaknesses as well as his strengths. Nevertheless, the Lord God used him to accomplish what He willed in His own way and time.

To accomplish His purpose God used others who would aid Moses in carrying out His plan. The mother of Moses apparently taught him all about the one true God and the promises of the Messiah. God used Aaron, the brother of Moses, to be the "spokesman to the people" on behalf of Moses.

God's hand in the life of Moses was obviously operative in accomplishing His plan for His people and finally His plan of salvation for the whole world.

APPLICATIONS

What do the questions of Moses found in Ex. 3:11 and 4:17 reveal about this man who has now arrived at the age of 80 years?

Consider such attributes as confidence, courage and faith in the life of a Christian. Discuss the significance of the name God gives to Himself, I AM.

All of us have weaknesses as well as strengths. God uses us just as we are for the work of His kingdom. Discuss abilities that God has given each of us and how we might use them to glorify and praise God.

How does God overcome weaknesses in each of us?

PASSAGES

These passages can be assigned as memory work or simply discussed in class as to how they fit the lesson.

Lower

Isaiah 49:15 - *Can a woman forget her nursing child, and not have compassion on the son of her womb?Surely they may forget, yet I will not forget you.*

Peter 5:5b - *God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble.*

Isaiah 41:10 - *Fear not, for I am with you, be not dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, yes, I will help you, I will uphold you with My righteous right hand.*

Middle any of the above and...

Acts 7:22 - *And Moses was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and was mighty in words and deeds.*

Upper any of the above and...

Hebrews 11:24-25 - *By faith Moses, when he became of age, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin,*

HYMN CHOICES

"Take My Life and Let It Be" (TLH #400)
"Oh, That The Lord Would Guide My Ways" (TLH #416)
"The King Of Love" (TLH #431)
"What Is The World To Me" (TLH #430)

STORY
The Plagues - Exodus 5-10

TEACHER PRAYER
Lord God, thank You for the blessing of giving Your Word to us and our children. It helps us so much to see Your hand in the lives of Your people in former generations. Oh Lord, Your will is always done. For this we praise You every day. Help us always to pray, "Your will is our will, Lord." Fill me with Your Spirit that I may lead those entrusted into my charge willingly and faithfully. Help me to place their hand in Yours as they deal with life in a sinful world. And so may they live to praise You. In our Savior's name I pray. Amen

VOCABULARY
hardened heart - Man hardens his own heart by obstinately resisting God. Finally, God may withdraw His Spirit of Grace from such an individual and abandon him to the sorry perverseness of his own sinful heart. (Cf. Acts 7:51)

OUTER AIM
God's will is always done.

INNER AIM
All who fight against God will be put to shame in time and finally, if they do not repent, eternally.

BACKGROUND
(Rupprecht Bible History References, Vol. 1, pp. 156-160)
For Moses and Aaron to meet with Pharaoh was a difficult and dangerous undertaking. Moses and Aaron were of the Hebrew people who were nothing but slaves to Pharaoh. Secondly, there could well have been some officers in the service of Pharaoh who could possibly recognize the man who slayed the Egyptian and then fled. Also, compare this with the difficulties a citizen would encounter in trying to gain an audience with the president of the U.S. not to mention the difficulties of a non-citizen.

For Moses to seek permission for his people to worship in the wilderness, it may not seem like a huge request. Yet, we must realize that the Egyptians had their gods and, generally cared nothing for the Lord God of the Hebrew people. Besides, the Pharaoh who was an absolute monarch certainly felt no obligations to grant such a request to these slaves as minor as it might seem. Actually, it seemed to backfire. Pharaoh used this request as an excuse to increase the work load of the Hebrew people.

If the slaves had time for such things as worship, which he likely considered unimportant, then they must not have enough to do. Straw was used as a binding material to help hold the clay together as the bricks dried in the sun. Secondly, some believe straw was used to fuel huge kilns used to fire the bricks to make them as hard as stone. This took huge amounts of straw and required a tremendous amount of man hours to gather and then prepare it for use in brick making.

This work which had been done by others was now added to the work load of the people of Israel. The people became angry and blamed Moses whose promise of deliverance seemed to be nothing but an idle dream.

The plagues demonstrated the power and judgment of God. The Egyptian sorcerers in league with the devil copied Aaron. This seemed to have an influence on Pharaoh. Yet, when their rods were swallowed by Aaron's, the power of God over the devil and his servants is clearly demonstrated.

1. Ch. 7:14-25 First Plague: Blood
    a. The Nile was sacred to the Egyptians
    b. Their lives depended upon it
        i. Irrigation for crops
        ii. Deposits of silt for fertilizer
        iii. Fish for food
        iv. Water for drinking. cooking, bathing, brick making, etc.
2. Ch. 8:1-15 Second Plague: Frogs
3. Ch. 8:16-19 Third Plague: Lice
4. Ch. 8:20-32 Fourth Plague: Flies
5. Ch. 9:1-7 Fifth Plague: Disease on Beasts
6. Ch. 9:8-12 Sixth Plague: Boils on Man and Beast
7. Ch. 9:13-35 Seventh Plague: Hail
8. Ch. 10:1-20 Eighth Plague: Locusts
9. Ch. 10:21-29 Ninth Plague: Darkness

STUDENT PRAYER

Lord God, thank You for telling me about the troubles and suffering of Your people in another time. By doing this You show me how Your hand is always in the lives of those who are in Your kingdom of love and grace. Help me, Lord, look to You for guidance in my life. And when I must suffer in this world of sin draw me close by Your hands of love in forgiveness and compassion. And so Lord, protect me and love me, unworthy though I am, until that day when You receive us all with open arms into the glories of heaven. Through the merits of Jesus our Savior and Lord. Amen.

PRESENTATION

God's will shall always prevail. When man sets himself against the one true God of heaven and earth he will always suffer as a result. Unless he repents he will be separated from God for time and for eternity. The only way for us to live a life of peace, happiness and joy for time and eternity is to humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God that He may exalt us in due time.

Moses had to learn humility and exercise his faith in the Lord God before he could properly serve God. God used those forty years that Moses spent in Midian as a shepherd to prepare him for His work among His people.

We must always remember that the people of Israel were the carriers of God's promise of the Messiah. Nothing and no one could stand in the way of God Who would bring His people into the land which He had promised to them and which He had predetermined would be the land where He would bring forth the Messiah, Jesus Christ, the Savior of us all. Everything that God did served that one ultimate goal.

APPLICATIONS

In this world of sin we may suffer. There may be Godless people who bring this about. We may suffer because of our own misguided words or deeds. Through it all we must never blame God. He did not bring sin into this world. Man did through the workings of Satan.

We need to realize that in the midst of a sinful world the Lord God is the one sure anchor in which we can and must trust. Nothing else is sure, nothing is certain, but the Lord God is. He will never let us down. (Read Is. 54:10) Notice how Jesus was moved by the suffering of people because of sin. When He witnessed the sorrow

of a sin-laden people in the face of death, we are told "He groaned in the spirit and was troubled." (John 11:33) Indeed, "Jesus wept." (John 11:35) How earnestly and compassionately He pleads with all, "Come to me all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." (Matthew 11:28)

PASSAGES

These passages can be assigned as memory work or simply discussed in class as to how they fit the lesson.

Lower
Matthew 11:28 - *Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.*

Philippians 1:21 - *For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain.*

Psalm 37:5 - *Commit your way to the LORD, trust also in Him, and He shall bring it to pass.*

Psalm 31:1-5; Romans 8:1-39; Psalm 27:1-3

Middle any of the above and...

Upper any of the above and...

HYMN CHOICES

"In The Hour Of Trial" (TLH #516)
"The Will Of God Is Always Best" (TLH #517)
"Commit Whatever Grieves Thee" (TLH #520)
"If God Himself Be For Me" (TLH #528)

STORY
The Tenth Plague: The First Passover - Exodus 12

TEACHER PRAYER
Heavenly Father, I thank You that while You have hidden the mystery of Your salvation from the wise and prudent, You have revealed it to children. Impress upon me the seriousness of my high calling as a teacher and enable the love of Christ to shine forth through my teaching. I pray that You would help me see Jesus in this story of Your great Old Testament salvation act of deliverance. Amen

VOCABULARY
Passover - the Jewish festival commemorating God's deliverance of His people from Egypt
leaven - yeast, that which makes bread rise
firstborn - the oldest child in a family

OUTER AIM
God saved his people from death and delivered them from Egypt.

INNER AIM
Jesus, our Passover Lamb, was sacrificed for us.

BACKGROUND
God told Moses to prepare the people for their Exodus from Egypt. The difference between Israel and Egypt and between Jehovah and the gods of Egypt was about to be revealed in a final cataclysmic stroke from God. The judgment would be the death of the firstborn (11:4-7).

The Passover celebrates the most important salvation act of the Old Testament. The date the Passover took place would become the first month of the Jewish new year emphasizing the importance of the Passover. This month had been named Abib meaning "ears" because the "ears" of grain appeared in this month (March-April depending on the new moon). This is why the date of Easter corresponding to the Passover is always in March or April. This month of Abib is now called Nisan because of the "Passover" sacrifice chosen by each household.

Four days before the Passover took place, a male lamb or kid not yet one year old and without a blemish, was prepared to be sacrificed. The meat of the lamb would have to be totally eaten by a family or group of families. The blood was to be caught in a basin and then "struck" with a branch of hyssop on the two side posts and the upper doorpost of the house. Hyssop in ancient times was often considered to have cleansing properties.

The blood of a lamb or goat was to be applied directly to the house to make atonement for its inhabitants and convert it to an altar. Seeing the blood, Jehovah would pass over the door and spare the inhabitants of the house. The name "passover" or "pascha" literally expressed the meaning of this observance. The sacrificial meal consisted of the lamb, unleavened bread and bitter herbs. The bitter herbs symbolized the bitterness of the afflictions in Egypt. The unleavened bread symbolized the removal of the old corruption and the need to leave in a hurry. Finally, the Passover lamb symbolized God's great Old Testament act of act of salvation and the deliverance of His people from Egypt.

At midnight, God's judgment came upon Egypt. About midnight Jehovah passed through the land of Egypt and a great cry went up. Pharaoh begged the children of Israel to leave. He even gave them the wealth of Egypt to leave Egypt immediately lest "we all be dead men." God's salvation was to be a perpetual memory, as each year the Jews were to celebrate the Passover and explain the deliverance of God. Every year at this time, God's people were to reenact the Passover meal that would bring to remembrance God's great salvation act. When the children would ask, "Why are we eating this lamb and unleavened bread, and bitter herbs?" the parents would then tell them how God had delivered His people from Egypt. The observance of the Passover was to be followed by a "feast of unleavened bread," lasting for seven days in which all leaven or yeast was to be purged or removed from the households.

Israel left Egypt with 600,000 men of military age. The total number of the Children of Israel was probably about two million.

STUDENT PRAYER

Dear Jesus, You are the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world. We pray that you would help us see how You delivered Your people out of Egypt protecting them from death through the blood of the Passover Lamb. Help us to believe that the blood of Jesus, the Lamb of God, protects us from death. Amen.

PRESENTATION

It is important that the teacher review the previous story of the first nine plagues or strokes. Stress the stubborn opposition of Pharaoh to the Jehovah and how senseless it was for Pharaoh to oppose God.

Some have actually reenacted a Jewish Passover meal. It might be interesting to have at least a sample of lamb, unleavened bread, and the bitter herbs. As you tell the story, you can emphasize the "shadow" pictures of these elements in the Passover meal.

Discuss the story in the context of the feeling of horror Pharaoh and the Egyptians felt when they discovered what had happened that night. Now they couldn't wait to get rid of God's people. This will lead into the next story as you reveal the depth of Pharaoh's opposition to God.

It is also important to connect this story with Jesus. The Bible reveals that the lamb which was killed was a shadow picture of Jesus. In 1 Corinthians 5:7, Christ is called "our Passover Who was sacrificed for us." Jesus is the Passover Lamb, Whose blood protects and delivers us from eternal death. In 1 Peter 1:17-18 in a reference to the Passover lamb, Jesus is referred to as the "lamb without blemish or spot." It is the blood of Jesus, the Lamb of God that redeems us from sin and death.

Before Jesus died on the cross, He celebrated the last Passover with His disciples. It is called the last Passover because Jesus was establishing the "new covenant" or "new testament" through His death on the cross. Jesus' blood would deliver His people from death by giving them the forgiveness of their sins. In keeping with the Old Testament meal of remembrance, Jesus gave His believers a New Testament meal of remembrance. Jesus took the unleavened bread and the wine from the Old Testament Passover and gave them to His disciples saying, "This is my body. This is my blood shed for you." We are to partake of this meal in remembrance of Him, that is remembering what Jesus did for us when He died on the cross.

APPLICATIONS

1. What was the meaning of the Passover for Old Testament Israel?
2. What is the deeper meaning as seen in the cross of Jesus, cf. I Peter 1: 18-20? Why do you think that Jesus' death occurred at the time of the Passover?
3. What was the Old Testament significance of the lamb, the unleavened bread, and the bitter herbs?What were the people to remember?
4. What is the shadow picture of the Old Testament Passover as it relates to Jesus?
   a. What does the Passover lamb picture for us? (1 Peter 1:18-19)
   b. What does the unleavened bread picture? 1 Corinthians 5:6-8
5. When we celebrate communion, what are we to remember?
6. It is important to stress that this Old Testament salvation act of God pointed to a greater salvation act in the death of Jesus. We understand the Sacrament of the Altar better against the backdrop of the Passover Meal.

PASSAGES

These passages can be assigned as memory work or simply discussed in class as to how they fit the lesson.

Lower
John 1:29 - *Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!*

Middle any of the above and...
1 Peter 1:19 - *You were redeemed with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.*

1 Corinthians 5:7 - *Christ our Passover Lamb is sacrificed for us.*

Upper any of the above and...
1 Peter 1:18-19 - *Knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold, from your aimless conduct received by tradition from your fathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot."*

1 Corinthians 11:24-25 - *Take, eat; this is My body which is broken for you; do this in remembrance of Me." In the same manner He also took the cup after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in My blood. This do, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me.*

HYMN CHOICES

"O Christ, Thou Lamb Of God" (TLH #147) "Lamb Of God, Pure And Holy" (TLH #146) "The Day Of Resurrection" (TLH #205:1)

STORY
Israel Leaves Egypt - Exodus 13:17-15:2

TEACHER PRAYER
Heavenly Father, sometimes I get so busy trying to solve my own problems that I forget that you have already provided an answer for me. Help me to be quiet so that You can be God in my life. Especially help me to realize that in teaching these children, only the Holy Spirit can create and preserve their faith. With a humble spirit, I prepare to teach Jesus' little lambs. Amen.

VOCABULARY
Passover -Meal to remember how God delivered His people out of Egypt

OUTER AIM
God teaches his people that He will take care of them.

INNER AIM
Be still my soul and God will work in our lives.

BACKGROUND
The Passover became a memorial feast for all generations to remember what God had done for His people. The month of Abib or Nisan became the first month in the Jewish calendar. From this time forth, in remembrance of this day, the firstborn of all Israel would belong to the Lord. The first born son would have to be redeemed by a sacrifice. Compare the presentation of Jesus in the temple in Luke 2. This would be a sign that the "Lord brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand." (Exodus 13:14-16) What takes place in today's lesson must be considered in view of God's great act of salvation delivering His people from Egypt. The power of God was mightily revealed that night in Egypt.

The Children of Israel were on their way to the Promised Land. The number of people including women and children numbered about two million. There were 600,000 footmen of military age (Exodus 12:37). They had been in Egypt 430 years from the time Jacob had come with seventy souls. They journeyed from Rameses (treasure cities) to Succoth (booths), and from there to Etham. Instead of going the shortest way to Palestine and encountering the Philistines, God led them southward into the wilderness.

The Lord revealed His presence with the pillar of cloud which led them by day and the pillar of fire which gave them light at night. Jehovah, the God of the covenant, was leading His people and protecting them (Exodus 13:21).

The turn to the south ensured that Pharaoh would make one last attempt to get the people back (Exodus 14:4). He would expect them to be entangled with the mountains on the west and south, the Red Sea on the east, and would pursue them to the north. Flight was impossible; defense seemed madness. The chariots of Egypt were the ultimate in warfare at that time. They could be equated with panzer divisions of Germany and the air power of the Gulf War.

The people reacted to this first test with unbelief. They complained that they were better off in Egypt (Exodus 14:12). Moses' answer was the answer of faith. "Be quiet and know that God will fight for you." (Cf. Psalm 46:10) The Lord first opened the Red Sea for His people and then caused confusion and panic among the Egyptians. Jehovah shook off the Egyptians in the midst of the sea. The Red Sea closed and destroyed once and for all the military might of Egypt. This event became for Old

Testament Israel a picture of God's saving power and salvation which found completeness in Jesus and the cross.

STUDENT PRAYER

Dear Jesus, there are many times that we become afraid of many things. Sometimes we do not know where to turn for help. Remind us that You saved the nation of Israel by leading them through the Red Sea. Remind us that You sent Jesus to save us from our sins. Help us be quiet, and know that You will take care of us. Amen.

PRESENTATION

Ask the children whether it is easier to believe and trust in God when things are going well or when there are problems. It is important to realize that people, because of their sinful nature, have a difficult time trusting God. Everything God has done for us seems to disappear in the face of some difficult time such as in sickness or death or the danger of a tornado.

Again it is very important to review and fit this story in with the previous chapters about the Passover. The teacher should tell the story, highlighting the contrast between the tremendous deliverance of God's people from Egypt and their fear when they encountered the first obstacle on the way to the Promised Land.

Use a map to trace Israel's journey from Egypt into the desert area. This map should be used for the next series of lessons. Stress that the Lord God wanted to protect the Children of Israel by not taking the short way and encountering the Philistines and their military might in southern Canaan. Stress also that this was the final act of Pharaoh's rebellion against God. His blind and stubborn unbelief finally led him and his nation to destruction.

The application of this lesson is that faith is trust, not in self, but in God. As God's people, we are to be quiet and remember that God will protect us. The continuing story of God's Old Testament people show how God acts on their behalf. So also with our salvation, we have to be quiet and not try to gain our salvation by our own works. We need to know that God will act on our behalf through Jesus Christ.

APPLICATIONS

Discuss faith as trust in God when trust doesn't make sense. Faith is not an intellectual, book-learning exercise. Faith is trusting that God is taking care of us in every situation. This trust in God begins with the knowledge and trust that God sent Jesus to die for our sins. Romans 8 reminds us that if God delivered up His own Son for us, He will with Jesus freely give us all these other things.

Find out when the following people of God were weak in faith: Peter, the disciples, the children of Israel. They all have one thing in common: a trust in self rather than dependence on the Lord. We also and our children have times when we are "weak" in faith. Like Peter walking on the water, we are all right as long as we keep our eyes on Jesus. Do not condemn the Children of Israel in such a way that children think that they would never be weak of faith.

Discuss situations in which children and adults are afraid. Don't dismiss any replies because they seem petty. Children have real fears.

Follow through with what it means in our lives to "be quiet" and to "know God will protect us." Instead of trying to do things for ourselves, we need to learn to trust God to take care of our problems. Illustrate this by telling how people, when they are troubled, tend to become nervous or worried and want to do something, anything. The child of God learns to quietly wait for God to solve his problems.

PASSAGES

These passages can be assigned as memory work or simply discussed in class as to how they fit the lesson.

Lower
Psalms 46:10 - *Be still, and know that I am God.*

Middle any of the above and...
Psalms 46:10 - *Be still, and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth!*

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

Upper any of the above and...
Psalms 46:1-3 - *God is our refuge and strength, A very present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear, Even though the earth be removed, And though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea; Though its waters roar and be troubled, Though the mountains shake with its swelling.*

Romans 8:32 - *He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?*

HYMN CHOICES

"Be Still My Soul" (TLH #651)
"I Am Trusting Thee Lord Jesus" (TLH #428)
"God Moves in a Mysterious Way" (TLH #514)

STORY
Israel in the Desert - Exodus 15:22-17:16

TEACHER PRAYER
Heavenly Father, sometimes the things of this world seem to occupy my attention to the exclusion of You. I also tend to complain and gripe when I don't get what I want. Create in me a quiet sense of contentment. Feed me with the Bread of Life and the Water of Life that I may share this spiritual food with the children entrusted to me. Thank You for everything You have provided for me and enable me to receive these gifts with thanksgiving that drives out complaining and discontent. Amen.

VOCABULARY
complain - to let someone know that you are not happy with what you have
murmur - the sound of complaining; for example, when someone mutters under his breath
content - to be satisfied with what you have
test - to try a person's faith so that faith may grow and become stronger
manna - bread that God provided for His people (Hebrew word meaning "What is it?")

OUTER AIM
God continues to provide for a complaining people

INNER AIM
God must get tired of our complaints or does He?

BACKGROUND
Moses' song of thanksgiving after the deliverance at the Red Sea (Exodus15:2-18) can be divided into three parts (Ex. 15: 2-5, 6-10, 11-18) showing the power of Jehovah, the destruction of His enemies, and the calling of Israel to be the people of God.

The results of God's deliverance were short-lived with the children of Israel. They came to the wilderness, and after three days under the hot desert sun and the pebbly ground, they had not found water. When they finally came to a pool, it was too bitter for use. They named this place Marah, meaning bitterness. Their outlook seemed hopeless, and they were only three days on the road. Luther remarked that when our provision ceases, our faith is liable to come to an end.

Again God intervened on behalf of His people. He had Moses throw a tree into the water, and it became drinkable. Thus He made for them a statute and an ordinance (principle that the Lord would provide on their journey), and there Jehovah proved the Children of Israel by testing them (Exodus 15:25). God also "proves" us by constantly exercising our faith with challenges that it may grow. Our enjoyment of the blessings of God is made dependant upon a constant exercise of our faith.

A short march brought them to Elim where they found 12 wells of water and 70 palm trees. Here they stayed for a month before venturing into the Desert of Sin (Exodus 16: 1). The Wilderness of Sin was a sandy plain which ran along the shore of the Red Sea to the southern end of the Sinai Peninsula. It was a dreary trek with chalk hills and mountains in the distance.

Once more the Israelites' unbelief surfaced out of concern for their physical needs. They complained about

Moses and Jehovah. The people's displeasure with Moses was really a dissatisfaction with God and His ways. This was a part of God's "proving" or testing His people to see whether they would walk in His ways. In response, God showed them His glory and then met their needs. The food was called Manna (Hebrew for "What is it?"). In this way, God taught them to pray for their daily bread. Jehovah provided enough for each day. Those who tried to store it up found that it decayed. This is a lesson in our attitude toward the things of this world. He also provided quail for the entire camp.

Must the Lord continue to prove Himself? At Rephidim, again there was no water. Had Israel learned to trust the Lord? The answer is a resounding, "No!" The grumbling prompted Moses to go to the Lord. Again God provided water from a rock which was struck with Moses' rod. These places were called Massah (testing) and Meribah (quarreling).

The Lord demonstrated His total protection package by defeating the Amalekites. It was the Lord's battle as evidenced by Moses' hands. As long as Moses' hands were in the air, Israel triumphed over the Amalekites. Israel and Joshua had to learn that Jehovah would deliver them from the hands of their enemies. Israel must fight, but its success would be granted only as long as their fight was carried on under the banner of Jehovah. This is seen from the name given to this place of victory; namely, "The-Lord-Is-My Banner." The banner or ensign was the identifying mark of the regiment.

STUDENT PRAYER

Dear Jesus, all too often it is true that the more You give us, the less satisfied we are. May our faith not depend on how much we have but on You alone. When we need something, instead of complaining, help us to ask You for what we need with thanksgiving. Keep us from complaining and whining. Feed us today on Jesus, Who is the "Bread of Life" and the "Water of Life." Amen.

PRESENTATION

Again, review everything God had done for the nation of Israel as He led them out of Egypt to the land promised to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. The deliverance and mercy of God stands out in sharp contrast to the whining and unbelief of the people of Israel. Have a map handy so that you can trace the journey of the people of God toward Mt. Sinai and then north to the Promised Land.

Tell each of the stories illustrating how, in spite of everything God did for them, the Children of Israel had a very short memory. They continually put God to the test by complaining and revealing their lack of trust in Him.

1. Show how at Marah (Exodus 15:22-27), they complained about the lack of water and how God met their need.
2. Show how in the Wilderness of Sin (Exodus 16:1-36), they complained about the lack of food, and how God miraculously satisfied their needs.
3. Show how at Masseh and Meribah (Exodus 17:1-7), Israel again complained because of the lack of water and God met their great needs.
4. Show how God defeated the Amalakites (Exodus 17:8-16) on behalf of His chosen people.

Review these events in your own words.

APPLICATIONS

- The joy of God's immediate deliverance is all too quickly forgotten. People tend to quickly forget the good things God has done for them. Have the children list the good things God has done them from their own experiences.

- When things are going well, we are vulnerable to temptation from the devil. Prosperity, instead of promoting faith, often leads people to forget about God and His care. How is this true in our country today and in the lives of these children?

- I Corinthians 10 reminds us that all these events were examples for us so that we do not fall into the trap that consumed the nation of Israel. It is a warning that anyone who thinks he stands on his own two feet, he must be careful that he does not fall on his face.

- This is a good opportunity to discuss with the children the danger of complaining against parents, circumstances, teachers, other children, and especially the danger of complaining against God.

- Finally, do not forget the spiritual blessings that God has given us. List these with your children's help.

- Remember that Jesus is called the "Bread" from heaven and the "Water" of life. In a spiritual sense, God meets our deepest spiritual hunger and thirst by sending Jesus to die for our sins and give us everlasting life. Consider the meaning Christians apply to the terms "Bread of Life" and "Water of Life" with the background of these accounts from the Exodus.

PASSAGES

These passages can be assigned as memory work or simply discussed in class as to how they fit the lesson. Lower
Psalms 103:2 - *Bless the LORD, O my soul, And forget not all His benefits:*

Middle any of the above and...
Psalms 103:1-3 - *Bless the LORD, O my soul; And all that is within me, bless His holy name! Bless the LORD, O my soul, And forget not all His benefits: Who forgives all your iniquities, Who heals all your diseases.*

Upper any of the above and...
1 Corinthians 10:12 - *Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall.*

HYMN CHOICES

"Guide Me, O Thou Great Jehovah" (TLH # 54)
"O God of Jacob, by Whose Hand" (TLH # 434)
"The Lord my Shepherd Is" (TLH # 426)

STORY

The Giving of the Law - Exodus 19:1-20:24; 24:1-18

TEACHER PRAYER

Heavenly Father, today let me see Your Holiness reflected in Your Law. Use the Law to convict me of my own sins. Also let me today see Your Holiness reflected in the face of Jesus Christ and the glory of the Gospel. Assure me of the forgiveness of my own sins in Jesus that I may teach others. Amen.

VOCABULARY

Law - tells me what I should do and not do and convicts me of sin
Gospel - tells me what God has done for me and assures me of God's love

OUTER AIM

God established His "Old" Covenant with the Nation of Israel at Mt. Sinai.

INNER AIM

The law was given to reveal my sinfulness and my need for a sacrifice for sin.

BACKGROUND

God had promised to Abraham that his descendants would become a great nation. Up until this time, Israel was a "family," a collection of tribes. With the giving of the Law, Israel would become a nation, the covenant people of God. The covenant given at Mt. Sinai is a high point in the Old Testament development of the plan of God's salvation.

God had enabled Israel to defeat the Amalekites (Exodus 17:8-16). Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, appeared on the scene. He appeared, not only to bring back Moses' wife and two sons, but also to express his faith in Jehovah (Exodus 18:11). This is a picture of a later day when Gentiles would sit down in the kingdom of God. Jethro also had some practical observations for Moses. He told Moses to delegate authority instead of trying to do everything by himself (Exodus 18:25-26).

It was the third month when Israel reached the peninsula of Sinai and its mountain ranges. This range is known as HOREB (dried up ground). The one special mountain was known as SINAI (mountain of the thorn). Israel camped on a plain at the base of the mountain.

Mt. Sinai was completely covered with smoke (Exodus 19:18), and it quaked greatly. There was thunder and lightning and the voice of the trumpet. Jehovah came down upon Mount Sinai in His glory. God had taken care of Israel (Exodus 18:4), but He would give them even greater riches of His grace. He would enter into a covenant with them. "And you shall become unto me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation" (Exodus 19:5-6). Cf. New Testament application in I Peter 2:9 and Rev. 1:5,6,10. These people of God would not be created by the covenant of the law, but by the new covenant (testament) of the Gospel.

The people were to prepare themselves with certain purification rituals which were symbols of the need for inward cleansing. No one could come near the mountain nor touch it. It was not until Jesus died and the veil of the temple was split that men had free access to God through the sacrifice of Jesus. The glory of the Lord in connection with the giving of the Law was so terrifying that the people could not come into the presence of God. They begged Moses to speak with them rather than God (Exodus 20:19).

God revealed His will in the ten commandments of the "ten words." These were addressed in their original form to the nation of Israel (Exodus 20:2). These "ten words" were arranged in two tables. The numbering of the commandments is not revealed in Scripture. The first table deals with our relation to God and the second table with our relationship to our neighbor. The "ten words" are also found in Deuteronomy 5.

Moses wrote these words of the Lord (Exodus 24:1-8). Then he took the "Book of the Covenant" and read it to the people. This covenant was sealed with blood sprinkled on the people signifying the need for the forgiveness of sin. The sight of the glory of the Lord was like a consuming fire in the eyes of the Children of Israel. Moses was on the mountain forty days and forty nights (Exodus 24:18).

Yet the law with all its glory brought only the knowledge of sin. Man could not keep it with its demands for perfect love toward God and man. The Old Testament Covenant with its sacrifices of blood and its Day of Atonement (Leviticus 16) pictured the need of a sinful people for a perfect sacrifice of blood for sin. The saving glory of the Lord was revealed in connection with the coming of Jesus, the Son of God, to die for the sins of the world (John 1:17).

STUDENT PRAYER

Dear Jesus, God's holy law reveals to us our own deep sinfulness. We are not holy and can not come to You. However, You sent Jesus to reveal to us the forgiveness of our sins. May we today learn more about Your holy Law and Your blessed Gospel. Through Jesus, make us a kingdom of priests. Amen.

PRESENTATION

Review the promises made to Abraham that the Lord would make a great nation of his descendants also how after 430, Jehovah led His people out of Egypt. The Lord would now make of this people a nation, out of whom would come the Savior. The covenant made at Sinai was basically a covenant of law. "You shall be holy for I the Lord, your God, am holy." It stressed the need for perfect holiness and obedience on the part of God's people. The Sinai Covenant also pictured the need for a sacrifice for the sins of the people. It was a "shadow" picture of Jesus and His death on the cross as an atoning sacrifice (Colossians 2).

Talk about the things the people had to do in Exodus 19 which emphasized the fact that God was a holy God and only those who were holy could come into His presence. Think of the contrast with modern theology which pictures God as a benevolent grandfather or Santa Claus figure.

As you have time, briefly go through the Ten Commandments as given by God on Mt. Sinai. Realize that these commandments in this form were given to the nation of Israel i.e. the Sabbath. Explain that God required His people to love Him (first through third commandments) and their neighbor (fourth through tenth commandments). Also realize that many other civil laws and religious ordinances were contained in the law as given on Mt. Sinai.

The glory of the holy God was indeed a consuming fire. This sinful people needed a mediator to go to God on their behalf and bring God's words back to them. How different is the coming of Jesus! In Jesus, the glory of God is revealed in connection with the salvation God provided for us, lost sinners. The glory of God is revealed in connection with the cross where Jesus died for the sins of the world. This is the "new" covenant of the forgiveness of sins the Gospel that Jesus established through His death and resurrection.

APPLICATIONS

It is important that the children learn of the holiness of God in connection with the Law and the "old" covenant at Sinai. It is more important that they know the Gospel and the "new" covenant at Calvary. The importance of Jesus' sacrifice for sin cannot be understood unless a person realizes his own personal sinfulness under the Law.

Discuss the significance of how the holiness of God is contrasted with the sinfulness of the people and how this applies to your children.

Apply some of the "Ten Commandments" to show that we have sinned against God and His holiness.

What did God have to do in order to save us from our sins? Lead them to an appreciation of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God.

PASSAGES

These passages can be assigned as memory work or simply discussed in class as to how they fit the lesson.

Lower
Leviticus 19:2 - *You shall be holy, for I the LORD your God am holy.*

Middle any of the above and...
John 1:14 - *And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.*

Upper any of the above and...
Romans 3:20 - *Therefore by the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified in His sight, for by the law is the knowledge of sin*

Romans 3:22-24 - *For there is no difference; for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.*

HYMN CHOICES

"The Law Of God Is Good And Wise" (TLH #295)
"Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God Almighty" (TLH #246)
"God Loved The World So That He Gave" (TLH #245)

STORY
The Golden Calf - Exodus 24: 12-18; 31:18-32:35; 34:1-7, 28-33

TEACHER PRAYER
Heavenly Father, help me to see how easy it is for things to become more important to me than You are. May I through the power of the Holy Spirit fear, love, and trust in You above all things. May the failings and unbelief of Your people Israel be a warning for me lest I also fall. Bless the word which I am about to bring to Jesus' lambs. Amen.

VOCABULARY
idolatry - the worship of a false (non-existent) god
golden calf - a false god worshiped by the Egyptians
rose up to play - a description of sexual immorality

OUTER AIM
The children of Israel commit the sin of idolatry

INNER AIM
Whatever is most important to us becomes our "god"

BACKGROUND
While these sacred transactions (the giving of the Law) were taking place on the mountain with Moses, a different scene was being played out in the camp of Israel. Moses was on Mt. Sinai for forty days and forty nights. Moses went up on the mountain to get detailed instruction about the worship life and ritual of God's covenant people.

The prolonged absence of Moses, who had been gone for over a month, awakened doubts and fears in the minds of the Children of Israel. The people feared the glory of Jehovah (Ex. 24:17). In their sinfulness, they desired a god that they could see and control. Note how the gods of men are physical in nature, i.e. able to be seen. The Israelites had been influenced by the Egyptians. The god Apis in the form of a calf represented the powers of nature. Their sin consisted in their not recognizing the presence of the unseen God. Their fears led them back to the unbelief of idolatry. We too make gods of whatever becomes most important in our lives. The modern idols of money, power, and instant gratification are just as terrible as the golden calf.

Aaron sought to compromise. He made the golden calf but proclaimed a "feast to Jehovah." Aaron gave in to the people and proved himself to be no leader of God's people. This worship was also accompanied by sexual sins and immorality.

God informed Moses of the quick apostasy of His people. "And the LORD said to Moses, "Go, get down! For your people whom you brought out of the land of Egypt have corrupted themselves. They have turned aside quickly out of the way which I commanded them. They have made themselves a molten calf, and worshipped it and sacrificed to it, and said, 'This is your god, O Israel, that brought you out of the land of Egypt!'" (Exodus 32:7-8)

Moses interceded with God for the people (vs. 11-14). These people belonged to Jehovah. God's glory

was involved in their fate. God's gracious promises were pledged to bring the Savior from this people. However, Moses was not prepared for the sight that greeted his eyes (vs.19). Moses was filled with wrath. He broke the two tablets and summoned those who were on the side of Jehovah. The Levites slew 3,000 men. The golden calf was burned, and the powder put into the drinking water. Those slain remained naked, i.e. unrepentant. God warned that He would visit the sins of the people upon them. The Lord would not personally go into the midst of Israel. Now an angel, and not Jehovah, would be Israel's guide.

Moses asked the Lord's forgiveness for this people with an intensity unequaled except by Christ (Exodus 32:31-32). Moses was reassured by the vision of God's glory. This glory consisted of God's grace. The Lord consented to go before His people, and He would give them the rest of Canaan. Moses was only able to see the backside of God's glory (Exodus 33:21-23). We see the glory of God revealed in the face of His son Jesus Christ and in the cross.

STUDENT PRAYER

Dear Jesus, today we learn about how quickly God's people turned to other gods. Keep anything from becoming more to important to us than Jesus and His Word. Take care of us and our families today. We thank You that You love us enough to forgive us when we do forget about You and do bad things. Thank You for sending Jesus to be our Savior from sin. Amen.

PRESENTATION

This incident sets the pattern for the Children of Israel's rebellious relationship with Jehovah. God had made them His own people, led them out of Egypt, and provided manna for them. Their reaction was one of unbelief and ingratitude. We see clearly in the account of Israel's wilderness journey man's sinfulness and God's undeserved grace. This pattern is carried out in the next stories of Israel's wanderings in the wilderness and even into the entire history of Old Testament Israel.

Review the account of the revelation of God's glory in connection with the giving of the Law on Mt. Sinai. Read for yourself the detailed description of Israel's worship life in Exodus 22-31. All of this pointed to the coming of Jesus. It is obvious from this account that the Children of Israel could not be saved by the Law. They were guilty of gross idolatry even before Moses came down from the mountain with God's revelation of His holy Law.

Discuss with your children what led the people of God to ask Aaron to make for them a god in the form of a golden calf. Also pursue why Aaron gave in against better knowledge to this request of the people.

Tell the story by outlining what Moses saw when he came down from the mountain. Pagan idolatry was almost always accompanied by wild parties and orgies. Idolatry became an excuse for sexual immorality. The phrase "rose up to play" signifies sexual sins. The punishment was swift and severe. Three thousand people were killed because of their idolatry and nakedness.

When God told Moses that He was going to destroy this people and make a new people out of God, Moses interceded for the people. Moses appealed to God's gracious and merciful nature. Moses argued that Israel was God's special people; that God's own glory was involved in the fate of Israel; and finally that God had promised that He would give "the land" to this people and bring forth the Savior from them. This was indeed a stiff-necked people, and yet, God's gracious promises would preserve them.

APPLICATIONS

What are some examples of gods that can threaten our relationship with Jehovah? Mention things that can become more important than Jesus to the children e.g. money and possessions, fun, and especially the form of peer pressure.

What is the link between God's punishment for sin and His forgiveness? Why does it become necessary to punish transgressions as He did in the case of the Children of Israel? God is a just God visiting the iniquities of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generations. This is why God had to send Jesus to die for our sins. God could not simply ignore sin.

Paul applies this account in 1 Corinthians 10:6-7, "Now these things became our examples, to the intent that we should not lust after evil things as they also lusted. And do not become idolaters as were some of them. As it is written, "The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play.'" This is a strong warning against how idolatry can take over even God's own people.

With older children you might want to touch on the weakness of Israel's future high priest, Aaron, and how spiritual leaders sometimes tell people what they want to hear instead of rebuking them according to God's Word.

Emphasize that in spite of Israel's flagrant disobedience and God's righteous anger, Jehovah did not destroy this people but kept His promises to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Moses interceded for the people appealing to God's grace and mercy. We also need to pray for one another as well as for ourselves throwing ourselves, upon the mercy of our Savior God.

PASSAGES

These passages can be assigned as memory work or simply discussed in class as to how they fit the lesson.

Lower
Exodus 20:3 - *You shall have no other gods before Me.*

Middle any of the above and...
Matthew 4:10 - *Then Jesus said to him, "Away with you, Satan! For it is written, 'You shall worship the LORD your God, and Him only you shall serve.'*

Upper any of the above and...
1 Corinthians 10:7 - *And do not become idolaters as were some of them. As it is written, "The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play.*

HYMN CHOICES

"What Is The World To Me" (TLH #420:8)
"I Am Trusting Thee, Lord Jesus" (TLH #428)
"Let Us Ever Walk With Jesus" (TLH #409)

STORY
Worship in the Tabernacle- Exodus 35-40; Lev. 24; Num. 6, 15

TEACHER PRAYER
Dear Heavenly Father, I pray that You lovingly keep and protect our pastors, teachers, fellow members and the whole Christian Church on earth. Keep all of us from false teaching and a careless attitude toward Your holy Word. Lead us week after week to Your house of worship for the strengthening of our souls. May Your blessing of peace fill my soul with comfort and confidence to do my best in teaching this precious Word to Your children. Keep me and all of Your children in Your care until we stand before You face-to-face and praise You forevermore in our heavenly home. Amen.

VOCABULARY
Tabernacle - a portable tent used by the Israelites as their worship place of the LORD Jehovah.

Bezaleel and Aholiab - the head artisans(craftsmen) that directed the building of the Tabernacle.

Laver - large basin used by the priests to wash in.

OUTER AIM
God established an orderly series of sacrifices and services for the spiritual welfare of His people and to the glory of His name.

INNER AIM
Every Christian is called upon by God to publicly worship Him by hearing His Word, repenting of his sins and receiving the Good News of forgiveness through Jesus.

BACKGROUND
God described in minute detail the way in which the Israelites were to worship Him. He prescribed every feature of their worship: the place, the building, the time, the priesthood, the services and sacrifices. As long as they were in the wilderness, their place of worship would be a tent, which could easily be taken down, carried and put up again. The LORD Himself gave to Moses a pattern which the builders strictly followed in the building of the Tabernacle. Everything associated with the worship of God was to point to the coming Messiah.

Ex. 35:4-9
The LORD instructs Moses to tell the Israelites to bring Him an offering. This offering will be from "whoever is of a willing heart," prompted by God's love for him. This offering should consist of gold; silver; bronze; blue, purple and scarlet yarn; fine linen thread and goat's hair; ram's skins dyed red; badger skins; acacia wood; oil for the light; spices; onyx stones.

Ex. 36:2-7
The leaders of the building project were chosen by God (cf. Ex. 35:30-35). When they received the gifts of the people from Moses they found that there was "much more than enough for the service of the work which the LORD commanded us to do."

See Rupprecht Vol. 1, pgs. 192-210 for specific details and pictures of the various furnishings built and placed into the temple and the clothing worn by the priests.

Tabernacle measured: 45l 15w 15h and was erected in the west end of a courtyard. The Tabernacle consisted of two parts: The holy place and the holy of holies.

The holy of holies was separated from the rest of the Tabernacle by a heavy four-inch thick curtain and was kept completely dark. In it stood the ark of the covenant. This was a chest covered inside and out with gold. The cover of the ark was called the mercy seat made of gold. On the ends of the cover were the figures of two cherubim (angels). They faced each other with their wings outspread. Inside of the ark of the covenant were the two stone tablets of the Law; a jar of manna; and Aaron's rod. Only the High Priest could enter the holy of holies and this only once a year on the Day of Atonement, when he sprinkled the blood of the sacrificial lamb on the mercy seat as a picture of Christ's shed blood atoning for (covering) our sins before God.

The holy place was the rest of the Tabernacle which contained the altar of incense on which the priests burned incense every morning and evening; the table of showbread, on which 12 loaves of bread were placed every Sabbath and left there for a week; and the seven-branched golden lampstand. These candles were lit every night and were the only source of light in the holy place. Only Priests were allowed in this part of the tabernacle.

The courtyard measured 150 x 75 feet and was surrounded by a canvas screen about eight feet high. The courtyard contained the altar of burnt offering on which two lambs were offered every day, one in the morning and one in the evening. The fire on the altar was kept burning constantly. In the courtyard was the bronze laver (basin) in which the priests washed their hands and feet before performing their priestly duties. All the Israelites were allowed to gather in the courtyard of the tabernacle.

The priesthood was ordained by God. Aaron was the first high priest chosen by God and the LORD commanded that his sons serve as priests. Special garments were to be worn by the priests when they performed their many duties. The high priest was to wear two onyx stones and a breastplate, inscribed with the names of the twelve tribes of Israel. . .six on each of the stones. He also wore a gold plate on his forehead with the inscription: "Holiness to the LORD."

The sacrifices were of two kinds: bloody sacrifices and bloodless sacrifices. Cattle, sheep, goats, turtledoves and pigeons were offered as bloody sacrifices. The bloodless sacrifices consisted of offerings of meal, cakes, grain, salt, oil and wine.

Exodus 40:34-38
God's appearance was in the cloud by day and in the fire by night. If the cloud was taken up from the tabernacle, the children of Israel could go on in their journeys, if the cloud remained over the tabernacle, the people remained where they were.

Numbers 6:22-27
The same blessing given by the LORD to His people over 3,000 years ago is still bestowed upon each of us at the close of our worship services. The LORD assures us that HE will keep and protect us from all harm (safe in His arms); the LORD smiles upon us with His undeserved love in Christ Jesus washing away our sins; the LORD lifts up His countenance (face) to look at us and give us His peace which passes all understanding. We are at one with God. Note the threefold blessing which definitely reminds us of the Trinity and of the threefold work of God's goodness and mercy toward us. God the Father planned our Salvation and sent His Son; God the Son came into this world to take our place and live a perfect life of obedient love, (satisfying God's justice) and die upon the cross (paying our punishment); God the Holy Spirit takes the powerful Gospel and creates faith in

our hearts to believe this message. He also strengthens and preserves us in that faith through the Gospel.

STUDENT PRAYER

Dear Triune God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, I thank You that You have made me, redeemed me and brought me to saving faith. Your work alone has saved me. I thank You for my church and Sunday School, for my pastor and teachers who faithfully bring me Your holy Word. Keep them in Your care so that they always teach what is true and right to the glory of Your name. Help me to always love to come into Your house to worship You and hear Your Word. May Your Word be my constant guide day and night. Strengthen me in all areas of my life, especially in my worship of You and my praise of Your glorious salvation given to me. I ask this in Jesus' name. Amen**.**

PRESENTATION

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APPLICATION

1. God prepared a place for His Old Testament people to worship Him: the Tabernacle. The ark of the covenant in the holy of holies was the sign of His presence. He has given us houses of worship today also. He is present in His house in His Word.

2. The heavy, thick curtain separated the people from the holy of holies. Only the high priest could go in with the blood of the lamb and sprinkle it on the mercy seat. Jesus is our high priest and sacrificial lamb who had His shed blood spread on the cross for us. There is now nothing that separates us from our loving Heavenly Father. Hebrews 7:26-27

3. All the daily sacrifices for the sins of the people pointed ahead to the one sacrifice that would obtain forgiveness for the whole world; Jesus' blood. "... without shedding of blood there is no remission." Hebrews 9:22 "...the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin." I John 1:7

4. What a privilege to hear the same message of God's grace and peace as the Old Testament believers. When we come to church we hear the Good News of a Savior who has come to suffer and die for us. As we leave God's House we hear Him pronounce the same blessing of grace and peace upon us that He announced through Aaron over 3,000 years ago. The unchanging God has unchanging grace and mercy for us which give peace to our hearts and lives.

PASSAGES

These passages can be assigned as memory work or simply discussed in class as to how they fit the lesson.

Lower
I John 1:7 - "The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin."

Middle
Hebrews 10:14 - "For by one offering He(Jesus) has perfected forever those who are being sanctified."

Upper
Psalm 27:4 - "One thing I have desired of the LORD, that will I seek: that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the LORD."

Numbers 6:24-26 - "The LORD bless you and keep you; the LORD make His face shine upon you, and be gracious to you; the LORD lift up His countenance upon you, and give you peace."

HYMN CHOICES

Lord, Dismiss Us with Thy Blessing - TLH #50
To Thy Temple I Repair - TLH #2
For Many Years, O God of Grace - TLH #639

STORY
The Twelve Spies - Numbers 13 and 14 (refer also to Deut. ch. 1 for a rehearsal account)

TEACHER PRAYER
Dear Father, whom I claim in Jesus' name, infuse my heart with Your love and mercy so that I can work as Your servant in this classroom. Also get my brain working at best capacity so that I use your Word correctly; then give me the most effective language skills, the most effective psychological techniques, and the most effective "presence" to be what You want me to be for these Your children. Thank you. Amen.

VOCABULARY
Numbers - actually means numbers; Moses made a head count of men fit for military service. Ch.1 reports them as numbering 603,550; in Ch. 3 the Levites were counted--numbering 22,000 for their service career as clergy.

Spies - It made sense to scout the territory they were going to invade--to evaluate the strengths of the native population as the enemy; so this was a covert military expedition.

Locate map places such as *Wilderness of Zin*--the rift valley stretching from Dead Sea to Gulf of Akaba; *Hebron*--20 miles south of Jerusalem; *Rehob*--in the north, later known as Dan. *Kadesh* - at bottom border of Canaan.

OUTER AIM
The record of Israel shows how they cut themselves off from the blessings available to them.

INNER AIM
Our life is a time of grace for our blessing and a time to help the unbeliever find God as Savior.

BACKGROUND
(Rupprecht Bible History References, Vol. 1, pp. 210-214)
Since our last story-episode in God's Bible History, the children of Israel had their first census (Numbers chs.1-3) for military duty, for clergy responsibilities, and for other preparations needed to "move on out" from Sinai. When complaints came against the food (God's manna), or the leadership (God's man Moses), God dealt out some tough love. By the time our story-episode opens in chapter 13, they had progressed close to the southern border of Palestine (Canaan).

vs. 1-16
In this first tour across the desert (still ahead many years of being nomads), they got close enough to send out an expeditionary force to do some scouting of the territory. The LORD directed Moses how to select the men for the job--one from each tribe would create fair representation. They were going out as a survey team, not to engage in combat.

vs. 17-26
Their job was to scout out military forces, survey the ecology and economy of the country, its crops and population factors. They took forty days to get a good survey of their new homeland.

vs. 27-29
When they returned, they used visual aids to support their claim that the place was fertile and productive and reported that its citizens were strong enough to defend their territory.

vs. 30
This report evidently scared the Jews, who needed quieting down so Caleb could bring his recommendation: "*Let us go up at once* (without further delay) *and take possession, for we are able to overcome it."*

vs. 31-33
Caleb's encouragement was undercut by the faithless cowardice of the other ten scouts.

Ch.14: 1-4
Their pessimism infected others. The whole nation lodged complaint against the LORD and was about to depose Moses for any substitute who could lead them in retreat back to Egypt.

vs.5-9
Moses and Aaron, Joshua and Caleb were still confident that the LORD was on their side: *Only do not rebel...Do not fear them...* are the anguished words of a pastor in fear for the souls and earthly safety of his congregation.

vs. 10
The plea did not work. Satan brought the nation to a new low in rejecting their God-revering leaders. So the LORD stepped in to set things back on course for His purposes.

vs.11-12
God was disappointed and pained enough to discard the whole group of unbelievers.

vs.13-19
Moses could see that God's position and reputation were at stake; so he pleaded with the LORD to maintain His program of mercy (rather than anger) and to do the merciful thing of forgiving this sin, just as He had been doing time and again. The power of faith, holding God to His word and appealing to His heart of love WORKS!

vs. 20-22
The LORD *pardoned* just as Moses asked. However, the whole group of complainers, unbelievers, rebels--from oldest to youngest--would learn the ultimate lesson of how bad it was that they had robbed themselves of any future in the country God had prepared for them.

vs. 23
There's an earthly penalty that comes from opposing God; Satan has no intention of blessing anyone who leaves God's care.

vs. 24
Caleb's *different spirit* (like Joshua's) spared him from the fate (see vv. 36-38) of the other ten who had badmouthed the LORD.

vs. 25-27
So it was going to be a retreat from the border of the Promised Land. God was very precise about the consequences that disobedience (which comes from not believing or trusting in God) produces. Here's the bad news: a) you will get what you asked for, (and more) b) you will not enter Canaan, (but die in the wilderness) c) your generation will be stuck in the wilderness for forty years d) you will all die off, one-by-one (or in groups) e) while the babies born will grow up and receive what you rejected.
vs. 39-40
Contrariness was still in their hearts; they next wanted what God said they could not have.

vs. 41-45
So they had to be told they were headed for another dead-end if they disobeyed; which is what they did, anyway, and received what they deserved--because they had deserted their LORD God.

STUDENT PRAYER

Dear God, I'm thankful that I'm learning to know You better in Sunday School; but I need a lot of help to live as You want me to. So train my heart and soul to love You and desire to serve You. Bless me, please, in Jesus' name. Amen.

PRESENTATION

Abbreviate the sequence of events; but read verbatim the verses that have special such importance, as the orders to the scouting expeditionary force (ch.13:17-20). A *land flowing with milk and honey* means that the countryside was good for dairy animals as well as for wild species. It was rich in resources, with an agreeable climate, having wild game aplenty in woods and lakes. It had good grazing and pasture land, suitable for orchards and crops. (It was more productive and rich than Wisconsin. When settlers arrived here they found wild game aplenty and native Americans doing some subsistence agriculture. Yet it was a different situation in that God did not give settlers in Wisconsin permission to shove out the Chippewa nation already living here. Nor does He authorize us to invade Cuba or Canada or Mexico. The Jews were special, and so was the land He had promised to Abraham.)

Since the history of God's people is so important as example, God has given us two additional reminders: 1) Psalm 106 gives a poetic review of the whole sequence of events from Passover to Takeover of Canaan. 2) I Cor. 10:5-12.

APPLICATIONS

Most beneficial is 1 Cor. 10:5-12, which should be read with the students as introduction and again as closure, for it presents three distinct phases of involvement: 1) what happened back then came first, 2) then writing it in the Bible came second, and finally, 3) learning from their bad example is God's main point and purpose for us.

Emphasize the words like *our example...to the intent we should not lust...nor let us tempt Christ...written for our admonition.* It is basically a very sad story, and the only good thing to come of it is whatever we can learn from it for our own lives.

So since God always wants to bless us, let's be careful not to shove the blessings aside in fear of fighting the good fight of faith. He's not asking too much of us that we resist the temptations of worldliness (represented by Egypt); He's not asking too much of us that we should squelch the inner voice that complains, "I don't want to go to the trouble of being faithful to my Savior." Our warfare is against the evil kingdom; the battlefield is inside our hearts and souls. Let's do a better job of preparing ourselves than did the Jews.

Life on the frontier was not easy for settlers, but it toughened them so they survived (with many gravestones along the way) to become our great grandparents. (Illustrate with any old photo album or National Geography with pictures of settlers or Indian scouts or native Americans.)

When we have easy living, we are tempted to not want to do as God tells us; we think we cannot handle His new challenge or go in His new direction to a new life that will be even better. That was the challenge your parents and/or grandparents had in leaving the churches they were raised in, when they started a new synod in the sixties. It was always a temptation to go back to what was familiar and comfortable rather than follow His Word forward into the unknown.

We also need to learn the difference between punishment and chastisement. Punishment is what God sends upon the **unrepentant** child of Satan; chastisement is what God administers to His **repentant** child. Thus the forty years of marking time outside Canaan was a punishment for the rebel, but the same forty years was a chastening for the person who accepted it as a time of preparation for the Promised Land. In real time, life is a time of grace for the unbeliever to find the Savior; for the believer, it's time to help the unbeliever find the Savior.

PASSAGES

These passages can be assigned as memory work or simply discussed in class as to how they fit the lesson.
Lower
Numbers 14:18 - *The LORD is longsuffering and abundant in mercy, forgiving iniquity and transgression.*
James 5:16 - Confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much.

Middle any of the above and...
Romans 15:4 - *For whatever things were written before were written for our learning, that we through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope.*

Hebrews 3:12-13 - *Beware, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God; but exhort one another daily, while it is called "Today," lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.*

Upper any of the above and...
Hebrews 12: 5-6 - *My son, do not despise the chastening of the LORD, nor be discouraged when you are rebuked by Him; For whom the Lord loves He chastens, and scourges every son whom He receives.*

I Cor. 10: 6 - *Now these things became our examples, to the intent that we should not lust after evil things as they also lusted.*

I Cor. 10: 11-12 - *Now all these things happened to them as examples, and they are written for our admonition, on whom the ends of the ages have come. Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall.*

HYMN CHOICES

"Lord, As Thou Wilt, Deal Thou With Me" (TLH #406 1-2)
"O God Of Jacob, By Whose Hand" (TLH #434 1-5)
"Jesus, Lead Thou On" (TLH #410 1-4)

STORY
The Bronze Serpent in the Wilderness - Numbers 20:14 - 21:9 (and Deut. 2:1-9)

TEACHER PRAYER
Dear Lord, I am ready and willing to teach again today. In Your loving kindness bring blessing to me and my class as we study Your holy Word. May the meditation of my heart and the words of my mouth be acceptable to You. Amen.

VOCABULARY
Brazen serpent (KJV) - *bronze serpent* (NKJV) Bronze is a metal alloy composed chiefly of copper and tin melted together; this was cast into a serpentine form in a soil/sand mold.
Edom - the land of Idumea, named after the descendants of Esau who were regarded in the Mosaic Law as brothers to the Israelites.
Mt. Hor - the mountain on the east side of Arabah, halfway between the Dead Sea and the Gulf of Akaba; highest and wildest of the whole Edomite range.

OUTER AIM (various options and angles here are usable)
When Israel broke its bond with God by its sinful thoughts, words, and deeds, the Lord brought them back with His tough love. OR: God cured snakebite in a most miraculous way.

INNER AIM
Though God deals severely with sinfulness, He also deals generously with repentant sinners; and the brass serpent on the pole represents Christ on the cross.

BACKGROUND
(Rupprecht Bible History References, Vol. 1, pp. 220-221)
Forty years of nomadic wandering had passed; a new generation had grown up that had seen neither Egypt nor Canaan, but only nomadic campgrounds. These children had opportunity to start over in a life that their parents had messed up for themselves. Nonetheless, this new generation proved to have the same spiritual DNA as their parents and grandparents had. (A personality is not easily altered, and only God can do a complete overhaul.)
Ch. 20, vs. 14-21
This can be treated without much explanation, for the events are simple enough. Israel was at Kadesh, at the south end of Canaan. Moses asked permission for safe passage (not an invasion) through the homeland of their "cousins." Though Moses repeatedly pledged to be most careful not to impact on Edom's countryside and resources, the king of Edom stubbornly denied them access or passage. When conditions began to take on the look of a military confrontation, Moses/Israel backed off, realizing it would mean another detour and delay before arriving safely in Canaan.
vs. 22-29
At Mt. Hor the Lord replaced Aaron with Eleazar as chief priest. A one-month delay followed to mourn over their loss of such a great man.
Ch. 21, vs. 1-4
In a border clash, the defending Canaanites gained a small victory. It seems that Israel was continually testing the Lord, and He was training them to realize that they needed to depend on Him rather than on their own resources.

vs. 4
From Mt. Hor they went southward toward the tip of the Gulf of Akaba (also called "Red Sea") in order to back away from the land of Edom. If the king of Edom had let them pass through his country, Israel could have approached Canaan more readily; but since he had refused to do so, that resulted in some detours and delays, which evidently became rather frustrating. Although the Lord was thus sparing them a bloody conflict with their kin, they did not perceive the advantage.
vs. 5
The new generation had learned to complain as they parents had often done (ten times in all!). Unable to see their blessings, they attacked Moses as the cause of their unhappy condition.
vs.6
This turn of events was a swift departure from the usual M.O. (complaint registered, Moses interceding, the LORD relenting, partial penalties, then going forward again). These were *fiery serpents* either because their venom produced a burning sensation or because the snakes had a vivid coloration. God sent them on purpose; they were aggressive and lethal.
vs.7
The people realized the connection between their complaining and the plague. We give them the benefit of any doubt as to the sincerity of their confession of sin. They acknowledged their sinful thoughts, words, and deeds against both the LORD and Moses. Their public apology to Moses, however, did not come until *many of the people of Israel died.* Moses serves as a type of the Messiah in that he prayed for them--and his prayer was answered.
vs. 8
It remained to be seen, however, how deep their feelings ran. God's remedy for snakebite would seem as foolishness to anyone whose heart was not bonded to the LORD as Savior. If this was not a medically approved cure nor a recognized treatment for snakebite, so be it! The LORD had sent the snakes and the LORD had a cure for the punishment they deserved. God's directions were simple enough: using one's eyes is not a difficult task, for there is no labor involved. But we appreciate how it would separate the repentant believer from impenitant unbeliever. For who would surrender to this unreasonable device unless his heart had first been brought to kneel before the LORD? It's very improbability as a cure was enough to make the unbeliever turn his heart and eyes away in disdain--to his own death, of course.
vs.9
Moses did as directed: It may have taken a good part of a day to smelt pot-metal, gouge a rough- hewn channel in the sandy soil, pour the molten metal into the trough, let it cool, then shape and bend the metal so it would drape over a cross-arm on a pole. One can picture the congregation standing by, either patiently or impatiently, during the whole procedure, even as some of them throbbed with painful swelling, fever, then heart/diaphragm/muscle failure...and death. So we ask: Why devise a cure that took hours to perform? Why not an instantaneous miracle? Perhaps because sinners need to learn to wait on the LORD. It reminds us of Gal. 4:4 in that God also delayed sending His Son until "the fullness of the time had come" for His sin-cure to be presented to the world. But in God's good time and in His own good way, **it worked.** Of course, it worked! Our God always makes all things work together for the good of His children.

STUDENT PRAYER
Create in me a new heart, Lord, that gladly I obey Thy Word and naught but what Thou wilt desire; with such new life my soul inspire. Amen.

PRESENTATION
Read aloud the more provocative verses thoughtfully, avoiding monotonal presentation. This episode was a "hands-on" lesson that God is not a lecturer, and that true religion is not like listening to a lecture and then being quizzed.

The case of the Israelites was simple:
a) they were rebellious in heart, sinfully insulting to God; so
b) God taught them a hard lesson about being mean-tempered and unloving to Him.
c) He also is willing to lay aside His punishing anger, and He prepares His cure;
d) To receive His cure we need a repentant attitude; then to take God at His word. What an object lesson for learning to depend on God for solving the horrible fix of sinfulness! Decide in advance whether to use John 3:14-16 as introduction, as conclusion, or as both.

Additional Teaching Approach

Introduction:
Bring some pictures of snakes (such as from World Book Encyclopedia). Discuss with the children how some are harmless and some can kill you with their poison. Let the children express their delight or fear of snakes. In today's lesson we are going to learn how God used snakes to teach His people two very important lessons.
1. Sin brings death.
2. In God's mercy and love He gives life when people come with repentance and faith.

Presentation:
Fill a dish pan or cake pan with sand (or dirt). Color Popsicle sticks to represent the people. Use chenille wire (pipe cleaners), cut into pieces, to be the snakes. Also make a cross out of Popsicle sticks.

The Story:
See student's leaflet for narration of the story.

Review:
Why were the people of Israel getting discouraged? (It was such a long walk to the Promised Land, they couldn't take the short cut.)
What did the people start to do? (By their grumbling and complaining they were really showing rebellion against God who was directing and leading their lives.)
Why was this a sin? (They weren't trusting God or thanking Him for their blessings.)
What can happen if we go on sinning and we aren't sorry for our sin? (We can lose our faith and eternal life.)
How did God show the people that their sin was very serious? (He sent poisonous snakes to bite them.) What would happen to the people who were bitten by snakes? (They would die.)

Sin brings death. It is very serious.
Did the snakes help the people understand how bad their sin was? (Yes)
How do we know? (They told Moses they were sorry for their sin and asked Moses to pray for them.)
Was there anything the people could do to save themselves from the snake bites? (No)
Who was the only one who could save them? (God)
Why did God want to save them? (Because He loved them.)
What was God's plan to save the people from the poisonous snakes? (Put a snake on a pole.)
What would happen when the people looked at the snake on the pole? (They would be saved and live.)
Did God forgive their sins? (Yes)
What was God's plan to save them from their sins? (Jesus would die on the cross to take their sins away.)

Application:
Do we ever sin by grumbling and complaining? (Most kids will complain at times about the food they are served, orabout having to clean up their rooms or do other chores.)
Why is this a sin? (Disobeying parents is really disobeying God – 4th commandment.)

Is this sin serious? ("The wages (payment for) of sin is death.")
What do we deserve because of our sins? (Hell)
Is there anything we can do to save ourselves from sin and hell? (No)
What was God's plan to save us from our sins? (He would send His Son, Jesus, to live a perfect life for us and to pay the punishment for our sins on the cross. John 3:14-16 may be discussed here. Make sure the children understand verse 14, "so the Son of Man must be lifted up" means Jesus was lifted up on the cross to pay for our sins. Emphasize God's love that He would send His Son to suffer and die for us sinners.)
Why did God send His Son to die for us? (Because He loves us.)

We trust only in God to wash away our sins and forgive us.

What joy becomes ours because Jesus took away our sins? (The joy of eternal life with God in heaven.)

Closing Prayer:

Dear Father in heaven, we admit that we sin against you every day when we complain and don't obey our parents and teachers. We are sorry for our sins and ask that You forgive us for Jesus' sake. We know that You will save us because You love us. We pray that You will help us to always trust that Jesus paid for all our sins on the cross. Help us to trust in your promise of eternal life. We thank you for your love and mercy. Amen.

APPLICATION

1. How marvelous that Jesus (the vehicle for the Cure for sin) was placed into the form of a man (the vehicle of the curse); and that all who look to Him in their desperate need are given life! And Jesus his elevated position on the "accursed tree" counterbalances the degraded position of those below Him. How strange the symbolism: bitten by snakes and dying, the victim receives God's salvation in the form of a snake! What are we to make of it? Why not a symbol more divine-looking (like an angel, or a halo)? Because we should expect God to choose the improbable, the unlikely, and with it He does the impossible.
2. God does His work in the most amazing ways! He sent His own Son (not an angel or a sinner) to put Himself in the shoes of humankind, to bare his heel to the serpent of Eden, to absorb the venom of Satan's attack (suffer and die), then crush Satan's head by rising from the grave. The worldling reels in astonishment at such a doctrine (it's too illogical, too irrational to attract anyone with good sense); yet there is no Cure but in the cross of Christ.
3. And when in the reign of Caesar Augustus the time was ripe for God's plan and the embodiment of His Craftsmanship was finished, Jesus did not appear all that special. "He came unto His own (people and race), but His own received Him not." Thus the Cross and our preaching of the Cross (whether by Moses or by us) will be foolishness to them that are perishing (from Satan's poison); but unto those who look in faith to the Cross of Christ, well, to them it is "the wisdom of God and the power of God" (cf. 1 Cor. chs. 1 and 2).
4. So *faith* is basically an attitude toward God--the attitude that takes God at His word (no matter how illogical) and reaps the blessing that God channels through such unquestioning trust. *Unbelief* is basically the attitude that if it "doesn't make sense," then whatever the Bible (God) says is unacceptable.
5. One part of our soul looks askance and stands aloof from the way God acts and speaks-so His ways are "supernatural". Each Israelite had the struggle. "Shall I take a peek at that brass serpent? Shall I abandon my reservations, my doubts, my scientific good sense; shall I fight this thing on my own and die on my own terms? Or shall I take a peek and see what happens? I certainly have better things to do than stare at that stupid cross-draped dumb-looking piece of fakery that others find so compelling....etc., etc." The other part of our soul looks squarely at Jesus and reaches out to the Lord God who acts and speaks so wonderfully to us, after all. One learns to appreciate what Jesus saw in Nathanael: "Look, an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile." Nathanael wasn't trying to outsmart Satan and God too.
6. Of course, it's the kind of looking that's done in FAITH, for looking in disdain would be of no help, as

Jesus so clearly presents the crux of it: “And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life. For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.” (Jn.3:14-16)

PASSAGES

These passages can be assigned as memory work or simply discussed in class as to how they fit the lesson.

Lower
John 3: 14-16 “And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life. For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.”
John 12:32 - And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all peoples to Myself.
I Peter 2:24 - who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree.

Middle any of the above and...
I Cor. 1:18 - For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are saved it is the power of God. v.25 - Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men.
Lamentations. 3:22-33 - Through the Lord’s mercies we are not consumed, because His compassions fail not. They are new every morning; great is Your faithfulness. “The Lord is my portion,” says my soul, “therefore I hope in Him.”

Upper any of the above and...
1 Cor. 10:5-11 (Use your Bible here for the text.)

HYMN CHOICES

“My Faith Looks Up To Thee” (TLH #394)
“I Am Trusting Thee, Lord Jesus” (TLH #428 1-4))
“Upon the Cross Extended” (TLH #171, choice of verses)
“How Firm A Foundation, Ye Saints Of The Lord” (TLH #427 3,5)

STORY

The Last Days of Moses – Numbers 20:1-13, 27:12-23; Deuteronomy 6-8, 18:15-18, 31-34

TEACHER PRAYER

Thank You Lord for giving me the privilege of sharing Your Word with the children entrusted into my care in this class. I pray that You will give me Your Spirit and that Your loving will for us all will be clearly presented. I pray that through Your Word You will enter the hearts of these Your children by Your Spirit. Pour Your grace upon them that their relationship with You will grow ever stronger. Through Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior I pray. Amen.

VOCABULARY

Mount Abarim (Numbers 27:12) - "A mountain east of Jordan. Nebo, Peor, and Pisgah belong to this range." (Rupprecht Bible History References Vol. 1, p. 226)

Urim and Thummim (Numbers 27:21, Deuteronomy 33:8) - "Beneath the breastplate - in order that it might be on the high priest's heart when he 'went in before the Lord' - was the Urim and Thummim ('lights and perfections'), the crowning glory of the Levite tribe, but nowhere described in Scripture. With the Urim and Thummim the will of the Lord concerning judicial matters was learned, not only in the Sanctuary of where the Ark of the Covenant was, but in any place, provided the authorized priest with the ephod was present." (Rupprecht Bible History References Vol. 1, p. 202)

OUTER AIM

Moses prepares God's people for his death.

INNER AIM

God's blessing on His people continues as they are prepared to enter the promised land.

BACKGROUND

(Rupprecht Bible History References Vol. 1, pp. 226-230)

The 120 years of the life of Moses can be neatly divided into three equal sections. The first 40 years were spent in Egypt. The second 40 years were spent in Midian. The final 40 years were spent leading the people of Israel in the desert toward the land of promise.

Numbers 20:1-13

Because of a particular sin God forbad Moses "to bring this congregation into the land which I have given them." (vs. 12b) The sin of Moses was the sin of unbelief.

(vs. 12a) This apparently resulted in anger and possibly pride. (vs. 10-11) God's instructions were very simple and complete.

(vs. 8) Nevertheless Moses angrily upraided the people and seemed to adopt a rather prideful attitude. Secondly, he apparently adopted a mode of operation different from what the Lord had instructed. God had said, "Speak to the rock." Moses rather "struck the rock twice with his rod."

Numbers 27:12-23

Joshua is commissioned to assume the responsibilities of Moses as God commanded.

Deuteronomy 6-8

The book of Deuteronomy consists of a series of farewell messages by Moses, the 120-year-old whom God appointed leader of Israel. He addressed the generation of Israel who would soon be faced with the trials of entering the Promised Land.

These three chapters make three primary points: 1) teach the Word, 2) possess the promised land, 3) remember the LORD your God

Deuteronomy 18:15-18

These words of Moses point to the coming Messiah, Jesus Christ, who would be the Prophet of prophets. (cf. John 1:19-21; 5:46; 6:14, Matthew 17:5, Acts 3:19-26; 7:37)

Deuteronomy 30-34

In his final words, Moses predicts what will befall Israel in the days ahead. He rehearses the blessings which God will pour out upon Israel. He also shows the judgments that will be their lot because of their unbelief and perverse ways.

God buries Moses in an unknown place. This may have been done to prevent undue reverence to the past or even possible idolatry.

Though Moses was permitted to see the land of promise only at a distance before his death, he did return to this home for God's people when he appeared with the Christ on the Mount of transfiguration. (Matthew 17:3)

Some of the significant verses in this section: 30:11-20, 31:6, 12, 16-17; 32:1-7, 43, 48-52; 34:5-12).

STUDENT PRAYER

We thank you Lord for the many servants that You call to serve You in the labors of Your kingdom. We thank You for pastors, teachers, parents, relatives and Christian friends who guide us according to Your Word of truth. Give us , we pray, ready hearts to hear Your servants as they teach us Your Word. May we be lead to respond with willing and thankful hearts. In our Savior's name we pray. Amen.

PRESENTATION

An entire generation of Israel died in the wilderness. A new generation took its place. This was the generation which Moses was now preparing it for entrance into the Promised Land. Was this generation better equipped to handle the adversity that stood before them? The challenge was to occupy the populated land of Canaan which the Lord gave to them. On one hand, the answer is, yes. They had been trained in the adversity of the wilderness. On the other hand, they too were sinful as are all of mankind. Their complaints at Meribah resulted in Moses loosing his patience and sinning against God. As a result God did not permit Moses to enter into the Promised Land.

Moses at no time debated the matter with the LORD but fully accepted God's righteous judgment and the punishment. Under God's direction he appointed Joshua his successor and commissioned him to complete the work which he had begun, namely, to lead the children of Israel into the land of Canaan and divide it among the tribes of Israel. With deep devotion to His Lord and concern for God's people, he gathered all the representatives of the people and repeated the Words of God so that this new generation of Israel might know the will of God clearly and simply. He reminded them of the many blessings of God and showed them that they could best manifest their gratitude by walking in the Words of their God.

Furthermore, he admonished them to destroy completely all the inhabitants living in the land of Canaan, lest they lead the people of Israel to worship idols. The final words of Moses might be summarized in such words as these: "I call heaven and earth as witnesses today against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore choose life, that both you and your descendants may live; that you may love the LORD your God, that you may obey His voice, and that you may cling to Him, for He is your life and the length of your days; and that you may dwell in the land which the LORD swore to your father, to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to give them." (Deuteronomy 30:19-20)

Finally, in the presence of all the people, he ascended Mount Nebo. At that time he was 120 years old, and during the last 40 years of his life he had endured many hardships; yet his eyes were not dim, nor was his strength abated. God had wonderfully preserved him. With a lively step he walked up the mountain side until he reached its summit. There God showed him the whole land of Canaan. How delighted Moses must have been to see that beautiful country which stretched before him. There he died and we are told that the LORD "buried him in a valley in the land of Moab...but no one knows his grave to this day." (Deuteronomy 34:6)

APPLICATIONS

Down through the generations God has used many people, sinful though they were, to accomplish His divine purposes. As revealed in the Bible, God’s will was always that mankind would be redeemed and saved from sin. Through the sinful world, Satan and the sinful ways of mankind continually challenged and obstructed the will of God, yet, God's will is always done. Thank God that this is so! The central point of salvation in the Messiah overshadows every other consideration. Praise the Lord!

When the Lord instructs us to do a thing in His Word, we do not have the right to change His words, add something to them or interpret them according to the ways of our sinful flesh or of the world around us. God brought water out of the rock at Meribah even though Moses put his own spin on the event. Moses permitted his sinful flesh to dictate how he carried out God's instructions rather than abide by the simple words of God. This is done constantly in the world around us today both in the unbelieving world and sometimes in the Christian Church at large. We must take care not to be influenced by advice and judgments which are contrary to the Word and will of God.

We should thank God for people that He has used and continues to use today to lead and guide His people in His ways. Discuss the teaching and pastoral ministry and the privilege to serve God in these special ways. Discuss the priesthood of all believers and how we all have the privilege and responsibility, as children of God, to share God's blessings of salvation in Christ Jesus with everyone.

PASSAGES

These passages can be assigned as memory work or simply discussed in class as to how they fit the lesson.

Lower

Psalm 143:10 - Teach me to do Your will, for You are my God; Your Spirit is good. Lead me in the land of uprightness.

Middle any of the above and...

Romans 12:2 - And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

1 John 2:15-16 - Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.

Galatians 5:17 - For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish.

Upper any of the above and...

1 Timothy 3:1 - This is a faithful saying: If a man desires the position of a bishop, he desires a good work. (bishop - literally a spiritual overseer)

2 Timothy 4:2 - Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season; convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching.

Hebrews 13:20-21 - "Now may the God of peace who brought up our Lord Jesus from the dead, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you complete in every good work to do His will, working in you what is wellpleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen

HYMN CHOICES

"What God Ordains Is Always Good" (TLH #521)

"I Leave All Things To God's Direction" (TLH #529)

"Rejoice, My Heart, Be Glad and Sing" (TLH #535)

"With the Lord Begin Thy Task" (TLH #540)

STORY
Israel Enters the Promised Land - Joshua 1 - 5

TEACHER PRAYER
Heavenly Father, as I prepare to tell these lambs purchased with Jesus' blood about your love, bless my daily meditation of Your Word. Help me not to be afraid of whatever threatens me. May I be used as a courageous leader of Your people into their eternal rest. Amen.

OUTER AIM
God Prepares Joshua to Lead His People Into the Promised Land

INNER AIM
Be Strong and Very Courageous

BACKGROUND
The mantle of leadership had passed from Moses to Joshua. The basic character of the people had not changed. We continue to see God's love and mercy in contrast to the disobedience of the Children of Israel. God's promise of this land to Abraham (Genesis 12) is being fulfilled after 400 years of sojourning in Egypt and 40 years of wandering in the wilderness.

The Lord renewed the commission of Joshua and the promises He had made to Israel. "This is the land I will give you. I will never leave or forsake you." Only two things were required. 1) In loving obedience, the word and commands of God should be very precious to Joshua. 2) In strong faith he should be very courageous. It must have been a little scary when the people of Israel promised to follow Joshua just as they had followed Moses.

The tribes of Reuben and Gad and half of Manasseh already possessed their land east of Jordan. They were reminded especially of their obligation to help the other tribes secure the rest of the land.

Joshua secretly sent two spies to view the land and Jericho. Jericho stood as the key to the land of Canaan because of its location and fortress. These spies were sheltered by Rahab, the harlot. (She is later mentioned with the ancestors of the Savior - Matthew 1). In faith she acknowledged Jehovah and asked for His protection. Cf. James 2:25; Hebrews 11:31. The spies came back convinced. "Truly Jehovah has delivered into our hands all the land, for even all the inhabitants of the country do faint because of us."

Jehovah assured the people of His protection by repeating the miracle that led them out of Egypt. This time it was the Jordan River that they crossed in miraculous fashion. The Ark of the Covenant led the people through on dry land. Remember that Joshua and Caleb were the onlyones that had seen the crossing of the Red Sea as adults (Joshua 3:7, 10; 5:1).

The rolling back of the waters 1)assured the people that the Lord was with Joshua as He had been with Moses(Joshua 3:7); 2) assured the people that the Lord was with them and would deliver them from their enemies (Joshua 3:9-10); and 3) the people who inhabited the land would realize the power of Jehovah and fear His people (Joshua 4:23-24).

Joshua also set up twelve memorial stones so that the next generation would remember what Jehovah had done for His people. Again (Joshua 4:6) it would provide an opportunity to explain to the next generation what God had done by explaining the meaning of this memorial of twelve stones from the bed of the Jordan River.

First it was necessary to renew God's covenant by the rite of circumcision. At Gilgal (literally = rolled away) their reproach was rolled away. Then the nation celebrated the Passover. Now that they were in the land promised to them, the manna ceased.

The Captain (Prince) of the host (army) of Jehovah appeared to Joshua. This was Jesus, the Angel of the Lord, who had appeared to Moses at the burning bush. Joshua was to bring to completion the task that had been given to Moses.

STUDENT PRAYER

Dear Jesus, today we learn about how important it is to listen to Your Word and to Your promises. Help us to be strong and courageous in our faith life. Give us faithful leaders such as Moses and Joshua. Help us to remember all You have done for us so that we can serve You all our days. Amen.

PRESENTATION

Review Israel's sorry history. The first time the Children of Israel were about to enter the land promised to Abraham, they were afraid to go in because of the strength of people, who already were in that land. As a result the Lord God said that they would wander in the desert for forty years. During these forty years an entire generation would die without being able to enter into the promised land. Of the twelve spies sent into the land, only Joshua and Caleb said, "God will give us this land."

Moses had died and now Joshua was about to take over the leadership of these people. God assured Joshua that the Lord would neither forsake nor leave him. This would be an important time in the history of God's people.

Again, they sent out two spies into the land. They were protected by Rahab, a prostitute in the city of Jericho. She recognized the power of Jehovah and asked the spies to spare her and her family. What is remarkable is that Rahab, this Gentile woman, would become an ancestor of the promised Messiah.

Joshua was further strengthened by the appearance of the commander of the Army of the Lord. He was addressed by Joshua as "my Lord." Some have thought this "commander" was the archangel Michael. Others have thought He was the second person of the Trinity, the eternal Word. The point is that "if God be for us, who can be against us?"

APPLICATIONS

God continues to raise up faithful leaders for the next generation. Discuss with the children the pastors and teachers, who have served their congregations in the past years. Encourage them to think in terms of their service by talking about preparing for the teaching or preaching ministry.

The key to success is the study of God's Word. The Book of the Law refers to the Torah, the first five books of Moses. We need to meditate upon God's Word day and night. This meditation includes the reading of the Bible, thinking about its message, praying about it, and finally applying it to our daily lives.

God uses remarkable and unusual people to serve Him. God includes two women in the list of the ancestors of Jesus (Matthew1). Rahab is a Gentile and a prostitute, and yet God in His mercy includes her in the ancestors of Jesus. The other woman is Ruth, the Moabitess, the great-grandmother of David.

It is good to build our own memorial stones. We talk about our history, build our buildings, and talk about ILC so that the next generation will remember what the Lord has done for us. It is important that the truths of God's salvation be passed on to the next generation.

PASSAGES

These passages can be assigned as memory work or simply discussed in class as to how they fit the lesson.

<u>Lower</u>
Joshua 1:6 - Be strong and of good courage.

<u>Middle</u> any of the above and...
Romans 8:31 - If God be for us, who can be against us?

<u>Upper</u> any of the above and...
Psalms 1:1-2 - Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stands in the path of sinners, nor sits in the seat of the scornful; But his delight is in the law of the LORD, and in His law he meditates day and night.

HYMN CHOICES

"Guide Me, O Thou Great Jehovah" (TLH #54)

STORY

The Destruction of Jericho - Joshua Chapter 6 & 11:23

TEACHER PRAYER

Dear Heavenly Father, I know that You are the only righteous, all-knowing, all-powerful God. You hold my life in Your hands at all times. Teach me through this Bible story to learn to appreciate both Your power and Your righteousness. Make me to understand that You hate sin and wickedness, as You demonstrated in the destruction of Jericho. If those around me turn away from You, I pray that you would keep me ever faithful. Clear away from my life all that is displeasing to You, and let me adorn my life instead with love and service to You and to my neighbor. I pray also that You would give me the wisdom and ability to teach the lessons of this Bible story to the children entrusted to my care. In Jesus' Name I ask. Amen.

VOCABULARY

Jericho - One of the oldest cities known to man, its name means "City of Palms." At the time of Joshua it was probably the most important city on the fertile plain between the Jordan River on the East and the hills and mountains that stretch from north to south in the West. It was the guardian of the entrance to Canaan. Biblical archeology has found evidence of many cities built and rebuilt upon this site. From earliest times to about 3000 BC several cities were built and destroyed. From 3000 BC until the destruction by Joshua in 1400 BC four more distinct cities have been identified. The climate, which is tropical, probably explains why it was later used by Herod the Great as his winter palace.

Rahab the Harlot - A prostitute in Jericho who befriended the spies sent to search out the city before the attack by Joshua. Because of her help, she and her entire family were spared. They were the only recorded survivors of this city of about 10,000.

Abstain - to refuse to take part in or to take possession of; have nothing to do with.

Consecrated- set aside and dedicated for a specific purpose, in this case the gold, silver, bronze, and iron of the City of Jericho was to be dedicated to the Lord.

OUTER AIM

God destroys the wicked City of Jericho by the hand of Joshua and the Children of Israel.

INNER AIM

By the destruction of Jericho God demonstrates both His omnipotence and His holy intolerance of sin and unbelief.

BACKGROUND

The Children of Israel have now crossed over the Jordan River and have entered into the Promised Land. The manna stopped on the day after they began eating the fruit of the land that had been promised to them (Joshua 5:12). Now they are faced with their first real military challenge - the fortified City of Jericho. Archeologists estimate that the population of this city was about 10,000 at the time Israel attacked. Since we know that the city was in a state of siege when Israel arrived, and since the walls enclosed only about six acres of land, we know that the city was probably very crowded. Prior to the attack Joshua is greatly encouraged by the presence of the "Commander of the army of the Lord,"who appeared to Joshua near the city(Joshua 5:13-15).

Verses 1-2

- Jericho had received word of the approaching army of Israel and had taken refuge in their walled city. The city itself was not only double walled, it was also located at the summit of a raised plateau. From a military perspective the task of taking the city was daunting.
- The Lord made clear to Joshua that this was going to be *His* battle. *God* was going to defeat the city of Jericho. In so doing He was setting the stage for the entire conquest of the Promised Land. *With* God the Children of Israel could not fail. *Without* God they could not succeed.
- Note the Lord 'swords,**"See I *have given* Jericho into your hands."**Once God determined that the city was to be destroyed, its fate was sealed. Joshua accepted this promise of the Lord in faith, confident that the city had been delivered even before the walls had fallen.

Verses 3-11

- Given the size of the army of Israel and the relatively small footprint of the city of Jericho, the men of war could well have completely encircled the city as they marched around it.
- God wanted to demonstrate in this first battle in the Promised Land that He and He alone could deliver Israel's powerful enemies into their hands. What is more, they were not to rely on the cunning and bravery of man, but upon the power of God.
- It is widely speculated that the Children of Israel had to endure the taunts and jeers of the defenders on the walls as they walked in perfect silence around the city. This is by no means certain. The evil, pagan inhabitants of Jericho were well aware of what the God of Israel had done for his people on the east side of the Jordan River, and they were utterly terrified of Israel (Joshua 2:8-11). Rahab told the spies that her people were "fainthearted" and their "hearts had melted, neither did there remain any more courage in anyone because of (Israel)."Itis more likely then that the mood in Jericho while Israel circled was one of terror and foreboding, rather than one of confidence and shouted insults.
- Although we cannot say with any certainty why God had the people circle the city once a day for six day, and then seven times on the seventh day, we do know that it gave the people of Jericho ample time to repent and to turn to the Lord God. Whether or not any besides Rahab turned to the Lord is not known.
- The eerie, piercing notes of the trumpets, the ominous silence of the army of Israel, and the sound of marching feet must have been a terrifying spectacle. The people of Jericho were well aware that the God of Israel had parted the waters of the Red Sea. How secure could they have felt, even behind their fortified walls, when faced with such an enemy?

Verses 12-19

- Israel did exactly as the Lord had commanded, and God granted them success. If only the people had learned the lesson the Lord was teaching them at Jericho, what future misery they could have avoided. In

subsequent attacks they repeatedly failed to carry out the Lord's commands and paid a heavy penalty.

- Note the faith of Joshua as he adopts the same "already accomplished" confidence of the Lord:**"Shout, for the Lord *has given* you the city!"** Though the walls still stood, in his mind the destruction of the city was already an accomplished fact, for the Lord had declared it.
- Joshua honors the promise made by the spies to Rahab. Here is evidence of the mercy of God, for although He severely punished the wicked inhabitants of Canaan, He demonstrated mercy and kindness to those who turned to Him in faith. (Cf. Rahab's confession in Joshua 2:11)

Verses 20-25

- Archeology on the old site of Jericho has verified that Jericho was a double walled city when Joshua attacked. The outer wall was made of brick and was six feet thick, the inner wall, also of brick, was about twelve feet thick and thirty feet in height. The two walls were divided by a space of about fourteen feet. The Bible's simple statement that "the wall fell down flat" has also been verified by archeology. The entire wall, both inner and outer, fell outward. The outer wall fell down the sides of the rise on which the city was located. The inner wall filled the space between the walls and beyond. Archeologists note with some amazement that the walls showed no signs of decay or deterioration that could have caused their fall, thus dispelling the notion that "tremors" caused "decrepit walls" to collapse. They were pushed down by the finger of God.
- The destruction of the fortifications by God was so complete that the soldiers of Israel could all rush in at once. Most often in a siege a small breach is made in the wall, through which the whole army must pass at great risk. In Jericho the Lord God literally paved the way for the army of Israel.
- God commanded Israel to kill all of the citizens of Jericho (except for the family of Rahab). In prideful ignorance Bible critics have cited this lack of mercy as evidence of a cruel God- a different God than the one pictured in the New Testament. Yet we know that God is just, as well as loving. The city of Jericho was extremely wicked, and their time of judgment had come. The clear message is that God does not tolerate evil indefinitely. Man will be called to account for his evil.
- We ought to also recognize the love of God demonstrated here. His master plan for the Children of Israel was to send the Saviorthrough them. God knew that the perversion of Canaan would surely destroy Israel long before the birth of Jesus if the pagan peoples were allowed to remain in the land. In love for all mankind (who would later gain eternal benefit from the Messiah) God visited judgment upon the pagan peoples living in the Promised Land.
- Though the destruction was complete, God managed to preserve the house of Rahab, which was situated on the wall. Israel then burned whatever could be destroyed, and collected the gold, silver, bronze, and iron for the Lord.

Verses 26-27 and 11:23

- Joshua pronounces a curse upon whomever would dare to rebuild what the Lord had chosen to destroy. The city therefore lay desolate after the destruction by Joshua for some 540 years. It was rebuilt by Hiel of Bethel in 860 BC and the curse of Joshua was fulfilled at that time. (1 Kings 16:34).
- Joshua rested from war and conquest after he had accomplished all that the Lord had required of him. This resting from war did not mark the end of all conquest in the Promised Land, but rather the establishment of a foothold for Israel. There were more battles to come, but Joshua's part was done. Israel now set about fortifying its position and cultivating the lands they had captured.

STUDENT PRAYER

Dear Father in Heaven, I am often tempted to put my trust and confidence in myself rather than in You. Remind me often so that I never forget that You are my strength, the only One who can deliver me from my enemies. As you fought for the Children of Israel, fight also for me. Grant that I never forget how You feel about sin and disobedience, and fill me with joy in knowing that You paid for all of my sins on the cross. Give me comfort in knowing that You are always with me and will never leave me. As the Children of Israel could not defeat the city of Jericho without you, so too apart from You I can accomplish no good thing. Strengthen my faith and help me to always trust in You as my God and Savior. In Jesus Name I ask this. Amen.

PRESENTATION

This account can be read in class. Larger classes might also enjoy acting out the drama of the battle by marching around human "walls" that fall down at the shout of the people.

APPLICATIONS

1. Note the patience and the trust taught by God to the warriors of Israel in this lesson. It must have seemed silly and pointless to simply walk around a fortified city for seven days with no sound but the marching of feet and the blowing of trumpets. Let the children see that God's ways are very often not man's ways, and visa versa. Our calling as Christians is not to understand God and His ways, but to obey and trust.

2. Note that a group is made up of individuals. Every member is important. Had any of the Israelites disobeyed God's command to walk around the city of Jericho in silence, the displeasure of the Lord would have affected the whole of Israel. So also later when Achan took and kept from Jericho that which belonged to the Lord, all Israel suffered. Use these facts to demonstrate to the students that this not only applies to being part of a team in the secular world, it also applies to every member of the Christian Church. Each one of us is an ambassador for Christ. The poor conduct of even one will reflect badly not only on the whole Church, but also on our Savior Jesus.

3. Just as God preserved Rahab in the midst of the utter destruction of Jericho, so God today can and will preserve those who believe in Him, even though God's Children are surrounded by enemies on all sides. Though Rahab and her family were no doubt saddened by the thought of losing all of their friends in Jericho, they had found a new family among the people of God. Show your students how they too might be called upon to forsake friends and even family members for the sake of the gospel. (You might ask if any have friends or family members who belong to false teaching churches and discuss with them the best ways to help those friends or family members - i.e., not to join them in the false church but to call them out to the church that teaches the pure Word of God.)

4. It is important to discuss with the students why God commanded the death of all of the inhabitants not only of Jericho but of all of Canaan. Use this fact to demonstrate how God feels about sin. The punishment of the unbelievers in Canaan is a foreshadowing of the coming judgment of the whole unbelieving world. Use the destruction of the Godless to contrast the loving, merciful, undeserved rescue of us sinners (pictured by Rahab the prostitute). All men deserve God's wrath and destruction. For Jesus' sake He has granted us pardon and peace.

PASSAGES

These passages can be assigned as memory work or simply discussed in class as to how they fit the lesson.

Lower

(Hebrews 11:30 NKJV) By faith the walls of Jericho fell down after they were encircled for seven days.(Deuteronomy3:22NKJV) 'You must not fear them (the enemy), for the LORD your God Himself fights for you.' (Psalms 103:12 NKJV) As far as the east is from the west, So far has He removed our transgressions from us.

Middle any of the above and...

(Psalms 27:1 NKJV) The LORD is my light and my salvation; Whom shall I fear? The LORD is the strength of my life; Of whom shall I be afraid?

(2Chronicles20:20NKJV)"Hearme,O Judahand you inhabitants of Jerusalem:Believe inthe LORDyour God, and you shall be established; believe His prophets, and you shall prosper."

(Psalms 103:10NKJV) (The Lord) has not dealt with us according to our sins, Nor punished us according to our iniquities.

Upper any of the above and...

(Psalms 18:2 NKJV) The LORD is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer; My God, my strength, in whom I will trust; My shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold.

(Psalms 127:1 NKJV) Unless the LORD builds the house, They labor in vain who build it; Unless the LORD guards the city, The watchman stays awake in vain.

(Psalms 103:8-9 NKJV) The LORD is merciful and gracious, Slow to anger, and abounding in mercy. {9} He will not always strive with us, Nor will He keep His anger forever.

HYMN CHOICES

"If God Himself be for Me" TLH #528:1 & 4 "Who Trusts in God a Strong Abode" TLH# 437:1-2 "Built on the Rock the Church doth Stand" TLH# 467:1-3

STORY
Gideon - Judges 6:1-8:28

TEACHER PRAYER
Dear Lord Jesus, You appeared unto Gideon and chose him to set the Israelites free from the Midianite oppression. The deliverance of Israel depended, not on Gideon's abilities, but upon Your blessing. In the same way, you have chosen me to present the Gospel to these students, which sets them free from a much greater and more dangerous oppressor. Bless the teaching of this story with the power of Your Holy Spirit so that Your Word may have free course and accomplish Your purposes in the hearts of these children. May my feeble efforts bring glory to Your precious name. Amen.

VOCABULARY
Jerubaal - Let Baal plead - name given to Gideon after he destroyed the altar to Baal. When Baal worshipers asked his father to turn Gideon over to them, he replied: Let Baal do this himself.

Judges -- Leaders God raised up to deliver His people

Midianites - Originally descended from Abraham and Keturah, this nomadic tribe lived east of the southern tip of the Sinai Peninsula. Here the term includes more than one nationality (Amelekites and the People of the East). In this case, one could picture them as desert bandits.

Valley of Jezreel - Located south and west of the Sea of Galilee, the valley follows a small stream that empties into the Jordan River. It was a natural site for battles to be fought for two reasons: 1. Topography 2. An army needed to camp near water.

"The sword of the Lord and Gideon" - This battle cry meant that God was using Gideon to exact His justice upon the Midianite forces.

BACKGROUND
The period of the Judges was one of several very low points in the history of Israel. One problem was that the people failed to complete the task of driving the Canaanites out of the land. Also, after Joshua's death, the people had become spiritually careless in their prosperity, just as Moses had warned (Deut. 8:11ff).

To help His people, God used their enemies to chasten them. "Now these are the nations which the Lord left, that He might test Israel by them, that is, all who had not known any of the wars in Canaan." (Judges 3:1)

POINTS OF INTEREST

- Gideon was threshing grain in the winepress. Conditions were so bad that one could not risk threshing in the normal manner.
- Gideon destroyed the altar to Baal (his father's) at night, for fear of the reaction it would bring from the community.
- Gideon didn't understand why the Lord was chastening His people.
- God gave Gideon several special signs: He consumed Gideon's sacrifice, caused the dew to behave against the laws of nature, allowed Gideon to overhear a discussion in the Midianite camp.
- God made use of military strategy in the defeat of the Midianites and the capture of their leaders.
- The men of Succoth and Penuel were too selfish to lend their support to Gideon's cause.
- The golden ephod which Gideon made from the spoils of war, became the object of idolatry.

Verses 6:1-10

- For seven years the people of Israel lived in fear of the Midianites. Whenever the crops were ready for harvest, the Midianites would sweep through the land to plunder and destroy whatever they wanted. The country was thoroughly impoverished. People lived in caves and were forced to hide whatever they had from the Midianites. The scene is later used by Isaiah to depict a dark spiritual oppression into which the Light of the world would be born.

- Isaiah 9:2-4: The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who dwelt in the land of the shadow of death, upon them a light has shined. You have multiplied the nation and increased its joy; they rejoice before You according to the joy of harvest, as men rejoice when they divide the spoil. For you have broken the yoke of his burden and the staff of his shoulder, the rod of his oppressor, as in the day of Midian.
- The Lord sent a prophet to tell the people why this was happening. His purpose was to convict them of their sin and lead them to repentance.

Verses 6:11-27

- The Angel of the LORD appeared to Gideon as he threshed grain in the winepress. Gideon did not understand how the Lord could be with His people and still allow the Midianites to oppress them. When the LORD commissioned Gideon to lead the army against the Midianites, Gideon does a very natural thing: he looks at himself and confesses his own inability. "Who am I to lead the nation into battle?"

- God confirmed His promise to Gideon by consuming the sacrifice which Gideon had prepared. This special sign confirmed the word which the Lord had spoken. This is the primary purpose of God's miracles, (cf. Mark 16:20) to confirm God's Word. Miracles do not produce faith. (There are many examples of unbelievers who witnessed the miracles of God, yet remained unbelievers -- Pharaoh, the Jewish leaders, etc.) God's Word produces and strengthens faith; miracles confirm that Word and are sometimes called, the visible Word.

- Gideon's response was to build an altar to Jehovah, naming it: The Lord-Shalom.

- That night, at God's direction, Gideon dismantled his father's altar to Baal, which included an Asherah pole. With the wood from this symbol of Baal worship, Gideon would fire the sacrifice to the true God of Israel.

Verses 6:28-35

- The reaction which Gideon expected from the community became reality in the morning. When they learned that Gideon was to blame, they immediately went to Joash and ordered him to hand over his son. Joash had an interesting answer: If Baal is really a god - shouldn't he be able to defend himself? From this, Gideon receives his second name: Jerubaal - Let Baal Plead for himself.

- The combined Midianite forces gathered in the Valley of Jezreel. The Spirit of the Lord came upon Gideon, and used him to call the troops together for battle. Soldiers were summoned from the northern tribes of Manasseh, Asher, Zebulun, and Naphtali. One should probably not envision soldiers in the sense of well armed and trained warriors. The picture of farmers coming with pitchforks, scythes, knives, homemade swords, and any other instruments that might be used for battle, is probably more accurate.

Verses 6:36-40

- Who could blame Gideon for requesting a special sign from the Lord? We know how difficult it is to trust the Lord when what we see with our eyes is the opposite of what we are to believe. In Gideon's case, his own life was at stake.

- God is merciful and understanding. He knows our frame. He answered Gideon's request not once, but twice. A full bowl of water was wrung from the fleece the first night; the fleece was absolutely dry the next.

Verses 7:1-25

- The details leading up to battle seem quite straightforward. The emphasis is on the fact that the smaller the army, the more unlikely the victory would be. In the end, the odds were so stacked against Gideon, that it would take the Lord to grant them victory.

- From 32,000 to 300 is a striking change when one works it out on paper - to see the difference in the number of actual people would have been staggering.

- Why did the Lord sort the people by how they drank from the water? There are two answers; both are related. One suggests that those who lifted the water with their hands wouldn't take the time to kneel down; the second is that the most vigilant soldiers wouldn't put their faces down to the water, but would want to keep an eye open for the enemy.

- Gideon and his servant are granted a final confirmation of the Lord's plan. This time, it comes from a conversation they overhear from the Midianite camp.

- The choice of weapons seems odd to us in our day and age. Several historical factors may shed light on how brilliant this choice turned out to be. For one thing, it would seem that very few soldiers would actually carry torches and trumpets, just as only a handful of soldiers during the Civil War would carry a fife or a drum. Secondly, because it is nighttime (midnight - at the changing of guards), and because there are different nationalities camped together (and also, there are no uniforms), the Midianites would awake to the sound of hundreds of trumpets and the sight of hundreds of lights. Their first thought would not be: there are only 300 men. Seeing 300 torches and hearing the shouts and trumpets of 300 men, they would more likely think that there were hundreds of thousands of soldiers. In the confusion of darkness, stranger would have to turn against stranger; it would be kill or be killed.

- In the same way, the Lord used military strategies throughout the history of His people - not because He needed strategy, but because His miracles often accompany ordinary means. (cf. The battles at Ai, Jericho, etc.)

- The Midianite army would self-destruct. Those who survived the midnight massacre, headed east toward the Jordan River, hoping to get across before the pursuing Israelites caught them.

- Gideon sent word ahead to the people of that area, telling them to draw arms and attack the fleeing Midianites. They captured two of the Midianite princes, Oreb and Zeeb. The locations at which these men were killed were named accordingly.

Verses 8:1-21

- Once they become involved in chasing the Midianites (and had some success), the men of Ephraim are angry that Gideon has not called upon them sooner. (Their interest is probably due to gaining both the glory of victory and the spoils of war.) They take Gideon to task for neglecting to enlist their support. Gideon's answer is very diplomatic: he commends them for the glorious job of killing Zeeb and Oreb.

- As his tiny army reached the Jordan river, the men were hungry and exhausted. Requesting food supplies from the locals, Gideon is surprised to see how selfish the people of Succoth really are. They aren't willing to risk their food on an army so small, especially when there is no guarantee of victory. The people at Penuel do the same thing. Therefore Gideon promises to teach them a lesson on his return trip.

- Once again Gideon uses a bit of strategy in attacking what's left of the Midianite forces. When they feel secure, he attacks, not from the west where they would expect, but from the east. He routed the enemy and captured their kings, Zebah and Zalmunna.

- On his way back to Israel, Gideon caught a young man from Succoth and interviewed him about his hometown people. He got a list of the city elders who were responsible for withholding food from him. No doubt, he kept the two Midianite kings alive, simply as proof to the people of Succoth that he was victorious as he said. Then, he chastened the leaders of Succoth, giving them a few lessons with briers and thorns. At Penuel, Gideon gave another lesson. There, he destroyed their tower and killed the men of the city.

Verses 8:22-28

The crescent-shaped ornaments taken from the Midianites were collected, melted and formed into an ephod, which was, no doubt, patterned after the ephod worn by the high priest. It would seem best to say that this was done in order to attribute this great victory to the Lord. As time passed, this became a matter of superstition and was a snare even to Gideon and his house.

STUDENT PRAYER

Dear Lord Jesus, help me to trust You at all times. When there is trouble in my life, help me to remember Gideon and grant me the kind of faith that You gave to him. Use me as You used Gideon, by giving me opportunities to share my faith with the people around me and by blessing my gifts for the work of the Church. Help me to remember that Your powerful Gospel is the weapon that sets people free from the oppression of sin, death, and hell. Thank You for being my Savior and for bringing me to faith. Amen.

PRESENTATION

With so much material in this story, the teacher will need to chose which items to present, based upon the age and attention span of the class. The focal point is obvious: the routing of the Midianites with a tiny army of 300 men. The primary purpose of this lesson is to show how the LORD delivers His people.

APPLICATIONS

God chastens His people because He loves them. He allowed the Israelites to suffer poverty from the hands of the Midianites because they had fallen into sin (evidenced by the altars to Baal, etc.). The consequences of their unbelief would be far worse than any temporal pain they might endure. Because He loves us, God chastens His people today. Scripture says, "We are chastened of the Lord, lest we perish with the world."

God sets a limit to the chastening and removes it when it has achieved His desired effect. Seven years was the time frame for the Midianite oppression, then God delivered His people.

God usually performs His deliverance through ordinary means, but also lets us see that the deliverance is His doing and not ours.

Faith is needed at all times in life, but especially in those times when what we see with our eyes is at odds with what we believe. Courage was required when the army was at 32,000. Greater courage was required as the numbers were reduced. Many times God leaves us with nothing but His promises to depend upon. This is really how it should be.

We should be ready to follow the Lord without fear, knowing that He is far greater than any enemy we could ever face.

We should be ready to support the work of preaching the Gospel, confident that His Word will achieve His purposes. Unlike the men of Succoth and Penuel, we should not put ourselves and our interests ahead of serving the Lord.

The parallel between Gideon's victory and the preaching of the Gospel is striking. Today, we engage in the work of God's kingdom with the unlikely weapon of the Gospel in Word and Sacrament. By outward appearance, the Gospel hardly seems capable of the task and is considered foolishness by the world. Yet, the Gospel continues to conquer. Souls continue to be set free from spiritual oppression and are saved eternally. In this way, the children can do something that is similar to what Gideon had done, by sharing their faith and supporting the work of the Gospel.

PASSAGES

These passages can be assigned as memory work or simply discussed in class as to how they fit the lesson.

Lower

Luke 1:37 With God nothing will be impossible.

Hebrews 12:6 Whom the Lord loves, He chastens.

Psalm 118:8 It is better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in man.

Middle

Hebrews 11:1 Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.

Proverbs 3:5 Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding. Psalm 37:5

Commit your way unto the Lord, trust also in Him, and He shall bring it to pass.

Upper

Hebrews 12:5-6 My son, do not despise the chastening of the Lord, nor be discouraged when you are rebuked by Him. For whom the Lord loves He chastens.

Psalm 33:8 Let all the earth fear the LORD; let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of Him.

Psalm 46:1-2 God is our Refuge and Strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea.

HYMN CHOICES

"Oh, for a Faith that Will Not Shrink" TLH #396

"How Firm a Foundation, Ye Saints of the Lord" TLH #427

STORY
Samson - Judges 13-16

TEACHER PRAYER
Dear Heavenly Father, it is both a great privilege and responsibility to lead these precious lambs into the pastures of Your Word. Equip me with a full measure of Your Spirit that I may understand and apply the truths of Your sacred Word, first to myself, and then also to the hearts and lives of these children. Bless my feeble efforts, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

VOCABULARY
Philistines - A nation of people who lived in the Gaza Strip area of Israel. God used this nation, as He did other nations, to chasten His people during their apostasy.

Dagon - The god of the Philistines that is believed to have been in the form of a fish (having the head and hands of a man).

Nazarite - Special laws governing a Nazarite can be found in Numbers 6. Usually a person became a Nazarite for a limited period of time (connected with a vow). He was not to eat or drink any fruit of the vine, including raisins! No razor was to touch his head.

OUTER AIM
Samson, a man blessed by God with tremendous strength, is used by God as a judge to free Israel from their enemy the Philistines.

INNER AIM
Just as God used even the prideful Samson to accomplish His plan for Israel, so He uses each of us, even in our weakness, to accomplish His plan for mankind.

BACKGROUND
The account of Samson is a good reminder of how honest the Bible is. Rather than painting him as a flawless character, we find in Samson the same sinful flesh that infects all people. Of special note to anyone teaching this story is the obvious fact of Samson's immorality. More amazing than the feats of strength which he performed with the Lord's power is the fact that the Lord chose to use Samson as His instrument. Though the children may ask, one cannot justify the sinful actions that are so evident in Samson's life; one can merely use the opportunity to teach about God's grace and mercy.

Points of Interest.
The similarities between the life of Samson and the life of Jesus are actually quite amazing. When he appeared on the scene, for example, Samson came as a savior of his nation. His birth, like the birth of Jesus, was announced by an angel. His name meant "little sun," because in the darkened days in which he lived and worked, his efforts would shine like the sun. Jesus is called, "The Sun of Righteousness" who came with healing in his wings.

With the Spirit of God upon him, He had extraordinary strength and did mighty things. Jesus is the almighty Son of God who has power over all. This man worked alone to bring deliverance from the Philistines who troubled Israel. Jesus had to tread the winepress alone in saving sinners. One day, this man met a lion and killed it with his bare hands. Jesus met the devil, the roaring lion who seeks to devour us, and Jesus

overpowered him. When this man slaughtered scores of Philistines they came after him with their army. They could do nothing against him until one of his own countrymen delivered him into their hands. Jesus allowed His enemies, fellow Jews, to capture Him. He died, and rose victoriously.

This man had been bound with two new ropes by his own brethren and was delivered to the Philistines. At the mere sight of him his enemies broke forth in celebration. But when he arrived in their camp, the Spirit of the Lord came upon him, and the ropes became like threads. Picking up the jawbone of an ass, he killed 1,000 of their mightiest men. When he finished, he was fatigued and overcome by thirst. He cried to God for help and God caused water to flow out of a hollow place. Jesus, emerged from the three hours of darkness when Satan and all the powers of hell assailed Him. When God cursed Him with the sins of mankind. Exhausted from the conflict, He cried out "I thirst."

This man was betrayed for 1100 pieces of silver; Jesus was betrayed for 30. This man was tortured and ridiculed, his eyes were poked out, but in his death he destroyed thousands of people who had come to mock his God. Jesus died in His saving work, but thereby accomplished our salvation. (comparisons adapted from an unknown source)

Chapter 13

The roller coaster ride of the Israelites' unfaithfulness hits another low. For a period of 40 years they are enslaved to the tiny country of Philistia. When the time is right, the Angel of the LORD appears to Manoah's wife. Though barren, she will give birth to a special child who is to be a Nazarite all his days. The promise is reaffirmed to both Manoah and his wife. During the sacrifice that follows, they realize that they have spoken with none other than the LORD Himself.

Chapter 14

Unfortunately, Samson seeks a wife from outside of his own people. He also rejects the good counsel of his parents and wants to marry a woman from Timnah. Verse 4 explains that God would even use this sinful decision of Samson to accomplish His own good purposes (do not suppose that God was responsible for Samson's sinful choice).

Our first acquaintance with his unusual gift of strength comes as the family is going toward Timnah. A lion springs upon Samson and he single-handedly tears it apart as though it were a young goat. He mentions nothing of the incident to his parents, who, perhaps, were lagging behind.

The carcass of this lion plays a role in the story which follows. The honey he finds in it becomes the basis for a riddle which he uses to challenge the friends of his Philistine bride. When unable to solve the riddle by themselves, they use his bride-to-be to solicit the answer for them. Despite his physical strength, Samson reveals himself as a man of great weakness. Losing his bet, he kills 30 Philistines for the clothes they are wearing.

Chapter 15

When Samson's first bride-to-be is given to his best man, he retaliates by setting fire to the Philistine grainfields. When the Philistines retaliate against Samson's would-be father-in-law and his ex-bride, he turns his wrath against them with a great slaughter.

Rather than viewing him as a savior of their nation, his own countrymen come to arrest him and to turn him over to the Philistines. Bound by two new ropes, he is delivered into their hands. Suddenly, the Spirit of the Lord is upon him; with the jawbone of a donkey, he kills 1,000 Philistines.

Almost incidentally, the Bible indicates that Samson judged Israel for a period of 20 years.

Chapter 16

Rather than praising God for the special blessings he has received, Samson squanders his gift with a life of sin. After recording Samson's incident with a prostitute in Gaza, the Bible directs us to the situation that will cost him his strength and his life: his relationship with Delilah.

It seems odd to us that Samson didn't catch on to Delilah's continued questioning over the source of his strength. Evidently, he felt invincible, as our flesh often does. Finally, he crossed the line. His strength left him. The source of his strength wasn't simply his long hair - but rather, the blessing of the Lord. Once deprived of this, he was subject to mistreatment by his enemies.

Samson's life ends as a testimony to his faith and God's grace (cf. Hebrews 11). The Lord heard his prayer and granted his final request. In his death Samson destroyed more Philistines than during his lifetime.

STUDENT PRAYER

Dear Lord Jesus, just as You gave the special gift of strength for Samson to use in Your service, so you have given each of us special abilities that can be used in Your work. Help us to develop these gifts according to Your will and may we ever use them to glorify Your name. Thank you, above all, for the gift of forgiveness and eternal life. Amen.

PRESENTATION

Most children are best acquainted with the story of Samson and Delilah. Nevertheless, teachers should read the entire account in Scripture for their own information and should share (with discretion) parts of the entire story with their students.

APPLICATIONS

1. Samson's story is a good reminder that we shouldn't take chances spiritually.
   The most dangerous time in a Christian's life is when he thinks he is strong enough to overcome temptation on his own.

2. Bad company corrupts good morals. How important is it to choose friends (and especially one's mate) wisely? The story of Samson provides a timely lesson.

3. For the older students especially, this lesson provides an opportunity to talk about using the right criteria for choosing a husband or wife.

4. Samson disregarded his parents' advice - to his own harm. Parents have the God-given responsibility to guide and instruct their young, teaching them how to make crucially important choices.

5. It is never too late, in this life, to turn back to God. God is always waiting for His wayward children to repent and is ready to forgive. Cf. The Prodigal Son

6. Do you sometimes feel you can not do anything for God? Samson was powerful, yet he was spiritually weak. God used Samson to accomplish good for Israel. God will use each of us as His tools to accomplish His will. Don't fight against God in this matter, but look for opportunities to serve Him.

PASSAGES

These passages can be assigned as memory work or simply discussed in class as to how they fit the lesson.

Lower
2 Cor. 12:9 My strength is made perfect in weakness.

Psalm 130:4 There is forgiveness with You, that You may be feared.

Middle any of the above and...
Genesis 8:21 The imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth.

1 Cor. 10:12 Let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall.

1 Cor. 10:13 God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able.

Psalm 130:4 There is forgiveness with You, that You may be feared.

Upper any of the above and...
1 Cor. 10:12-13 Let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall. No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it.

Matthew 15:19 Out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witnesses, blasphemies.

Romans 5:19 For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so also by one Man's obedience many will be made righteous.

HYMN CHOICES

"Let Us Ever Walk with Jesus" TLH #409
"I Walk in Danger All the Way" TLH #413

STORY
Ruth (Ruth 1-4)

TEACHER PRAYER
Dear Father in Heaven, when I consider how Naomi in her discouragement gave poor counsel, but later in faith gave good counsel to Ruth, I feel the responsibility of these students in my care. Do not let me become discouraged but rather strengthen my faith in Your forgiveness through Christ and in Your wise providence in my life. Give me wisdom to guide and encourage my students to follow You with trusting, faithful hearts throughout their lives. For though we do not understand all of Your plans, we trust that You, O Lord, direct our lives for the eternal blessing of many souls. With faith in You, O Father, Your Son Jesus, and the Holy Spirit, I pray, Amen

VOCABULARY
Chapter 1:
judges - civil and religious leaders whom God gave to Israel to lead them on His behalf once they were settled in the land of Canaan and before their first human king.

sojourn - live someplace temporarily. Another place is considered home.

(names:) *Elimelech* - "My God is King" *Naomi* - "Pleasant" or "Jehovah is pleased" *Mara* - "bitter"

Moab - the land of the descendants of Lot, the nephew of Abraham. It was located immediately east of the Dead Sea. The people there were heathen but spoke a dialect of Hebrew.

Ephrathites - from the region of Bethlehem. (cf. Gen. 35:16, Mic. 5:2)

Chapter 2:
kinsman - Someone related by blood. Near kinsman - A closely related blood relative upon whom certain duties fell to preserve the land and birthright inheritance for a family if immediate heirs were not available.

glean - Reapers (people who harvested by hand) missed some of the harvest. God had told the Israelites not to go back to catch any missed grain but to let the poor and widows "glean" or pick up what was left behind.

sheaves - bound bundles of the stalks of grain stood upright to dry before the grain was separated from the stalks by threshing and winnowing.

ephah - a unit of measure equal to 7.5 gallons or enough to make about 20 loaves of bread.

Chapter 3:
winnowing and threshing - Threshing breaks the kernels of grain from the stalks as they are beaten or rubbed across the "threshing floor" or hard packed dirt or rock. Winnowing separated the grain from the straw and husks by means of throwing it in the air and letting the wind blow away the waste while the heavy grain fell to the ground.

OUTER AIM
God blesses a faithful widow with a new family.

INNER AIM
God's actions with His faithful people produce many rich blessings.

BACKGROUND
According to verse 1, this story took place during the time of the judges. God tells us in Judges 17:6, "In those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in his own eyes." The book of Judges showed God's faithfulness even when His people were unfaithful to Him. The book of Ruth shows that despite the wickedness around about, one non-Israelite and a few Israelites faithfully followed God's will and were richly blessed for it.

Setting the stage
Chapter 1
vs. 1 - 2: An Israelite family leaves their home because of famine in the land to live in the heathen country of Moab. The word "sojourn" in Hebrew implies they expected to return to Israel.

vs. 3 - 5: First Elimelech dies, leaving Naomi a widow. Her two sons marry Moabite women, Orpah and Ruth. Then over a span of 10 years, the two sons die, leaving all 3 women as widows.

A bittersweet homecoming
vs 6 - 7: Naomi hears that her homeland has been released from famine so she sets out with her 2 daughters-in-law to return to Bethlehem in Judah.

vs. 8 - 9: Naomi, is discouraged by her situation and doesn't know how she could support her daughters in law. So Naomi blessed them, Orpah and Ruth, and urged them to return to their parents' homes where they could be supported and more likely find new husbands. Naomi's blessing implies that Orpah and Ruth knew about the true God. But her urging them to return to their families who likely worshipped false gods, shows her own struggling faith in the true God.

vs 10: Both daughters said no, they would return with Naomi to Bethlehem to Naomi's people.

vs 11 - 13: Women generally depended on husbands to support them and marriage was considered much more desirable at that time than today. Naomi wouldn't be able to provide her daughters-in-law with husbands for support and the joys of marriage. Naomi felt sorry for her daughters in law because of how the Lord had treated her thus far.

vs 14 - 15: Orpah wept goodbye and returned to her parents' house and their gods. But Ruth clung to Naomi and didn't want to return. Naomi again urged "go back" with your sister-in-law.

vs 16 - 17: Ruth's selfless declaration of faithfulness to Naomi has often been used to exemplify the faithfulness needed between husband and wife. She is willing to accept whatever Naomi's circumstances would be and to worship Naomi's God so that they might be together until death parts them.

vs 18: Naomi accepts Ruth's determination to remain with her and stops arguing with her about it.

vs 19 - 22: When they arrive in Bethlehem together, Naomi expresses her discouragement to those who knew her by asking for a different name. Instead of Naomi which means “pleasant,” she wished to be called Mara which means “bitter.” "For the Almighty has dealt bitterly with me." Blinded by grief from her past, her faith is dim for the future.

Ruth meets a kind, God-fearing relative
Chapter 2
vs 1: Boaz is introduced as a wealthy relative of Naomi's husband.

vs 2: God through the civil laws which He set up for Israel had provided a way for the widows, orphans and poor to be fed. They were allowed to go into the fields, vineyards, and olive groves at harvest and gather whatever was left by the reapers. Ruth asked Naomi's permission to make use of that provision on their behalf.

vs 3: Ruth went to the fields and "happened to come," by God's subtle direction, to the field of Boaz, the kinsman.

vs 4 - 7: When Boaz came to oversee the harvest, the greetings he exchanged with his servants that showed that they worshipped the Lord. Boaz noticed Ruth and asked his servant who she was. The servant gave a good report identifying Ruth to Boaz.

vss 8 - 9: Boaz asks Ruth to continue gleaning in his fields and extends to Ruth protection and special favor.

vs 10: Ruth, in the customary sign of great respect in that time and country, bowed to Boaz wondering why he would treat a foreigner so well.

vs 11 - 12: Boaz explains that he respects her faithfulness to Naomi in leaving all to remain with Naomi. He prays that the Lord in whom she now trusts for refuge would bless her well. (cf. the refuge of wings illustration in the following: Ruth 3:9, Deut. 32:10-12; Exod. 25:20; Ps. 91:4ff.)

vs 13: Ruth expresses her humble appreciation and hope for his continued favor, though she recognizes that she is not even one of his servants.

vs 14 - 18: Boaz continues to show extra favor to Ruth with an invitation to eat with the workers and with special instructions to let her gather extra grain. Ruth in turn saved some of her lunch for Naomi and worked hard to glean and prepare the unusually favorable amount of grain she collected and brought back to Naomi.

vs 19 - 23: Naomi, upon hearing the good report about Boaz from Ruth, began to see again the Lord's blessings upon them. Naomi then encouraged Ruth to make use of the opportunity for protection and extra care that the Lord provided. And Ruth faithfully did what Naomi (and God) wanted. This continued for a few months, from about the time of Passover through Pentecost.

Naomi and Ruth seek a God-pleasing solution

Chapter 3

vs 1 - 4: Naomi proposed that Ruth make good use of the special laws God had provided to keep land within the family line of inheritance. {God's civil law [Leviticus 25:23-28] said that near kinsmen had to buy back land that their poor kinsmen had sold in order to make sure that every family maintained an inheritance within the Promised Land. But, if later a male heir came of age, the land would be returned to the male heir and the kinsman would lose the redemption price of the land. This was one of the ways that God sustained the family line for the Promised Savior.} Perhaps Boaz would serve as a "kinsman-redeemer" who would pay a good price for Naomi's (and Elimelech's inherited) land. And if, Boaz should choose to marry Ruth and they had a boy, then their heir would receive the land back that had been Elimelech's. So, Naomi instructed Ruth to look her most attractive and visit Boaz in the night when he was feeling good after a hard day's work and a good supper. Then Ruth should propose marriage to him and suggest he perform the duties of the kinsman-redeemer.

vs 5 - 9: Ruth agrees and does what Naomi tells her to do. She even uses Boaz's own words to propose to him. (cf. 2:12)

vs 10 - 13: Boaz is happy to accept the proposal of marriage but realizes that a nearer kinsman may wish to buy the land first. But if the other does not, Boaz also swears to buy the land for Naomi. They spend the rest of the night together virtuously.

vs 14 - 18: In the morning they discretely part as Boaz sends Ruth home with a large gift to Naomi. And so Ruth and Naomi wait at home for Boaz to follow through with the plan.

God through Boaz arranges a happy ending

Chapter 4

vs 1 - 8: True to Naomi's expectation, Boaz carries through the plan, carefully showing the nearer kinsman how it would be more advantageous to let Boaz perform the duties of kinsman redeemer since Boaz was going to marry Ruth and their heir would receive the property back. This would cost the nearer kinsman the redemptive price of the land and so diminish his own children's heritage. (cf. The Peoples' Bible - Judges Ruth pp253-254.) The nearer kinsman agrees to let Boaz redeem the property.

vs 9 - 10: Boaz reviews before his witnesses the entire transaction so that all would know and accept the legal standing of the arrangements.

vs 11 - 12: The witnesses in turn accept their duties as witnesses and then congratulate Boaz, giving him their blessings on his marriage to Ruth. Rachel and Leah are the two wives of Jacob from whose 12 sons the 12 tribes of Israel were started. Ephrathah is the region of Bethlehem, their home city. Perez was one of Boaz' ancestors who played a key role in the history of their tribe of Judah.

vs. 13: The Lord did indeed bless Boaz and Ruth with at least one son.

vs 14 - 17a: The women of the town who witnessed Naomi's sorrow when she came to the city, rejoiced with her, praising the Lord who had provided a grandson for her in her old age through Ruth. They hoped that as Naomi cared for the child, both of them would be blessed by it. Surprising to us, but part of their culture, the neighbor women named the baby Obed.

vs 17b - 21: These final verses with their genealogy carry an important gospel message. They show that God included gentiles into the line of David, the great king of Israel, and ultimately the blood line of

Jesus our Savior. For Jesus would also be a Savior for Gentiles as well as for the faithful of Israel. The genealogy is not complete here but it highlights main characters in the line from Judah's son Perez (seven centuries before). Amminadab was the father-in-law of Aaron, Moses' brother and the high priest during the wilderness wanderings. Nahshon was the leader of the tribe of Judah during the wilderness wanderings. Salmon married Rahab, the gentile woman from Jericho who helped Israel when they began taking Canaan. And, Jesse and David we know well from events that follow in 1 Samuel 16 and into history.

STUDENT PRAYER

Dear Father in Heaven, we know Your love for us because You sent your Son, Jesus, to be the Savior, not only of the Jews but also for us who are not Jews. You know how best to direct our lives for our own good and the eternal good of others. We pray that You would give us trusting and faithful hearts to follow Your direction throughout our life. Encourage us when we are tempted to discouragement. Strengthen us when we feel weary. Make our words and actions a blessing to others that through us others may also share in the blessings that You richly provide us. We ask this, trusting that You will receive our prayer because of Jesus who redeemed us. Amen.

PRESENTATION

Briefly review previous story as time allows. If it is about one of the judges of Israel, see the background notes for ideas how to make links to the new story. Tell the story: Teachers, be encouraged to tell the story in your own words while remaining faithful to the scriptural account. The older children should be encouraged to read this aloud from the Bible since it is a suspenseful, engaging story. Time will likely permit only one reading of the story so make some applications along the way while still completing the story.
Note: to shorten the story, one series omits the details of the following verses: 1:11-13, 18; 2:14, 18, 21, 22; 3:4,5, 7, 8, 9a, 10, 11, 13-15, 17-18, 4:1-5 (summarized),7-12, 14-16, 18-22

Discuss the lesson: While reviewing the major events of the lesson, discuss the possible applications to the students' lives. Ask questions that make them think about the lesson and show that they understand the it.

APPLICATIONS

1. Naomi began this lesson discouraged and grieving because of the loss of her husband and sons. She didn't see what good God would have in store for her. But as God through Boaz's faithful service to God and Ruth provided for her, she found cause for rejoicing. And through the previous losses for Naomi, God was able to bring a Gentile women to faith and into the line of the Savior, proclaiming God's mercy for Gentiles as well. Sometimes in life, even God's people will experience loss and struggle to see hope for good to come out of it. But God carefully works in the lives of individuals to carry out wonderful plans for the eternal good of many souls.

2. Ruth came from a family that did not believe in God, she lived part of her adult life in a country that worshipped false gods, and moved to a country where many formerly faithful people had turned from the true God. Yet through the influence of her husband and his family, God brought her to faith in Him as her Lord and Savior. God gave her the strength then to trust in Him despite many outward influences to turn away from Him. She faithfully followed God while she steadfastly remained with Naomi, as God wished according to the 4th commandment. She walked by faith and turned her back on what at the time seemed better prospects of her parents' home. (When might we need to turn our back on

seemingly better opportunities that take us farther from God?) She walked by faith to serve Naomi, despite Naomi's initial attempts to dissuade her. (Sometimes people resist our attempts to do what God says is right.) She walked by faith as she set out to provide for Naomi in the God-pleasing, God-given work of gleaning (Many times walking by faith requires hard work and patient dedication..) And she walked by faith into the arms of faithful Boaz, not knowing if she might be rejected by him, trusting God that Boaz would do what was best. And God blessed her in ways she probably had never imagined. For her honor and respect to Naomi as well as her faithfulness and trust in God, Ruth received the blessing promised in the 4th commandment, as well as the other blessings of faith in the promised Savior. So, though walking by faith may mean sacrifices, meeting with resistance, requiring hard work and dedication, and asking you to risk yourself for the sake of God's will, God will work through your faith-walk to bless you and others.

PASSAGES

These passages can be assigned as memory work or simply discussed in class as to how they fit the lesson.

Lower
Isaiah 26:3 - You will keep him in perfect peace, Whose mind is stayed on You, Because he trusts in You.

Psalms 17:8 - Keep me as the apple of Your eye; hide me under the shadow of Your wings,

Middle any of the above and...
Revelation 2:10 - "Do not fear any of those things which you are about to suffer. Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life.

Proverbs 3:5-6 - Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; In all your ways acknowledge Him, And He shall direct your paths.

Upper any of the above and...
Luke 18:29-30 - So (Jesus) said to them, "Assuredly , I say to you, there is no one who has left house or parents or brothers or wife or children, for the sake of the kingdom of God who shall not receive many times more in this present time, and in the age to come eternal life."

Ruth 1:16-17 - Ruth said: "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, And your God, my God. Where you die, I will die, and there will I be buried. The LORD do so to me, and more also, if anything but death parts you and me."

HYMN CHOICES

What God Ordains is Always Good.- TLH #521
My God, My Father, Make Me Strong. - TLH #424
O Perfect Love - TLH #623
O Happy Home Where Thou art Loved Most Dearly - TLH #626

STORY
Samuel - 1 Samuel 1-7

TEACHER PRAYER
Heavenly Father, You who are the source of all true wisdom, be with me as I teach these children the material contained in this lesson. Help me to present the truths that You would have them learn in such a way that they will keep them in their hearts and apply them to their lives so that their faith in our gracious God may grow. Keep us all trusting for forgiveness and eternal life in our Savior, Jesus Christ, whom You have sent. Amen.

VOCABULARY
ephah - a measure holding just over three-fourths bushel

horn - strength

abhor - detest, be disgusted by

ephod - a vest with an onyx stone on each shoulder, the names of six of the sons of Israel engraved on each.

cherubim - the golden angels at either end of the ark

tumult - uproar made by a crowd

Dagon - Philistine idol with the face, hands and upper parts of the body of a man; the lower parts tapered into the tail of a fish.

tumors - possibly a symptom of bubonic plague which is spread by the fleas on rats.

diviners - fortune-tellers

consecrated - set apart, usually for sacred purposes

OUTER AIM
God provided a son for Hannah and, in the same person, a new spiritual leader for Israel.

INNER AIM
God still provides for the spiritual needs of His people by sending faithful pastors and teachers. We are to accept them and to reject the false pastors and teachers.

BACKGROUND
(*Rupprecht Bible History References, Vol. I,* pp. 270-277)

For about 450 years after Joshua's death, Israel was a theocracy, ruled by God through the law which He had given His people. However, the people often forgot about God and His will and worshipped heathen idols. God would send enemies to invade their land and afflict them. When they remembered God,

repented of their sin and asked God for help, He would send someone, a judge, to lead them against the enemy and free the people from foreign rule. Samuel was the last of the judges. He led the people back to the worship of the true God.

Chapter 1
vs. 1-7 Elkanah, Samuel's father, had two wives. Penninah had children. Hannah did not. Hannah was loved by her husband. Jealousy led Penninah to taunt Hannah about her not having children.

vs. 8-13 Grief over her childlessness caused Hannah to pour out her misery to the Lord at the tabernacle. She promised that if God gave her a son, she whould give him to the service of God. She prayed silently, only her lips moved.

vs. 14-18 Eli, the priest, jumped to the conclusion that Hannah was drunk. He scolded her. Hannah protested that she had drunk nothing. She was only bringing her grief to the Lord. Eli realized his mistake and encouraged her to believe that God would give her what she had asked.

vs. 19-23 In due time, Hannah bore a son and called him Samuel. Hannah did not go to the yearly sacrifice. She said she would remain at home until Samuel was weaned. Then she would take him to the priest and leave him there.

vs. 24-28 When the time came, Hannah took her son and sacrifices with her to the house of the Lord. After the sacrifices were offered, Hannah brought Samuel to Eli. She explained that she was the woman who had been praying in the tabernacle. God had answered her prayer for a son. Now she was leaving him to the Lord for the rest of his life.

Chapter 2
vs. 1-11 Hannah sings praises to God and rejoices in the salvation He provides. She especially mentions God's justice in dealing with people.

vs. 12-17 The sons of Eli, the priest, were very wicked. They made a mockery of the offerings by taking the best meat for themselves. They greatly offended the worshipers.

vs. 18-21 Each year Hannah would bring her son a new robe when she came to worship. Eli blessed her and her husband. The Lord gave Hannah three sons and two daughters.

vs. 22-26 Eli's sons continued in their wicked ways. Eli scolded them but they would not listen. Samuel grew and found favor with God and man.

vs. 27-36 A man of God pointed out to Eli the sad state of affairs in the priestly office. He warned that punishment would come upon Eli's family. The sign would be the death of Eli's two sons on the same day. Then God would raise up a faithful priest.

Chapter 3

vs.1-14 The Lord came to Samuel at night and revealed to him that He would release His wrath upon Eli and his sons because of the wickedness that Eli did not stop.

vs. 15-18 Samuel was afraid to tell Eli what God told him. Eli persuaded him to talk and accepted God's judgment as revealed to him by Samuel.

vs. 19-4:1 Samuel grew and the people realized that he was a prophet of the Lord. God spoke through Samuel.

Chapter 4

vs. 2-5 Israel was defeated in battle by the Philistines. Without consulting God, the Israelites decided to take the ark of the covenant with them for the next battle as a good luck charm. When the ark came into the camp, the soldiers of Israel shouted loudly.

vs. 6-10 The Philistines were terrified when they learned that the ark was in the Israelite camp. They knew what God had done for the Israelites in Egypt. With little hope of winning, they went into battle and won a decisive victory over the Israelites. They captured the ark and killed Eli's two sons.

vs. 11-18 A messenger brought Eli the news that the Israelites had been badly defeated, the ark had been lost and his two sons had been killed. Eli fell backward from his seat and died of a broken neck.

vs. 19-22 After hearing the news that the ark had been captured and that her father-in-law and her husband were dead, the wife of Phinehas gave birth to a son. Before she, too, died, she named her son, Ichabod, meaning, "The glory has departed."

Chapter 5

vs. 1-5 The captured ark was taken to Ashdod and placed in the temple of Dagon, the fish-man god of the Philistines. Two days in a row the idol was found face-down before the ark, the second day with its head and hands broken off.

vs. 6-12 The people of Ashdod felt God's wrath. They were stricken with tumors. The ark was moved to Gath where the people suffered the same calamities. From there it was taken to Ekron with the same deadly results.

Chapter 6

vs. 1-6 The desperate Philistines wanted to send the ark back to Israel. Their wise men told them to send an offering along with it, five golden tumors and five golden rats (mice).

vs. 7-12 A new cart was made to carry the ark. Two untrained milk cows were hitched to the cart. Their calves were taken away from them. The cows' natural reaction would be to refuse to pull the cart and to stay near their calves. If they would take the road to the land of Israel, it would be a sign that God had

caused the evil to the Philistines. If they refused to leave their calves, the evil was by chance alone. The cows headed straight for Israel and did not turn aside. The lords of the Philistines followed to see what would happen.

vs. 13-16 When the cart reached Beth Shemesh in Israel, the people rejoiced to see the ark. They chopped up the cart and sacrificed the cows as a burnt offering to the Lord. The Philistine rulers returned home.

vs. 17-7:1 The golden tumors were a trespass offering, one for each of the five chief Philistine cities. There was a golden rat for each of the cities and villages of the Philistines. The Lord killed some of the men of Beth Shemesh for looking into the ark. (The reading of the Hebrew is difficult and perhaps means that of the 50,000 men in the area, God struck 70.) The men of Beth Shemesh were afraid and didn't want to keep the ark. They asked the men of Kirjath Jearim to take it. They did.

Chapter 7
vs. 2-4 Samuel carried out a reformation. He persuaded the people to put away the worship of heathen idols.

vs. 5-8 Samuel called the people to Mispah for a service of repentance. The Philistines mistook the gathering as the preparation for attacking them.

vs. 9-12 A sacrifice was offered by Samuel. He prayed for the Lord to help them. The Lord sent a tremendous thunderstorm which confused the Philistines. The Israelites attacked and God gave them a great victory. Samuel set up a memorial stone and called it Ebenezer, "So far the Lord has helped us."

STUDENT PRAYER

Dear heavenly Father, You have given us Your Word. By it You guide us to live lives pleasing to You. You lead us to believe in your Son Jesus Christ as our Savior from sin and eternal damnation. As You gave the Israelites a faithful teacher in Samuel, so give us faithful pastors and teachers to teach what we should believe and do according to Your Word. We ask it in Jesus' name. Amen.

PRESENTATION

God gives His people what they need. He does it in His way and when He thinks it best. The Israelites had been turning away from God to worship heathen idols. This was due in part to the weakness of Eli and the wickedness of his sons, Phinehas and Hophni. God began to prepare for a new religious leader by answering Hannah's prayer for a son. When Samuel was old enough, he went to live with Eli. In this way God arranged to have Samuel trained for his work as a priest and a judge. God spoke to Samuel and revealed that He would punish Eli and his family for their unfaithfulness.

God used the Philistines to bring about the change in religious leadership. They defeated the Israelites in

battle and captured the ark of the covenant. Eli's sons were killed in battle. Eli died from a fall when he heard that the ark had leen lost. The Lord caused so much death and misery among the Philistines that they returned the ark seven months later. Samuel led the people of Israel to repent of their sins and the Lord gave them a great victory over the Philistines. Samuel was a faithful priest and judge until he died.

APPLICATION

Our Savior prayed to His heavenly Father, "This is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent." It is absolutely necessary that people know about, and be led to believe in, the true God and His Son Jesus. Anyone who interferes with such knowledge and faith angers God. Such was the case of Eli and his sons. God knew what would happen and planned years ahead how He would remove them and provide a new spiritual leader for His people.

The world has not changed. Unfaithful pastors and teachers are common. God has provided the means by which people may protect themselves from such false teachers. He has given us His Word, the Bible, by which we learn what is true. By comparing what we hear and read with what Scripture says, we can tell the right from the wrong. We are to support what is according to Scripture. We are to flee that which is contrary to Scripture. We pray that the Lord would provide us with faithful pastors and teachers.

PASSAGES

These passages can be assigned as memory work or simply discussed in class as to how they fit the lesson.

Ps. 1:6 - The Lord knows the way of the righteous, but the way of the ungodly shall perish.

Ps. 50:15 - Call upon Me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you and you shall glorify Me.

Matt. 21:22 - All things, whatever you ask in prayer, believing, you will receive.

Luke 11:28 - Blessed are those who hear the word of God and keep it.

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

Col. 3:20 - Children, obey your parents in all things; for this is well pleasing to the Lord.

HYMN CHOICES

Before Jehovah's Awe-full Throne - TLH #13
The Lord hath Helped Me Hitherto - TLH #33
Speak, O Lord, Thy Servant Heareth - TLH 296
The Man Is Ever Blest - TLH #414
God Moves in a Mysterious Way - TLH #514

STORY
Saul - 1 Samuel 8-15

TEACHER PRAYER
Dear God, my heavenly Father, who tells us, "Let him who has My word speak My word faithfully," guide and direct me as I teach this lesson to the children in my class so that I teach that which you would have them learn from it. Help me to impress upon them that Your will is to be done. But when they fail to do so, lead them to repent and to trust in the forgiveness which Jesus has earned for them and all people. We ask it in His saving name. Amen.

VOCABULARY
terebinth - a type of oak tree
ephod - a vest with an onyx stone on each shoulder, the names of six of the sons of Israel engraved on each.

OUTER AIM
The people of Israel demanded a king. God gave them Saul who started well, but later followed his own will and lost God's support.

INNER AIM
Unrepented disobedience to God can only result in disaster.

BACKGROUND
Rupprecht *Bible History References, Vol. 1,* pp. 279-285)

The people of Israel were not content to have God rule them through judges and prophets. They wanted a king to lead them. Samuel did not like this, but God told him to listen to them. God selected Saul to be the king. He was accepted by the people when he led them to victory over the Ammonites who were besieging Jabesh Gilead. Saul disobeyed God by offering a sacrifice which was unlawful for him to do. His excuse was that he had hoped to keep more of his soldiers from deserting. Because of this sin, the throne would not remain in his family.

God gave the Israelites victory over the Philistines. Saul's son, Jonathan, had eaten some honey during the battle. He did not know about Saul's foolish oath that no one should eat before evening. Saul's soldiers would not permit him to punish Jonathan. Saul was ordered by God to utterly destroy the Amalekites. He spared the king and some of the best animals. God rejected him as king.

Chapter 8
Because Samuel's sons were unworthy to succeed him as judges, the people asked him to give them a king. In doing so, they were rejecting God's direct leadership. God told Samuel to give them a king. Samuel explained to the people just what demands a king would make of them.

Chapter 9
Saul, of the tribe of Benjamin, was a tall, humble and handsome young man. He was sent to find some of his father's donkeys which had strayed. He learned that there was a man of God in town. He went to learn from him where the donkeys were. The man, Samuel, informed him that the donkeys had been found. He took Saul and his servant in to eat with him. The next morning Samuel went out of the city to send them on their way.

Chapter 10
Samuel anointed Saul to be king. To prove that this was really so, Samuel told Saul exactly what would happen on his way home. Everything happened as Samuel had said. Saul was given a new heart, that of a king. The Holy Spirit came upon him and he prophesied. His uncle asked him what had happened. He told about the search for the donkeys, but not about Samuel. Samuel called the representatives of all the people to meet. Lots were cast and Saul was chosen. Samuel told them that Saul was their king. Not all were happy with the choice.

Chapter 11
The Ammonites besieged Jabesh-Gilead. The inhabitants learned that they could have peace only if they permitted their right eyes to be put out. They asked and received a week to make a decision. Messengers brought word to Saul. He summoned the men of Israel who, with God's help, destroyed the Ammonite army. Offerings were made to the Lord.

Chapter 12
Samuel gave an address at Saul's coronation in which he pointed out that he had served the Israelites well. They had sinned by rejecting God's rule and asking for a king. The people repented after God sent a very unusual storm during the harvest season. Samuel told them not to fear, but to serve the Lord with all their heart.

Chapter 13
Saul recruited an army. When his son Jonathan attacked a Philistine garrison, the enemy came in force. The Israelites waited for Samuel to come to offer a sacrifice. When Samuel hadn't arrived at the set time, Saul offered the sacrifice which was not lawful for him to do. Because of this, his family would not keep the throne. The Israelite army was poorly equipped because the Philistines did not permit blacksmiths among the Israelites.

Chapter 14
Jonathan and his armorbearer attacked an enemy garrison. This caused panic in the enemy camp. The noise attracted Saul's attention. The Israelites attacked and God gave them a great victory. The army of the Israelitles was handicapped by hunger. Saul had foolishly taken an oath forbidding his men to eat until evening. Jonathan had not heard about the oath and had eaten some honey. When God did not answer Saul's request to pursue the enemy that night, he realized that someone had broken the oath. Lots were cast and it was learned that Jonathan had eaten some honey. The soldiers would not let Jonathan be killed for this. Saul had war with enemies on every side.

Chapter 15
The Lord sent Saul to destroy utterly the Amalekites who years earlier had attacked the Israelites on the way to the Promised Land. Saul was successful, but spared the king and the best of the cattle and sheep. The Lord sent Samuel to speak to Saul about his disobedience. Saul blamed the people for saving the animals for a sacrifice to God. Samuel told him that obedience was better than sacrifice. Saul was rejected by God as king. The Amalekite king was executed and Samuel went home, never to see Saul again.

STUDENT PRAYER

Dear heavenly Father, who clearly shows us what You wish for us to do and to avoid doing in Your Word, prevent us from following our own ways when they are contrary to what You expect of us. Give us the desire and the strength to follow where You lead us. When we fail to do as we should, lead us to ask Your forgiveness and comfort us with the assurance that our sins are forgiven, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

PRESENTATION

Dissatisfaction over the judges by whom God had ruled Israel led the people to demand a king like the nations around them. God gave them a king, Saul the son of Kish. He started well as a humble servant of God. But later he chose to ignore God's will and to do things his own way. When he failed to destroy the Amalekites completely, God rejected him as king.

APPLICATIONS

Though God chose Saul to be king and he started well, he was weak. He trusted in himself and lost God's help and finally his life and kingdom.

God's guidance is always good. He makes no mistakes. Human leaders are often wrong. We do well to follow God's will and not our own or that of others.

PASSAGES

These passages can be assigned as memory work or simply discussed in class as to how they fit the lesson.

Lower
1 John 5:3 This is the love of God, that we keep His commandments.

Middle any of the above and...
Prov. 3:5 Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding.

Upper any of the above and...
Jer. 17:5 Cursed is the man who trusts in man, and makes flesh his arm, and whose heart departs from the Lord.

Prov. 14:12 There is a way which seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death.

HYMN CHOICES

The Law of God Is Good and Wise - TLH #295
Speak, O Lord, Thy Servant Heareth - TLH #296
God Moves in a Mysterious Way TLH - #514
If Thou But Suffer God to Guide Thee - TLH #518
If God Himself Be for Me - TLH #528

STORY
David Anointed King - I Samuel 16

TEACHER PRAYER
Lord God, heavenly Father, Your holy word is forever settled in the heavens. Bless my study of Your saving Word and help me share it with my class. Send me Your Holy Spirit and "lead us into all Truth." No matter where we turn, in Your precious Word, enable us to see Jesus, our Lord and Savior. Amen

VOCABULARY
sanctify, consecrate - set apart as holy, make sacred for religious use, purify
ruddy - red, healthy looking, reddish
prudent - sensible, wise, discreet valor - bravery, courage

OUTER AIM
God chose a new king for His people

INNER AIM
God knows all things, even the thoughts and intents of the heart

BACKGROUND
(Rupprecht Bible History References, Vol. 1, pp. 286-289)
King Saul had disobeyed an explicit command from the Lord. As a result, the Lord rejected him as king. The Lord now chose a young man named David to become his successor. The Lord sent the prophet Samuel to anoint David as king.

v. 1 Jesse was grandson of Boaz and Ruth. He lived in or near Bethlehem. He was a man of some means and had eight sons. The Lord would choose one of his sons to become the next king of Israel.

vs. 2-3 Samuel was afraid Saul would come and kill him if he found out that he anointed a new king in Israel. The Lord, therefore, told Samuel what to do. He was to go to Bethlehem to sacrifice and to invite Jesse to come.

vs. 6-10 Samuel was sure Jesse's firstborn son, Eliab, was God's choice to become the next king. The Lord said no and then went on to explain. Seven of Jesse's sons passed before Samuel. None of them was to become king.

vs. 11-13 David, the youngest, was chosen by the Lord. He wasn't even present at the sacrifice. He was a shepherd and was tending the sheep. The Lord revealed to Samuel that David was the one chosen to become king. David was then anointed, and God the Holy Spirit was poured out upon him.

v. 14 An evil spirit replaced the Holy Spirit in Saul's heart and life. He had disobeyed and forsaken the Lord and did not sincerely repent. He had fallen from grace and had become an unbeliever.

vs. 15-16 Saul's servants tried to help their king. Certain music gave Saul some relief. A skillful musician was sought.

vs. 17-18 David was chosen. He not only played the harp very well, but he was honorable, strong, wise, and good-looking as well. Most important of all, they knew that "the Lord was with him." They did not, however, know that David had been anointed by Samuel the prophet to be the next king.

vs. 21 David became Saul's personal attendant, eventually his armorbearer. He was in a position of high honor. The Lord was training and preparing David to become the next king of Israel.

vs. 23 Saul was granted some relief, but he did not turn again to the Lord. He remained an unbeliever the rest of his life.

STUDENT PRAYER

Lord God, heavenly Father, to You belongs "the Kingdom, the Power, and the Glory." You govern the affairs of men and nations. You govern our individual lives. You know all things; You know what is best. Your will be done. You know even the thoughts and intents of our hearts. O Lord, forgive our many sins and help us live a God-pleasing life, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

PRESENTATION

At first the Children of Israel lived under a theocracy in Canaan, the land of promise. God raised up prophets and judges. He spoke and ruled through them. After a time the people asked for a king like their heathen neighbors had. God gave them a king. The prophet Samuel was sent by God to anoint Saul as Israel's first king. When Saul later turned away from the Lord, the Lord rejected him as king and chose another-David.

APPLICATIONS

When the Lord chose Saul to become king, Saul was a believer. As the years went by, Saul fell from faith. He trusted in himself and not the Lord. He rejected the Lord in his unbelief, and the Lord rejected him as king.

The Lord knows all things. He knows the thoughts and intents of our hearts. We may be able to fool others, but we can't fool the Lord.

PASSAGES

These passages can be assigned as memory work or simply discussed in class as to how they fit the lesson.
Lower

I Samuel 16:7 - Man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart.

John 2:24-25 - Jesus knew all men, and had no need that anyone should testify of man, for He knew what was in man.

Middle any of the above and...

I Corinthians 10:12 - Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall.

Upper any of the above and...

Psalms 147:11 - The LORD takes pleasure in those who fear Him, in those who hope in His mercy.

HYMN CHOICES

"My Faith Looks Up To Thee" (TLH #394)
"Oh, For A Faith That Will Not Shrink" (TLH #396)
"Renew Me, O Eternal Light" (TLH #398)
"Praise To Thee And Adoration" (TLH #401)
"Oh, That The Lord Would Guide My Ways" (TLH #416)

STORY
David and Goliath - I Samuel 17

TEACHER PRAYER
O Lord, You have called me to feed Your precious lambs. What a special privilege You have given me! Be with me as I prepare my lesson. Send me Your Holy Spirit. Help me impress upon my students Your power to deliver and save. You, O Lord, are the Savior of both soul and body. Amen.

VOCABULARY
cubit - the distance from the elbow to the extremity of the middle finger-estimated from 18-21 inches. *armed* - "clothed" with scaled body armor
coat of mail - scaled body armor (Goliath's weighed about 150 lbs.)
5000 shekels of bronze - 150 lbs. or more
weaver's beam - 4" to 5" in diameter
600 shekels - 20 lbs. or more
ephah - unit of measure
uncircumcised - heathen, spiritually unclean, an unbeliever
Span - the distance between the extremities of the thumb and the little finger in the outstretched hand-
a half cubit
sling - a weapon of ancient times, made of a piece of leather tied to cords and used for hurling stones (slingshot)

OUTER AIM
The Lord enables David to overcome Goliath.

INNER AIM
The Lord is able to deliver and save.

BACKGROUND
((Rupprecht, Bible History References, Vol. 1, pp. 289-293)
David was a young man when Samuel anointed him to some day be the next king of Israel. A number of years passed before he actually was crowned king. During this time the Lord carefully prepared his servant for what lay ahead. That preparation included his combat with the giant named Goliath. This encounter made David a national hero. Rupprecht estimates David was 18 at his anointing, 21 when he fought Goliath, and 30 when he actually became king.

vs. 1-3 For the Philistines this was a war of revenge. They had been defeated in battle with Israel not long before this. Israel's armies had been led by Saul's son Jonathan. The battle lines were now drawn in an area southwest of Jerusalem.

vs. 4 Goliath was anywhere from 9 feet 9 inches to 11 feet 4 inches tall. He truly was a giant among men! Joshua 11:22 speaks of a race of giants in the days of Joshua. Goliath perhaps was from this same area of Canaan, now under the rule of the Philistines.

vs. 5-7 Goliath was a formidable opponent indeed-strong and tall.

vs. 8-10 Goliath was certain he could easily defeat any one Israelite. He suggested one-on-one combat instead of army against army. If he was victorious, Israel would serve the Philistines. If a man from Israel was victorious, the Philistines would become Israel's servants.

vs. 11 The army of Israel was filled with fear and terror. They did not trust in the Lord who had helped them so often in the past. They feared the worst.

vs. 15 Even though David was Saul's armorbearer, he was not trained for battle. He was often sent home in time of war.

vs. 25 A three-fold reward was offered for anyone who could defeat Goliath.

vs. 26 David here confesses his faith in God.

vs. 33 Saul relied on human reason; he had no faith in God.

vs. 34-37 David displays heroic faith and childlike trust in the Lord and His help. The Lord had delivered him in the past (lion and bear) and would also in the future.

vs. 39 David had no experience in wearing armor combat.

vs. 40 David went out against Goliath armed as a shepherd.

vs. 41-47 Goliath trusted in his false gods and in his own personal strength. David trusted in the one true and living God, not in himself.

vs. 49-50 The Lord granted David the victory and delivered him from the giant Goliath.

STUDENT PRAYER

O dearest Jesus, You have promised that You will be with us always, even unto the end of the world. You are our Lord and Savior. Defend us from our enemies and lead us into all truth. Deliver us from every evil, physical and spiritual. Forgive our frequent lack of faith. Help us to rely upon You more and more in everything. Amen.

PRESENTATION

The Biblical record of David and Goliath is not mere fiction nor a myth. It really happened. It is an historical fact. "The Scriptures cannot be broken." "God's Word is truth." The account is very familiar to most of us.

Much detail is recorded for us to help us appreciate the seriousness of the situation and the miraculous nature of the deliverance. Help the students to realize and visualize the size of Goliath. He truly was a giant among men!

Also impress upon the students that it was the Lord who delivered David, not his skill and cunning with the slingshot.

APPLICATIONS

The Lord was with David. David trusted in the Lord, and the Lord delivered him. David was not tempting the Lord. He firmly believed that the Lord could and would preserve him. We need to pray for the faith and strength to follow David's example.

The faith David displayed was a gift from God. Our faith is a gift from God, too.

David faced a great foe. We face a great foe, too-the devil. Like David, only the Lord can deliver and save us.

Life in this world is filled with trials and tribulations. The Lord can and will deliver us from them all. We can be confident of that.

PASSAGES

These passages can be assigned as memory work or simply discussed in class as to how they fit the lesson.

Lower
Psalm 46:1 - God is our Refuge and Strength, a very present Help in trouble.
Psalm 56:11 - In God have I put my trust; I will not be afraid what man can do to me.
Psalm 91:10-11 - No evil shall befall you, nor shall any plague come near your dwelling; for He shall give His angels charge over you, to keep you in all your ways.
Psalm 124:8 - Our help is in the name of the Lord, who made heaven and earth.
Matt. 7:7 - Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you.
Hebrews 4:16 - Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.
I Peter 5:6 - Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God that he may exalt you in due time.
I Peter 5:7 - Casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you."

Middle any of the above and...

Upper any of the above and...

HYMN CHOICES

"A Mighty Fortress Is Our God" (TLH #262)
"Oh, For A Faith That Will Not Shrink" (TLH #396)
"How Firm a Foundation, Ye Saints Of The Lord" (TLH #427)
"I Am Trusting Thee, Lord Jesus" (TLH #428)
"Jesus, My Truth, My Way" (TLH #433)
The Lord's My Shepherd, I'll Not Want" (TLH #436)
"Who Trusts in God, A Strong Abode" (TLH #437)

STORY
David Becomes King - I Samuel 31 - II Samuel 7

TEACHER PRAYER
Lord, Your holy Word is "a lamp unto our feet and a light unto our path." Those who listen to It and treasure It will be richly blessed. Continue to bless my study of Your Word and those who hear It proclaimed by me. "It is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness." Amen.

VOCABULARY

OUTER AIM
David becomes the second king of Israel.

INNER AIM
The Lord richly blessed David and enabled him to become Israel's greatest king.

BACKGROUND
(Rupprecht, Bible History References, Vol. 1, pp. 306-311)
David was anointed by Samuel the prophet at about the age of 18. David didn't become king until he was about 30. For 12 years David waited to become king while Saul sat on the throne. During this time the Lord was preparing David. Saul made David's life very miserable. Again and again he tried to kill him. David was hunted like an outlaw. During these years of adversity, the Lord strengthened David spiritually. During these years David wrote some of his greatest, and most beautiful psalms. With the Lord's blessing, he became one of the best kings Israel ever had.

I Samuel 31 (The tragic end of Saul and his sons)
The Philistines defeated the army of Israel near Mt. Gilboa. They pursued Saul and his three sons. Jonathan, Albinadab, and Malchishua were slain. Saul, himself, was severely wounded by archers. He asked his own armorbearer to kill him before the Philistines could. The armorbearer refused. Saul therefore killed himself and so did his armorbearer.

Samuel 1 (The report of Saul's death)
One man who escaped from Saul's camp reported to David all that had transpired. He hoped for a rich reward. This man claimed to have been there when Saul and his sons died. He even claimed to have taken Saul's life, as Saul requested. David had the man executed. David then mourned for Saul and Jonathan and wrote a song in memory of them.

II Samuel 2 (David anointed king of Judah)
David was anointed by Judah at Hebron as the next king. But Abner, commander of Saul's army, took Saul's son Ishbosheth (40 years old) and made him king over the remainder of Israel. Only Judah followed David. David ruled over Judah for 7 ½ years.

Joab was David's commander-in-chief. There was a fierce battle between the forces of Joab and Abner. Judah prevailed. Abner and his men fled. Joab's brother pursued him and was killed. There was a temporary truce between Judah and Israel.

II Samuel 3 (Abner switches sides)
Fighting continued between Judah and Israel. The house of David grew stronger and stronger. The house of Saul grew weaker and weaker. There was a disagreement between Abner and Ishbosheth, king of Israel. Abner chose to join forces with David and delivered all Israel and Benjamin to him at Hebron.

Joab didn't trust Abner, and he told David so. Without David's knowledge, Joab later killed Abner in a trap. David mourned greatly for Abner.

II Samuel 4 (The reaction in Israel)
Ishbosheth and all Israel lost heart and were deeply troubled over Abner's death. Two of Ishbosheth's military leaders turned against him and killed him. They went to David for reward; but they, in turn, were killed.

II Samuel 5 (David anointed king of Israel)
David became king over all Israel at the age of 30, and he reigned for 40 years. He ruled over Judah for 7 ½ years and over all Israel and Judah for 33 years. Jerusalem became the city of David. David became a great king, and the Lord was with him.

The king of Tyre sent messengers to David along with cedar trees and workers. They built a house (palace) for David in Jerusalem. David's family grew. Twice the Lord helped him defeat the Philistines.

II Samuel 6 (The ark of the covenant)
David had the ark of the covenant moved to Jerusalem and a new tabernacle. There was a joyful procession with music and dancing. One man died when he touched the ark. David offered sacrifices before the Lord and blessed the people of Israel. Israel now truly had a king who feared the Lord.

II Samuel 7 (God's covenant with David) The Lord graciously granted David peace with his neighbors for a time. David, himself, lived in a beautiful house built out of cedar, but the ark of the Lord sat in a tent (tabernacle). David wanted to build a house for the Lord and the ark. He spoke to Nathan the prophet about his concerns and desires. The Lord told Nathan to tell David that his son and heir would build the Lord's house. He also predicted that David's son would become a great king with an even greater kingdom. The Lord also promised David that His descendant (Jesus) would be "king of kings and lord of lords." He would have an everlasting kingdom. David then offered up a prayer of praise and thanks to the Lord.

STUDENT PRAYER

Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior, You have loved each of us with an everlasting love. You have promised to be with us always, even unto the end of the world. Assure us continually of Your grace and blessing in our daily lives. Forgive our many, many sins. Strengthen our weak faith. Help us to live God-pleasing lives more and more. Amen.

PRESENTATION

This particular Bible story covers eight chapters in the Bible. The background notes summarize those chapters and condense the material. Not all the events recorded in them need to be taught in this lesson. They are noted here simply for the teacher's information.

Stress how the Lord was with David-how He richly blessed him and carefully prepared him for his reign as king. Similarly the Lord blesses us and prepares us for our life in this world. We need to remind ourselves and our students of this truth: "Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God." (I Cor. 10:31)

APPLICATIONS

Much is told us in Scripture about David's life and rise to the position of king. There is much that we can learn from it. The Lord also guides us in our life and blesses us. He wants us, as a fruit of faith, to live our lives unto Him and in His service.

PASSAGES

These passages can be assigned as memory work or simply discussed in class as to how they fit the lesson. Lower
Psalms 37:25 - "I have been young, and now am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his descendants begging bread."

Psalms 115:3 - "But our God is in heaven; He does whatever He pleases."

Matt. 28:20b - "Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."

John 15:16 - "You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain, that whatever you ask the Father in My name He may give you."

Romans 8:28 - "And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose."

Romans 8:32 - "He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?"

I Peter 2:9 - "But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light." (cf. v. 10)

I John 3:1 - "Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed upon us that we should be called children of God."

Middle any of the above and... Upper
any of the above and...

HYMN CHOICES

"Come Thou Precious Ransom, Come" (TLH #554) "Blessed Are The Sons Of God" (TLH #391)
"Take My Life and Let It Be" (TLH #400)
"Jesus, Lead Thou On" (TLH #410)
"The Lord's My Shepherd, I'll Not Want" (TLH #436) "For All Thy Saints, O Lord" (TLH #468)

STORY
David and Bathsheba - II Samuel 11:1-12:25

TEACHER PRAYER
O dearest Jesus, we daily sin much in thought, word, and deed. We so desperately need You for a Savior. You lived that perfect life which we could never live, keeping the commandments perfectly. You also suffered and died for all the sins of all mankind. Forgive our sins, O Savior, and help us to ever amend our sinful lives according to Your holy Word. Amen.

VOCABULARY

OUTER AIM
David's fall into sin and his repentance

INNER AIM
The snowball effect of sin

BACKGROUND
(Rupprecht, Bible History References, Vol. 1, pp. 311-315)
David was a mighty king for Israel. The Lord was with him and blessed him richly. One neighboring enemy after another was defeated and subdued by David and his army. Israel had become a great nation, richly blessed by the Lord. Not only was David concerned about the temporal welfare of his people but the spiritual as well. To this end, inspired by the Holy Spirit, David wrote many a psalm. In those beautiful psalms we find prayers, hymns, and prophecies. David, indeed, was a great king, a man of great faith; but he was not without sin. The devil led David into temptation, and he committed two terrible sins-adultery and murder.

<u>Chapter 11 - David's Fall</u>
vs. 1 Usually the king personally led his army into battle. On this occasion, David didn't. The Ammonites were descendants of Lot. Rabbah was their capital.

vs. 2 It was a flat roof.

vs. 3 Uriah was one of David's commanders in his army.

vs. 4 David commited adultery.

vs. 6 Uriah was called back from the battle.

vs. 8-9 David attempted to cover up his sin with Bathsheba by having Uriah return home for a few days so he could spend time with Bathsheba and Uriah might think the baby was his. The plan didn't work; Uriah didn't go home to Bathsheba.

vs. 12-13 David again attempted to cover up his sin by getting Uriah drunk and hoping he would go home to Bathsheba. This plan, too, didn't work.

vs. 15-17 David's third attempt to cover his sin was to have Uriah killed in battle.

vs. 18 Joab, David's commander-in-chief, shared in David's sin.

vs. 25 David was very cold about his sin and its seriousness. He pretended it never happened. He hoped all would view it simply as an act of war.

vs. 26-27 Bathsheba was not innocent in this case either. She was an active partner in the seduction and the adultery. David thought no one knew about his sins, but the Lord knew.

Chapter 12 - David's Repentance
vs. 1-9 Nathan the prophet confronts David with his sin. He tells a little parable to get David's attention. David was the rich man in the parable; Uriah was the poor man.

vs. 10-12 The Lord's prophet reveals the consequences of David's grievous sins. There was to be fighting and killing and turmoil within David's house as long as he reigned as king.

vs. 13-14 David confesses his great sins, and Nathan immediately assures him of God's forgiveness. The prophet also reveals that David's son with Bathsheba would die.

vs. 23b David's faith in the resurrection of the dead and the life everlasting is clearly revealed.

vs. 24 The name Solomon means "peaceful."

STUDENT PRAYER
Lord God, heavenly Father, we must confess our many, many sins. We so often do what we shouldn't, and we so often don't do what we should. We daily sin much in thought, word, and deed. We deserve only Your wrath and punishment. O Lord, forgive our many sins and help us live our lives unto You. For Jesus' sake. Amen.

PRESENTATION
Point out that David was a great king. He did many good things for Israel. Scripture describes him as "a man after God's own heart." He was very concerned about both the temporal and spiritual welfare of his people. He was also blessed with the gift of spirtual song and prophecy. He was inspired by the holy Spirit to write and record many hymns and prayers in the Book of Psalms.

David, however, was not beyond temptation and sin. The devil succeeded in leading him into two grievous sins-adultery and murder. By God's grace, he was later brought to repentance and restored to God's family. Some of his greatest psalms reflect his experiences.

APPLICATIONS
None of us is immune to temptation. If great men of faith like David succumbed, so can we. It's important that our sins, no matter how great, can be forgiven. "The blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, cleanses us from all sin."

This lesson demonstrates how one sin can lead to another. We can clearly see in this lesson the snowball effect of sin.
This lesson also reveals that "where sin abounded, grace did much more abound."

Finally, we can see that even though our sins can be forgiven, they often carry with them certain consequences.

PASSAGES

These passages can be assigned as memory work or simply discussed in class as to how they fit the lesson.

Lower

Isaiah 1:18 - Come now, and let us reason together, says the Lord. Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool.

John 1:29 - Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!

Romans 3:23-24 - For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God; being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.

Romans 5:20 - But where sin abounded, grace abounded much more.

Romans 6:23 - For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Romans 8:1 - There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit."

Ephesians 1:7 - In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace.

I Timothy 2:4 - God our Savior desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.

I Peter 1:5 - You are kept by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

I Peter 5:8-9 - Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. Resist him, steadfast in the faith.

II Peter 3:9 - The Lord is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.

I John 2:1-2 - If anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world.

Middle any of the above and...

Upper any of the above and...

HYMN CHOICES

"Jesus Sinners Doth Receive" (TLH #324:1)
"Rock Of Ages, Cleft For Me" (TLH #376)
"Lord, We Confess Our Numerous Faults" (TLH #382)
"Just As I Am, Without One Plea" (TLH #388)
"Blessed Are The Sons Of God" (TLH #391)
"Renew Me, O Eternal Light" (TLH #398)
"Oh, That The Lord Would Guide My Ways" (TLH #416)
"Rise, My Soul, To Watch And Pray" (TLH #446)

STORY
Absalom's Rebellion - II Samuel 13:30 - 18:33

TEACHER PRAYER
Lord God, heavenly Father, bless the students entrusted to my spiritual care. Strengthen their faith through
Your holy Word and Spirit and lead them in the path of faith and righteousness. Whenever they fall into
temptation, call them to repentance and graciously restore them to Your fold. In Jesus' saving Name. Amen.

VOCABULARY

OUTER AIM
Absalom rebelled against his father David and tried to steal the kingdom from him.

INNER AIM
The Lord will deliver us from all evil.

BACKGROUND
(Rupprecht, Bible History References, Vol. 1, pp. 317-323)
The Word of the Lord came true concerning David and his royal house. Much intrigue, quarreling, fighting, and even killing were going on.

Chapter 13
David had many sons and daughters besides Solomon. He had more than one wife. In this chapter we learn about Absalom, Tamar, and Amnon. Absalom and Tamar were brother and sister. Amnon was another brother from a different wife of David, and he loved Tamar. She was very beautiful. We read how Amnon seduced Tamar, defiled her, and then rejected her. When David heard what had happened, he was very angry. Absalom didn't do anything at first, but two years later he conceived a plot and killed Amnon. David, his sons, and servants mourned for Amnon. Absalom fled to Syria and stayed there for three years.

Chapter 14
King David was concerned about Absalom. Joab, David's commander-in-chief, devised a clever scheme to get David to permit Absalom to return to Jerusalem in peace. The king granted Joab's request; Absalom returned, but David never saw Absalom face to face for two more years.

Absalom was a very handsome man and was admired by all. He had such beautiful hair and lots of it. He had three sons and one daughter (Tamar), who also was very beautiful.

Finally, Absalom desired to see his father again. He urged Joab to arrange for a reconciliation. David kissed his son when he finally saw him.

Chapter 15
Absalom conveted his father David. He endeavored to steal the throne from him. He sought the support of the people. He made all sorts of promises and tried to steal their hearts and get their support. After some time, Absalom thought he was strong enough to overthrow his father. The conspiracy grew stronger and stronger; more and more people followed Absalom. David and his army

and his followers fled Jerusalem, fearing an attack. He had hoped to spare his beloved city as much pain and suffering as possible. He crossed the Brook Kidron with his people and climbed the Mount of Olives. He wept as he went.

Chapter 16
A servant of Jonathan's son Mephibosheth came out in support of David. Shimei, a man from Saul's house, came out to curse David. At that point David made a beautiful confession of his faith and hope (vs. 12). Absalom and his people took control of Jerusalem.

Chapter 17
Ahithophel, David's former counselor, was now serving Absalom. Absalom asked him what he should do. Ahithophel told him, but Absalom followed the counsel of another man, David's friend Hushai. Hushai pretended to follow Absalom, but secretly he was still loyal to David. Absalom consulted with Hushai and preferred his advice. Feeling betrayed and rejected, Ahithophel left Absalom, returned home, and killed himself.

David and his army crossed over the Jordan River and were befriended by the Ammonites.

Chapter 18
David prepared his army for battle. He himself remained behind. He ordered his generals to deal gently with Absalom. Absalom and all Israel attacked David and the men of Judah. Absalom's army was defeated, and Absalom fled on his mule. His long hair became entangled in the branches of a tree, and he hung there while his mule kept on going. Joab and his men killed Absalom and buried him. The remnant of Israel's army fled.

David was informed of the outcome of the battle and the death of his son. He wept bitterly.

STUDENT PRAYER

Dear heavenly Father, we face all sorts of temptation from the devil, the world, and our flesh. Whenever we fall into temptation, call us to repentance and restore us to Your fold. Whenever various trials and tribulations come our way, give us the strength to persevere and endure. We are confident that You can and will deliver us from every evil. In Jesus' saving Name. Amen.

PRESENTATION

- After David's great fall into sin, the Lord announced that he would experience some great trials within his family. "Thus saith the Lord, behold I will raise up evil against thee out of thine own house." These words were fulfilled when David's son Absalom rebelled against his father and tried to steal the kingdom from him.
- There were earlier situations within his family which also brought David much grief.
- Absalom was very handsome and had beautiful hair, but he was very vain and proud. His inner character was severely blemished.

APPLICATIONS

1. David mourned for his son Absalom, not only because he was dead but also because he had died in his sins and unbelief.
2. There are places in this lesson where David serves as a type (or symbol) of Christ-his weeping over Jerusalem and crossing the Kidron and ascending the Mt. of Olives. There are other aspects of his life which parallel Christ's as well.

PASSAGES

These passages can be assigned as memory work or simply discussed in class as to how they fit the lesson.

Lower
Matthew 26:41 - Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.
Acts 14:22 - We must through many tribulations enter the kingdom of God.
I Corinthians 10:12 - Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall.
II Timothy 4:18 - And the Lord will deliver me from every evil work and preserve me for his heavenly kingdom.
I Peter 1:5 - You are kept by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.
I Peter 5:8-9 - Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. Resist him, steadfast in the faith.

Middle any of the above...

Upper any of the above...

HYMN CHOICES

"Oh, That The Lord Would Guide My Ways" (TLH #416)
"I Am Trusting Thee, Lord Jesus" (TLH #428)
"Every Morning Mercies New" (TLH #537)
"Now The Shades Of Night Are Gone" (TLH #538)
"I Am Jesus' Little Lamb" (TLH #648)
"Beautiful Savior" (TLH #657)

STORY

Solomon as King and the Building the Temple - I Kings 1-11 and I Chronicles 28-29

TEACHER PRAYER

Dear Jesus, the Wisdom from on high, I pray that You fill my heart with the wisdom of Your Word so that I can proclaim that wisdom to my students. Do not let me trust or rely upon my own wisdom or abilities, but fill me with the Holy Spirit so the words I teach are truly from You. May this heavenly Wisdom remain in my heart and my students' hearts and lives forever until we stand before You in perfect wisdom, righteousness and peace. I ask this in Your name. Amen.

VOCABULARY

OUTER AIM

God gave Solomon wisdom, riches and honor to use to glorify His name in his rulership of Israel and in the building of the Lord's house.

INNER AIM

We should use all the blessings God gives us (time, talents, treasures) to glorify God in our work, worship and recreation.

BACKGROUND

Our lesson takes place about ten years after Absalom's rebellion and death. David is now 70 years old. His son, Solomon, is appointed to rule in his place when he dies. Solomon became a world famous king, noted for his wisdom and his wealth. He begins his rule like his father David and like King Saul; a God-fearing, obedient child of God. The most prominent event in his life was the building of the magnificent and extraordinarily beautiful house of God, the temple in Jerusalem. Solomon built the temple not to enhance or further his own fame and glory, but to glorify God and to further the spread of His spiritual kingdom on earth. He would give to God the best he and his people had to offer.

1:5-6

- Adonijah tried to usurp the throne by exalting himself as the next king after David.
- David did not rebuke him, either because of his old age or simple lack of fatherly discipline.

1:11-14

- Nathan and Bathsheba plan to speak to David to tell him what is happening with Adonijah and get him to proclaim Solomon king as he had sworn earlier.

2:1-9

- A dying father's words to his son. Wise advice and fatherly admonition.
- 1) Be strong in faith and courageous in battle
- 2) Walk in the ways of the LORD, keeping His statutes (Mosaic laws); His commandments the 10 Commandments; His judgments (ceremonial and civil laws); His testimonies (the revelations of God's covenant of grace with His people concerning the Messiah).

I Chronicles 28-29

- David gives Solomon plans for the temple, no doubt given to him by God in a vision
- David also encourages all the people to give from their hearts for this house of God and there was a great response. They "gave willingly." The people rejoiced at the willing response of their leaders, for they had given freely and wholeheartedly to the Lord.

I Kings 3:5-9

- Solomon acknowledges God's great mercy to him. He realizes his youthful inexperience (about 20 years old).
- Solomon shows his faith and love for the LORD by not asking for wealth and fame, but as a benefit and blessing for the people-an understanding heart and wisdom to govern justly, wisely and well.

3:10-14

- Solomon's request sought 1) the glory of God and 2) the welfare of his fellow man. The LORD grants not only an understanding heart beyond any man before or since, but also great wealth and honor so that he will have no equal. Matt. 6:33

3:16-28

- Solomon's wisdom is put into practice and seen in this judgment. Solomon knew the love of a mother for her own child. The people held him in awe, yet acknowledged that his wisdom came from God.

5:1-8

- King Hiram, dear friend of David and Solomon. It appears Hiram had a heart knowledge of the LORD Jehovah as well. Brought down cedars from Lebanon and also pine or fir logs.

5:5

- A prophecy with an immediate and a future meaning. Solomon is a type of Christ because it was foretold of Him that He would build God's house. Christ's house is not made of wood or stone, but is a spiritual temple, an eternal house and kingdom, which is the house of the Church of Jesus Christ, all believers. All of us, like Solomon and his people, are called to help build this temple, His Kingdom!

5:9

- The logs were floated down to Joppa and then hauled overland to Jerusalem -quite an undertaking.

5:13-18

- 30,000 laborers to Lebanon: 10,000 a month with 2 months off; 70,000 carrying burden; 80,000 stone cutters; 3,600 supervisors

6:1-38

- Time: 480th year after the exodus from Egypt; the fourth year of Solomon's reign. Place: Mt. Moriah, where Abraham sacrificed Isaac; where David erected an altar during the time of the plague; where in the future, the Messiah would walk and speak and be judged by the Sanhedrin and was crucified.
- Size: arrangements the same as the tabernacle, but twice as large. 900 x 600 feet; temple proper: 90'l x 30'w x 45'h
- Materials: Built of white and rose-tinted marble, cedar and fir (most lasting wood). It's front toward the east. See Rup. Pg. 329-331 for more details of the temple. Time of building: It took 7 ½ years; estimated cost: $2,450 million. It was the most magnificent edifice in the world at the time.

7:1-39

- It took Solomon 13 years to build his palace after the temple was completed.

8:1-21

- Representatives from all 12 tribes. There were many people, it required 22,000 oxen and 120,000 sheep to feed them. The Lord's presence was in the cloud that filled the temple. The Lord showed His pleasure to live in this temple with His presence. NOTE: The dedication of our churches, school buildings, parsonages and teacherages means to set it apart for sacred use - for the glory of God.

8:22-53

- Solomon's dedication prayer gives praise to God requests His continued presence even in bad times, and asks God to hear their prayers and to forgive their sins. These are the small ways of salvation for the New Testament believer. Acts. 15:11 "We shall be saved in the same manner as they (O.T.), through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ."

11:1-13

- Unfortunately Solomon was led astray by the many foreign heathen wives whom he married. A warning to all, not to despise the Law of the Lord and put oneself into a place of temptation. He burned incense and offered sacrifices to these idols. In Deut. 17:17, the Lord warns Kings not to take wives to themselves for this very reason.
- There is danger in mixed marriages, especially if the one spouse is not a Christian. Our children need to be advised of this before their dating begins. If a love does grow between the two, the danger should be clearly revealed so that a blessing may result
  (conversion of a spouse) and not a curse (the falling away of the once faithful spouse).
- Two dangers: 1) seduced to follow false doctrine; 2) fall from faith.
- The great blessing: bring the unbelieving spouse to Christ or lead him or her out of false doctrine to the truth.
- Punishment from God upon faithless Solomon: the Kingdom would be torn into two nations; but in mercy (showing love for David) it would not happen in Solomon's lifetime.

11:41-43

- It seems that Solomon's last days were blessed ones. He wrote Ecclesiastes late in life, when near his death, he preaches of the perishability of everything earthly and that the joys and glories of this world as only vanity (emptiness). The true lasting joy and glory are in Christ and His Word.
- He is described as having slept with his fathers and is counted with the faithful, being buried in Jerusalem.
- Jesus mentions Solomon and honors him. This would not likely be so, had Solomon died in unbelief like the fallen King Saul.
  Solomon was 58 years old at the time his death.

STUDENT PRAYER

Dear Father in heaven, I pray that You ever keep me in the wisdom of Your Word so that I do not trust in my own wisdom or intellect. I thank You for all of the lessons You have taught me in my Sunday School. May these lessons give me the true wisdom to be able to rely upon You throughout all the days of my life. May we children always love Your house and come as often as we can to worship You. As we hear Your word, help us to learn the way of salvation better and better. Help us learn to do Your will more and more until we are taken to be with You for an eternity of worship and praise in heaven. Hear my prayer for Jesus' sake. Amen.

PRESENTATION

Teacher should tell the story with perhaps a model to the temple to scale. The following website has a good picture of a model of the temple. http://www.yahrzeit.org/temple.html

APPLICATION

Ask the children what they pray for. Make a list. Do material things top the list? Do they ever pray for wisdom; wisdom to learn their lessons, to know right from wrong, to be able to understand and live according to God's Word? Encourage prayer at all times: before school, before tests, for parents, brothers and sisters, teachers and pastors, the government, good weather, friends, etc..

We, like Solomon, should spend our time, efforts, and talents in building up the house of God: HIS CHURCH. This means more than just a building. It means helping to spread the Word through missions (providing for missionaries and their expenses) and at home, by providing for pastor's and teachers' salaries and paying bills. Children can be encouraged to bring friends and neighbors to our Lord, thereby building the Spiritual kingdom!

Solomon first built the Lord's house, then built his own. Our firstfruits should be given to our Lord, not the leftovers. We give to our Lord, not out of necessity, grudgingly or being forced; but freely, willingly, out of love. Christ's love compels us. We rejoice when we see each other willingly, freely giving of our time and talents to the Lord, not comparing each other's gifts, but rejoicing in the blessed privilege and opportunity to be able to help by giving.

Ask the students the following questions: Why do we dedicate churches?--To set them apart for use in the Lord's kingdom. Why is the church the house of God?--Because God is present in the church. Where is His presence evident?--God is present in His WORD AND SACRAMENTS. How do we act in this house of God?--We are reverent and worshipful to the Lord.

Encourage the older children to be very selective in their dating choices. Remind them the blessings of a Christian spouse, especially of the same synod.

PASSAGES

These passages can be assigned as memory work or simply discussed in class as to how they fit the lesson.

Lower
Psalm 84:1 - "How lovely is Your tabernacle, O LORD of hosts!"

Middle
Psalm 26:8 - "LORD, I have loved the habitation of Your house, and the place where Your glory dwells."
I Corinthians 10:12 - "Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall."
Psalm 84:12 - "O LORD of hosts, blessed is the man who trusts in You!"

Upper
Psalm 84:10 - "For a day in Your courts is better than a thousand. I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God than dwell in the tents of wickedness."
Matthew 6:33 - "But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you."

HYMN CHOICES

Christ, Thou Art the Sure Foundation - TLH #466
My Soul, Be on Thy Guard - TLH #449
Here in Thy Name, Eternal God - TLH #635

STORY
The Kingdom Divided - I Kings 12-14

TEACHER PRAYER
I thank You Lord that You have given me, Your servant, the privilege of declaring Your Truth to little children. Help me, Oh Lord, to let Your Truth shine forth as a lamp for the children, lighting their way through this sin-darkened world. I pray that You will fill all of us with Your Spirit that we may live in joyful and heartfelt obedience to You and Your Word. Your name may be glorified through us. In the name of our Savior Jesus we pray. Amen

VOCABULARY
Scourge (12:11) - whip with knots or hard objects fastened to the lashes
The River (14:15) - the Euphrates
Tirzah (14:17) - the capital city of Israel at the time
High Places (14:23) - places for pagan worship

OUTER AIM
God's kingdom of Israel is divided

INNER AIM
Disobedience to God has dire consequences

BACKGROUND
(Rupprecht Bible History References Vol. 1, pp 334-340)
Solomon was blessed - Solomon was rich - Solomon was wise - but Solomon was also disobedient to God. His prosperity and wisdom were sacrificed on the altars of idols.
Solomon's "wives turned his heart after other gods; and his heart was not loyal to the LORD his God…." (I Kings 11:4)

"Therefore the LORD said to Solomon, 'Because you have done his, and have not kept My covenant and My Statutes, which I have commanded you, I will surely tear the kingdom away from you and give it to your servant.'" (I Kings 11:11 also read vs. 1-3, 12 and 13)

Solomon had many enemies. One from among his own administration was Jeroboam. Jeroboam had been a servant of Solomon. He was very industrious and Solomon had made him "the officer over all the labor force of the house of Joseph." (11:28)

It appears that he was generally well liked among the people. Now it happened that the prophet Ahijah revealed to Jeroboam that because of Solomon's disobedience the LORD revealed that He would tear the kingdom out of the hands of Solomon and divide it in two. The prophet Ahijah further announced to Jeroboam that he was chosen to rule over the ten tribes of Israel. To Solomon's son (Rehoboam) "I will give one tribe, that My servant David may always have a lamp before Me in Jerusalem, the city which I have chosen for Myself, to put My name there." (I Kings 11:36) (Though the house of Benjamin is not always mentioned, it is generally considered part of Judah.)

When Solomon became aware of God's promise to Jeroboam through the prophet, he tried to kill Jeroboam. Jeroboam fled to Egypt and was there until the death of Solomon.12:1-24

Rehoboam was the one and only son recognized by God's word as the legitimate heir to the throne. He, therefore, became king after Solomon. The people contacted Jeroboam notifying him that Solomon was dead and Jeroboam returned from Egypt.

Jeroboam and a delegation of the people met with Rehoboam urging him to lighten the burdens on the people which Solomon had enforced. If an agreement could be reached, they promised to serve Rehoboam. As a result, Rehoboam sought counsel from the elders of the people. They urged gentleness and kindness toward the people promising that the people would respond with loyal dedication and service.

Rehoboam stubbornly rejected the counsel of the elders and rather sought out the advice of those with whom he had grown up. They advised stern and harsh treatment of the people even more severe than that of his father Solomon. Rehoboam accepted their advice and advised the people accordingly.The people of the northern tribes reacted by revolting against Rehoboam severing all ties with Judah and made Jeroboam king over the ten northern tribes which were known then as Israel.

Rehoboam sought to assemble an army from the houses of Judah and Benjamin to attempt to force Israel under his rule but was advised by a man of God, "Thus says the LORD 'You shall not go up nor fight ….'" (12:24)12:25-33

Jeroboam settled in as king of Israel. Yet, something bothered him. Jerusalem remained the center of worship for all the people of both Judah and Israel. He feared that continued contact with Judah could easily erode the loyalty of the people which he enjoyed. Therefore, he determined that he would establish places of worship in Israel-one at Bethel (about 12 miles north of Jerusalem) and one at Dan (about 100 miles north of Jerusalem).What kind of worship would Jeroboam establish? He made calves of gold and said to the people, "Here are your gods, O Israel, which brought you up from the land of Egypt." Before these idols at shrines and high places, priests were appointed who were not of the house of Levi to offer sacrifices on the altars. "And this thing was the sin of the house of Jeroboam, so as to exterminate and destroy it from the face of the earth."

Jeroboam's son became extremely ill. What should he do? He decided to disguise his wife so that they wouldn't recognize her and send her-where else but-to Shiloh to the prophet of the one true God, Ahijah. Ahijah had a message from the LORD for Jeroboam. "You have done more evil than all who were before you." As a result, the house of Jeroboam would be taken away as one takes out the garbage. As for his sick son, "when your feet enter the city, the child shall die." Nevertheless, the LORD makes it clear to Jeroboam that out of all in his house in this young child "there is found something good toward the LORD God of Israel." Beyond that, the LORD foretells the destiny of Israel through the prophet Elijah in vss. 15-16. This came to pass through the invasion and captivity by the Assyrians some time later.

As for Rehoboam who ruled in Judah, he and the people also did evil. They too, "built for themselves high places, sacred pillars and wooden images on every high hill and under every green tree." (14:23 and 24) Their dedication to the LORD waned and their weakness was obvious. Their enemies looted the house of the LORD of its treasures taking "everything away."

STUDENT PRAYER

I thank You Lord for Your Word of Truth and for pastors and teachers whom You have called to bring Your Words to us. Fill us with Your Spirit that we may avoid all that is against Your Word. So move us to walk with You in your Word in all that we say and do. Thus we pray Your name will be glorified through us and many will see Your salvation and walk with us in obedience and love to You.

PRESENTATION

Disobedience to God always has serious consequences: It affects our relationship with God It may offend others, that is, lead them into the trap of sin It may contribute to stifling the labors of His kingdom. Above everything, it may give people occasion to ridicule rather than to respect the name of God and worship him.

You may take each of the persons mentioned in our lesson who were disobedient to God and examine how the above four points applied to their lives. (You might include Solomon with Jeroboam and Rehoboam because of his obvious contribution to the sad state of affairs outlined in our lesson).

Discuss the sad state of affairs that results when those called to be leaders in spiritual matters mislead the people. As in the days of Israel and Judah, disobedience to God and the disregard of His Truth today also results in the people making their own religion or accepting something which is not of God and therefore harmful which could destroy one's relationship with God and eternal life.

APPLICATION

Because of our sinful flesh we are all prone to disobey God in our thoughts, words and deeds. Each of us, however, by God's grace has His Spirit in us. Because of God's Spirit in us. we are able to spot evil and root it out of our lives through repentance and faith in His forgiving love in Christ Jesus. The unbelieving world around us together with Satan and our sinful flesh are continually trying to tempt us to disobey God and to walk the way of evil. As we walk with the Spirit of God, we walk righteously to His glory and for our own good and blessing.

Disobedience to God is always harmful. Repeat the four points from the presentation section in application to us personally. Use examples of disobedience to God from the lives of children to show how seriously it affects one's relationship with other people and above all, with God. Example: Disobedience to parents, teachers, laws; lying etc. Repentance is the way to cast sin out of our lives. Describe how true repentance is healing for our soul: admitting one's guilt to ourselves, to others involved, to Christian friends and/or to parents and above all to God. We must be truly sorry for our sins not merely sorry that we "got caught." We will make amends in any way we can to correct the wrong and accept the assurance that we are truly forgiven through the forgiving love of God earned for us by Christ Jesus our Savior. We will praying earnestly for strength to avoid such sins in the future.

PASSAGES

These passages can be assigned as memory work or simply discussed in class as to how they fit the lesson.

Proverbs 15:1 - A soft answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger.
Matthew 4:10 - You shall worship the LORD your God, and Him only you shall serve
Deuteronomy 5:7 - You shall have no other gods before Me.
Psalms 119:105 - Your Word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.
Galatians 5: 16 - Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh

HYMN CHOICES

Lord Keep Us Steadfast In Thy Word - TLH #261
I Love Thy Kingdom, Lord - TLH #462
Stand Up! Stand Up For Jesus - TLH #451
Fight The Good Fight With All Thy Might - TLH #447

STORY

The Prophet Elijah - I Kings 16-17 - Extra Notes

Introduction: Hold up a living plant. What does this plant need to live? What would happen if it didn't get any water? What would happen to strawberry plants, or corn plants, or wheat plants if they didn't get any water? What would we eat for food if all the plants died? That is just what happened during the Prophet Elijah's day. We're going to learn today **how God provided food for his faithful prophet, Elijah.**

Suggestions for telling the story: Your students may not know what idol worship is. It might help to bring a stick and stone and talk about the futility of praying to sticks and stones even if they are carved in the shape of a man or animal.

For the miracle of the oil and flour, actually present two jars, one with a small amount of flour and one with a small amount of oil. Mix the flour with the oil and some water to make a lump of dough. Show how the two jars have become empty in the process. This will emphasize to small children that it was a miracle. Kindergartners probably will not know what the word miracle means unless you spend some time explaining it. A miracle is something people and machines can't do. Only God can do a miracle because He has great power.

OUTER AIM

God provided food for Elijah, a widow, and her family.

INNER AIM

We can trust God to provide all of our needs because He has all power. (lower)
We bring our first fruits to God out of love, trusting that He will provide for all of our future needs. (middle)
God sends trials and sufferings to test us spiritually, correct us, and to strengthen our faith. (upper)

PASSAGES

Our help is in the name of the Lord, who made heaven and earth. Ps. 124:8
Give us this day our daily bread. Matt. 6:11
Oh, give thanks to the Lord, for He is good! For His mercy endures (lasts) forever. Ps. 106:1
1st Article

HYMN CHOICES

"I am Jesus' Little Lamb" TLH 648
"Praise God, from Whom All Blessings Flow" TLH 644
"Praise, Oh, Praise, Our God and King" TLH 570 verses 1, 4-8
"What a Friend We Have in Jesus" TLH 457
"What God Ordains is Always Good" TLH 521
"Be Still, My Soul" TLH 651
"Children of the Heavenly Father" WS 785

STORY
Elijah and the Prophets of Baal - I Kings 18

TEACHER PRAYER
I praise You, oh Lord, for calling me into Your kingdom and giving me the privilege of laboring together with You. Especially, I thank You for the privilege of teaching little children the wonders of Your grace and mercy in Christ Jesus. Give me Your Spirit, Lord, that I may help the children committed to my charge to recognize the spiritual dangers in this world of sin. May they be moved to fight the fight of faith and thus live to praise Your holy name before all. In the name of Jesus I pray. Amen.

OUTER AIM
Israel was called upon to chose between the LORD God and Baal

INNER AIM
God's people are called upon every day to chose God and deny Satan and the unbelieving world.

BACKGROUND (*Rupprecht Bible History References - Vol. 1, pp. 346-352*)
God created man to live with Him and for Him. In this state he reaches his highest potential and can expect every blessing from God. When Adam and Eve rebelled against God their spiritual relationship with God was broken. They were estranged from God, and their offspring would be born, not in the image of God but in the image of sinful man.

Mankind was spiritually dead by nature, separated from God for time and for all eternity. (cf. Eph. 2:1) This terrible spiritual void in man's life is filled in Christ Jesus, the promised Messiah. "He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds." (Ps. 147:3) By His substitutionary atonement "The LORD gives freedom to the prisoners." (Ps. 146:7). "By grace you have been saved through faith and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast." (Eph. 2:8-9) If this perfect relationship with God in Christ is not found man wanders about in this world of sin a lost soul searching-ever searching for purpose in life, reason for living and peace in heart and mind. He tries to fill the spiritual void in life with all kinds of works; works dictated by his sinful flesh and/or some type of religion which he invents.

Thus he hopes to gain eternal life. As a result, there are many, many religions in the world. Yet, basically there are but two: either of God or it is of man. God's religion is salvation by God's grace in Christ Jesus received through faith. Man's religion is a hoped-for salvation earned by his own works whereby he hopes to appease the wrath of whatever deity he has invented and thus find peace in heart and soul. Yet, man's religion can never give peace. It shall ever be true; "You will keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on You, because he trusts in You." (Is. 26:3) The worship of the Baalim (plural for Baal which means Lord, Master) was very prominent among the people occupying the eastern borders of the Mediterranean. There were many Baalim. Much like the Romans and Greeks they had a god or goddess for every aspect of life. Ahab maintained 450 priests of Baal. The domineering Jezebel introduced the worship of the main goddess of her native country of Tyre. Ashtoreth (Astarte) was her name. She was called "the queen of heaven." Jezebel employed 400 priests to foster this religion which included fleshly lewdness.

STUDENT PRAYER

I thank You Lord for your love to me which You have shown in so many ways. You have made me Your child when I was baptized in Your name. There I was cleansed of my sins, brought to believe in You as my Lord and Savior. You came to me in Spirit and to live in me. Lord God, help me always to be alert to any words and actions which oppose Your words of Truth. Strengthen me always to confess Your name in all I do and say so that Your name may be honored and that others see You as the gracious and loving Lord that You are. In the name of Jesus my Savior I pray. Amen.

PRESENTATION

The years of draught in Israel were about to come to an end according to the will of God. The LORD through it all had sustained Elijah. Now he was called to present the LORD'S message announcing the end of the severe draught to Ahab. But this message would be delivered only in conjunction with some very definite spiritual lessons.

All Israel would see the absolute rule, power and majesty of the LORD God of heaven and earth and the total impotence of the false gods invented by man. As is generally the case, when man places his trust in false gods, he is blind to the works and ways of the one true God. So it was that Ahab blamed Elijah for his problems rather than recognizing how he had brought his problems upon Himself by forsaking the LORD God and supporting, as well as worshipping the man-made Baalim and encouraging the people of Israel to do the same.

All Israel would be required to make a choice: "If the LORD is God, follow Him. If Baal, then follow him." It is sad to hear the deafening silence, which prevailed as Elijah challenged the people with that simple choice. "But the people answered him not a word." False teaching threatens faith! The LORD wishes for us to either remove the false teaching or remove ourselves from it. He never gives His approval to consort with false teaching and /or false teachers! Rather, our Lord who loves us instructs us to take careful note of those who teach contrary to his Word to and avoid them. (Cf. Rom. 16:17-18)

APPLICATION

False gods are as prominent today as ever. This is Satan's playground. He gains a tremendous following by using the religion invented by man to occupy the hearts and minds of people who are spiritually ignorant of the Truth of the one true God. Remember, Satan works through people. He uses people -friends, neighbors, peers, acquaintances, people of influence, the wealthy, etc. to attract and draw people away from the Truth of God.

Satan does not always challenge the Truth directly. He might try to inject a reasonable element into his temptation. (cf. Mat. 4) He is satisfied with small victories. He is very patient and will settle for small compromises. The people of Israel who began to follow Ahab and Jezebel in their idolatry were just trying to get along with their neighbors and friends, to begin with. Besides, it was reasonable, wasn't it? It was surely much closer going to Dan and Bethel than all the way to Jerusalem for worship. Probably it was also reasonable to think that they could worship both the Baalim and the LORD.

Whatever the thinking, idolatry had done its work and when faced with the choice between the LORD and Baal the Israelites were speechless. Doubtless many had become faithless. FALSE TEACHING THREATENS FAITH. "A little leaven leavens the whole lump." (Gal. 5:9)
Syncretism-compromising the Truth of God and mixing it with man-made teachings is the order of our day. Churches merge with little or no concern about whether God's Truth is being violated. Children are

particularly vulnerable because they are easily subjected to peer pressure. They won't always understand why they are forbidden to keep company with certain individuals or become involved with certain groups or join certain organizations which espouse teachings contrary to the Word of our Lord. Nevertheless, Christian parents who recognize spiritual danger for their children will do what is necessary, in love, to shield them from it. As parents will do whatever is necessary to protect their children from physical harm, how much more should they not do the same concerning their spiritual welfare?

As pastors and teachers, we are called to help the parents by reinforcing them with the truths of God's Word. For "if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin." (I John 1:7)

PASSAGES

These passages can be assigned as memory work or simply discussed in class as to how they fit the lesson.

I Timothy 6:12 - "Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, to which you were also called."

Matthew 4:10 - "You shall worship the LORD your God, and Him only you shall serve.

"Matthew 5:10 - "Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."

"I John 2:15 - "Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him."

HYMN CHOICES

Oh, For Faith That Will Not Shrink - TLH #396
Fight The Good Fight With All Thy Might - TLH #447
Rise, My Soul, To Watch And Pray - TLH #446
Preserve Thy Word, O Savior - TLH #264

STORY
Elijah in the Wilderness - I Kings 19

TEACHER PRAYER
Dear Lord, all of us are weak in so many ways. As your people, we are challenged on every hand and need Your wisdom, encouragement and strength every day. As a teacher of Your lambs, give me Your Spirit that I may help to prepare them to live in a world of sin. They need to know that in the midst of the struggles of life You will never let them down but will be with them always even unto the end of the world. Help us all to remember Your words, "Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness sake for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." (Mat. 5:10)

VOCABULARY
Beersheba - about 50 miles SW of Jerusalem
Broom tree - a type of juniper
Mt. Horeb / Mt. Sinai - Approx. 250 miles south of Jerusalem

OUTER AIM
Elijah is depressed by the unbelief of the people of Israel.

INNER AIM
God's kingdom will endure regardless of the unbelief of man.

BACKGROUND (*Rupprecht Bible History References Vol. I*, pp. 352 - 356)
Elijah was emotionally spent. For years he had preached, admonished, exhorted and rebuked the people of Israel in the Northern Kingdom. Yet, the constant slide toward make-believe gods of the surrounding nations continued. The teachings of this man-made religion appealed to their reason and their sinful flesh. God had made one last, clear and irrefutable testimony through the prophet Elijah on Mount Carmel. As a result for a short time, the people acknowledged the LORD God as the one true God and carried out the instruction of Elijah to execute the false prophets. This was in accord with the law of God. (Cf. Deut. 13:5; 12: 29 - 32)

This may seem extremely harsh. Yet, we must remember that the preservation of the promise of redemption in the Messiah was intricately connected with the nation of Israel. The LORD God was fighting for our life! At stake was nothing less than our life with God for time and for eternity.

As we recall from the previous lesson, Satan never quits. In the New Testament era our Lord nowhere instructs us to exterminate false prophets. The Messiah has come. His kingdom has been established in the Christ. Yet, the struggle goes on. This war against Satan and his followers is well described in Ephesians 6:10 -18.

STUDENT PRAYER
Lord God, before me stands the future. There are many unknowns, but I do know who holds the future. I pray that You will fill me with Your Spirit that I may face my tomorrow with a confident expectation. Help me to remember that You are always first in my life. Help me to confess Your name before all by word and action regardless of the consequences. I know that You will never let me down but will bless me. In Your holy name I pray. Amen

PRESENTATION

Answers to introductory questions.

Answers will vary
Real people have actually seen God, Moses, Adam and Eve, Elijah, disciples.
Yes.
Because He is God and he is all-powerful.

Let each student pick one of the choices.(If there is time ask them why they picked their answer.

Write this outer aim on the chalkboard after the introductory remarks.

God came to Elijah to tell him that he was acting in a wrong way.

Activity One - Answer the following questions by telling the answer from the lesson. The answers are in italics.

1. Why did Elijah leave to go into the wilderness? *He was getting away from Jezebel who was going to kill him.*
2. Why was Elijah so sad? *He thought he was the only believer left in Israel.*
3. Was he the only one left? *No, there were 7,000 people that believed in God.*
4. Who came to tell Elijah to eat? *An angel.*
5. What was special about the food that Elijah ate? *God blessed it so after he ate it he didn't have to eat for 40 days.*
6. What did God have pass in front of Elijah? *A windstorm, an earthquake, a fire, and a still small voice.*
7. Which one was God in? *The still small voice.*
8. Why do think God was in the still small voice and not the powerful things? *God used it to show that His power is the Gospel. (Ask this follow up question if they can't figure this last one out.)*
9. What does God use to come to us? *He uses His Word the Gospel.*
10. What is in God's Word that is so important for us? *We learn about Jesus and how He saved us from our sins. This is the Gospel message.*

Elijah had done the Lord's work faithfully. That is all the Lord asked him to do. Yet, in his assessment his labors were in vain. Jezebel had threatened to take his life "tomorrow about this time." Besides that, the children of Israel had forsaken the LORD and had given themselves to the worship of Baal.

Elijah had fled to Beersheba and went a day's journey into the wilderness. There he prayed that the LORD would take him from this world. But the LORD had something He wished for Elijah to do first. The LORD watched over him as he slept under a broom tree. The angel of the LORD prepared food on a fire and provided water. He was being prepared for the 200-mile trip to Horeb, "the mountain of God."

There in a cave the LORD came to Elijah with a very simple question: "What are you doing here, Elijah?" Elijah explained, "I have been very zealous for the LORD God of hosts; for the children of Israel have forsaken Your

covenant, torn down Your altars, and killed Your prophets with the sword. I alone am left; and they seek to take my life." (Vs. 10) Yet, the LORD had a very important lesson to teach Elijah, His faithful servant in a very graphic way.

First, there was the strong wind that broke rocks into pieces. The LORD was not in the wind.

Secondly, there was an earthquake violently shaking the ground. The LORD was not in the earthquake.

Thirdly, there was a consuming fire. The LORD was not in the fire. Finally, Elijah heard "a still small voice." He covered his face in reverent awe and went out to hear the LORD ask again, "What are you doing here, Elijah?" What was Elijah to learn from this?

Ask the children to give their thoughts regarding this rather graphic display of God's power and gentleness. How might one compare the wind, the earthquake and the fire? How do they differ from the "still small voice?" What was the purpose of asking for the second time, "What are you doing here, Elijah?"

Compare the condemning nature of the Law with the gentle loving nature of the Gospel. Had Elijah become so disturbed by the unfaithfulness of the people of Israel that he no longer could function in his ministry in a fashion pleasing to God? Is that why God asked His servant to answer that simple question, "What are you doing here, Elijah?" If Elijah would answer that question after examining his heart, he would find an answer to his inner turmoil.

APPLICATION

All God's people need to recognize that He who rescued us from the slime pit of sin and washed us clean in the blood of Jesus has one primary purpose for us, His purchased people, namely, "that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light." (I Peter 2:9) All of us wish to be successful in our endeavors in life. So also, we hope and pray for a positive response when we are engaged in the labors of our Lord's kingdom. Yet, our success or failure is not determined by a hoped-for positive response. Our Lord wishes for us to realize that, as we work with Him and for Him He has given us a special duty. He has not asked much of us. He has simply invited us to share the blessings in Christ, which He has given to us. The only way we can fail is if we refuse to give His love to others. Our success is simply in the doing of it.

Our Lord never asks us to build His church. He has reserved that for Himself. "I will build my Church," says the Lord. (Matt. 16:18) It appears Elijah lost sight of this all-important truth. As a result, he became extremely depressed and stopped sharing God's Word with others. That was not good. The Lord also warned His disciples when they were filled with excitement because their work was producing positive results. The Savior cautioned, "Do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rather rejoice because your names are written in heaven." (Luke 19:20) The fact that their names were written in heaven would be a constant, solid basis for rejoicing regardless of the reaction of their hearers to the Gospel. The kingdom labors will have many ups and downs, bu tour basis for rejoicing must remain constant and sure. Praise the Lord!

PASSAGES

These passages can be assigned as memory work or simply discussed in class as to how they fit the lesson.

Luke 10:20 - "Rejoice because your names are written in heaven."

I Peter 2:9 - "But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light."

Matthew 5:10 - "Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."

Ephesians 6:10-11 - "Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil."

HYMN CHOICES

All Praise To God, Who Reigns Above - TLH #19
A Mighty Fortress Is Our God - TLH #262
Soldiers Of The Cross, Arise - TLH #501
How Firm A Foundation, Ye Saints Of The Lord - TLH #427

STORY
Naboth's Vineyard - I Kings 21-22, II Kings 9:30-37

TEACHER PRAYER
Lord God, Your gracious forgiving love is before me every day as I labor for You in Your kingdom. I need Your forgiveness, Your guidance and Your constant love as I continue through this world of sin. Help me to accept the responsibility of teaching Your lambs Your precious Truths that they may clearly see You as the one true God and Jesus Christ whom You have sent. For in You and You alone will they reach the highest potential for true life here in time and for all eternity. In Your holy name I pray, Amen.

VOCABULARY
Jezreel - 30 miles north of Samaria (21:1)

Scoundrels - wicked, immoral and dishonest men (21:10)

Dogs - classed as unclean animals in the Law of Moses, thus, viewed by Israel with contempt (21:19, 23, 24)

OUTER AIM
As instruments of Satan Ahab and Jezebel carried out the devil's murderous plans.

INNER AIM
A Godless life always leads to disaster in time and, unless there is repentance, for eternity.

BACKGROUND (*Rupprecht Bible History References Vol. 1*, pp. 356-361)
Satan worked through Jezebel and the prophets of Baal who were successful in drawing King Ahab into the kingdom of Satan. He became a pawn in Satan's murderous schemes. Yet, we must realize that Ahab was responsible for his own actions. The Lord has said of Satan, "He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own resources, for he is a liar and the father of it." (John 8:44) Ahab became Satan's child.

The royal palace for the King of Israel was in Samaria, the capital city. However, Ahab had built his own private palace at Jezreel. Adjoining Ahab's property was the vineyard of Naboth. Ahab wished to expand his holdings by either buying Naboth's vineyard or trading a better vineyard in another location for it.

At this point, apparently, there is nothing unusual or sinful about the proposal itself. These kinds of transactions go on all the time and often are carried out for the benefit of both parties. However, there were circumstances which had to be considered. In the first place, "Naboth said to Ahab, 'the LORD forbid that I should give the inheritance of my fathers to you.'" The LORD forbade the people to sell their land permanently. (Cf. Lev. 25:23-28; Num. 36:7-9) Secondly, Naboth, evidently, wasn't interested in any proposition even on a temporary basis.

Ahab was accustomed to getting what he wanted. Besides, Jezebel was quick to remind him, "You now exercise authority over Israel!" Ahab was depressed. Jezebel devised a plan and promised Ahab, "Arise and eat food, and let your heart be cheerful; I will give you the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite." Did Ahab caution Jezebel and urge her not to do anything illegal or contrary to the Word of God? Not at all. His silence was approval for the words and actions that followed.

STUDENT PRAYER

Dear Lord, You have been so gracious to me and have provided for all my needs both physical and spiritual. Help me to realize this each day of my life. Forgive my sins of covetousness and lovelessness. Give me a heart, O Lord, which is not greedy but one which rather is ready to help my friends and neighbors keep what belongs to them. Give me Your Spirit that I may be able to recognize the activity of Satan and avoid it. And so may I live with you and for You in righteousness to the glory of Your holy name. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.

PRESENTATION

The greed of Ahab accompanied by the satanic devices of Jezebel led to a plan for murder. With Naboth out of the way Ahab could realize his petty desire of having Naboth's property. (Cf. King David's lust for Bathsheba led to adultery and murder.

Cain's jealous hatred of Abel led to murder.) Jezebel was well aware that, "Whoever blasphemes the name of the LORD shall surely be put to death, and all the congregation shall certainly stone him…." (Lev. 24:16) Somehow, Naboth would have to be portrayed as blasphemer so that he could be put to death "legally" before the people. (Cf. Jesus on trial on trumped up charges.)

Jezebel, filled with the spirit of Satan, had beaten her conscience into submission and was governed totally by her sinful flesh. Might made right in her eyes. The forgery of the king's seal on fictitious documents was a minor matter in her devilish scheme. The fact that the forged documents especially called for "scoundrels" to bear witness against Naboth was an open admission that the charges were false. These "sons of Belial" (KJV) were lawless, vile persons who would stoop to any crime for a price.

Apparently, the "elders and nobles" of the city were so eager to follow the orders of the king (in fact, the orders of Jezebel) that they failed to be concerned about justice. The law of God was clear and guarded against this very kind of abuse. (Read Deut. 19:15-21) It would appear that Naboth had no heirs who could legally claim the property after his death. Such property reverted to the king. An honorable king would, of course, restore such property to heirs if they should be found in the future. (Cf. II Sam. 9:6-7)

The judgment of God upon Ahab and Jezebel was announced to Ahab, quite fittingly, as he was in the vineyard which he had stolen from Naboth. Elijah was given the task. Because of Ahab's spiritual blindness, he could see Elijah only as his enemy. Yet, Elijah would not be intimidated but told it like it was, "I have found you, because you have sold yourself to do evil in the sight of the LORD." (I Kings 21:20) Both Ahab and Jezebel would die dishonorably. The dogs would drink the blood of Ahab and eat the flesh of Jezebel. It appears that Ahab showed signs of repentance after Elijah announced God's judgment upon him and Jezebel. (I Kings 21:27) Because of His infinite mercy the LORD delayed the action of His judgment upon Ahab until after his death. "Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap. For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life." (Gal. 6:7-8)

APPLICATION

Walking in ungodly paths always leads to disaster. Ahab and Jezebel had all the luxury, worldly comforts and honor before men imaginable. Yet, their life was a disaster. Not only did they destroy themselves but how many souls did they lead into the kingdom of Satan and finally into hell?

The world around us exonerates such things as worldly wealth, lust, prestige, power and honor before others. These are often bought at the price of rejection of God and His salvation in Christ. The unholy trinity of the world is wealth, sex and power. If we look around we will see the dedication and worship of this godless trinity everywhere.

"Now godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and clothing, with these we shall be content. But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and harmful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows. But you, O man of God, flee these things and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, gentleness. Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, to which you were also called and have confessed the good confession in the presence of many witnesses. (I Tim. 6:6-12)

Children are constantly bombarded with man-made religious philosophies as well as the thinking and ways of the world about us. Their friends, movies, television, neighbors all may become tools of Satan to draw these impressionable minds and hearts into a way of thinking, judging, talking and acting which may lead to a compromise of their faith in their Savior and could finally lead to a rejection of God and His Word.

Offense is also something which our children need to take seriously. We are called to be the salt of the earth and the light of the world. We are called upon to show forth the praises of Him who called us out of darkness into His marvelous light.. Together with being one of God's own in Christ comes responsibility. As God's own we have been bought with a price-the price the Christ paid for us in love as He gave Himself a ransom for all.

There are many influences which threaten the faith of our children. However, none of them can rob us and our children of the blessings that are ours in the kingdom of God for time and for eternity as we remain close to our Lord and His Means of Grace.

Sometimes believers suffer because of the wickedness in the world. Naboth died, but he joined his Savior in heaven.

PASSAGES

These passages can be assigned as memory work or simply discussed in class as to how they fit the lesson.

I John 2:15 - "Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him."

I Timothy 6:6-9 - "Now godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. Having food and clothing, let us be content. But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and harmful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition.

Galatians 6:7-8 - "Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap. For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life.

Deuteronomy 5:7 - "You shall have no other gods before Me.

Deuteronomy 5:17 - ”You shall not murder.”

Deuteronomy 5:19-20 - “You shall not steal. You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.”

Deuteronomy 5:21 - “You shall not covet your neighbor’s wife; and you shall not desire your neighbor’s house, his field, his manservant, his maidservant, his ox, his donkey, or anything that is your neighbor’s.”

Psalm 1:6 - “For the LORD knows the way of the righteous, but the way of the ungodly shall perish.”

Matthew 22:37-39 - “Jesus said to him, “‘You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.’ This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it:’You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’”

HYMN CHOICES

O God, Thou Faithful God - TLH #395
My Soul, Be On Thy Guard - TLH #449
Fight The Good Fight With All Thy Might - TLH #447
How Shall The Young Secure Their Hearts - TLH #286
Lord, Keep Us Steadfast In Thy Word - TLH #261
Oh, That the Lord Would Guide My Ways - TLH #416
The Man is Ever Blest - TLH #414

STORY
Elijah and Elisha - 2 Kings 2-4

TEACHER PRAYER
Lord Jesus, please be with me and bless me with the same spirit that You gave to Your servants Elijah and Elisha. Fill me with love and selfless devotion so that I might dedicate myself to you and to your service. Guide me now as I bring the truths of your Word to Your little lambs. Open their hearts to not only hear and learn, but to put into practice the truths they here come to know. I ask these things in the Name of my Savior Jesus. Amen.

VOCABULARY
Gilgal - A city located near the place where Israel first crossed the Jordan to enter the Promised Land. Here the monument of 12 stones (taken from the middle of the Jordan) was erected (Joshua 4:20). The name means "rolling," perhaps a reference to the rolling green hills in which it is located.

Bethel - A city about 12 miles north of Jerusalem and west of Jericho. The name means "house of God," and was so named because it is located at or near where Jacob had his vision when fleeing Esau. Abraham stopped here when the city was known as Luz. Excavations show that the city was burned both in the 14th century BC (around the time of the conquest under Joshua), and the 13th century (the conquest by the house of Joseph in Judges 1:22). Though Bethel had been a city of the tribe of Benjamin, it later became part of the ten northern tribes of Israel.

Mantle - A cloak or outer covering. Elijah and Elisha used this garment cloak much like Moses used his staff.

Mount Carmel - Headlands averaging 1,500 feet in altitude where the Lord through Elijah defeated the prophets of Baal. Elisha also spent time in this area.

Baal - The chief male god of the Phoenicians, adopted by many tribes in Palestine. The Canaanites regarded Baal as the god of storms.

Moab - The country to the east of the Dead Sea founded by and named for Moab, the son of Lot's oldest daughter. The Moabites, along with the Edomites, refused to allow Israel to pass through on the way to the Promised Land. It was the Moabites who hired Balaam to curse Israel. The most famous Moabitess was Ruth.

Indignation - anger aroused by something unjust.

Shunem - A city three miles north of Jezreel and seven miles south and east of what later became Nazareth. The city of Nain (where Jesus raised the widow's son) was later built near the location of Shunem. The maiden Abishag, who cared for David in his old age, came from Shunem.

Baal Shalisha - A little known city of Ephraim slightly west of Gilgal and just south of Jericho.

OUTER AIM
Elijah is taken bodily into heaven and Elisha serves in his place.

INNER AIM

The same Lord who worked so powerfully through Elijah and Elisha has also promised to be with each one of us today.

BACKGROUND *(Rupprecht Volume 1, pages 361-366)*

Elijah's time of service comes to an end

Elijah has served his Lord long and well, and now his time of earthly service is over. By God's hand he had survived famine, the priests of Baal, the wrath of Ahab and Jezebel, foreign armies, and much more. This lesson begins as God prepares Elijah to be taken to heaven.

Chapter 2

Apparently God had last-minute business for Elijah to attend to in Bethel and Jericho before his time of service on earth was completed. We are not told what that service might have been, although in each place it seemed to involve "the sons of the prophets." These were apparently future prophets in training. It had apparently been revealed to all of them that Elijah was to be taken to heaven on that day.

Though Elijah used his cloak in much the same way Moses used his staff, neither item possessed power in itself. All power and ability rests with God alone.

When Elisha asked for a double portion of Elijah's spirit, he was not asking for a ministry twice as great as Elijah's. In keeping with Israel's inheritance laws he was asking for the rights of a firstborn son (Deuteronomy 21:17) - in effect asking to be named Elijah's successor. This request was God's, not Elijah's to give, so he left the answer to God himself.

It is a misconception that Elijah was taken to heaven in a chariot of fire. The chariot served to separate Elisha from Elijah, who was then carried to heaven in a whirlwind.

When Elisha referred to Elijah as "the chariot of Israel and its horsemen" he was acknowledging the fact that God had worked through Elijah (not through the armies of Israel) to preserve the nation. The same would later be said about Elisha (2 Kings 13:14). As far as we know, only Enoch (see Genesis 5:22-24) and Elijah were taken bodily into heaven without first having to pass through death.

The signs that Elisha was able to perform after Elijah was taken gave evidence that he was the rightful successor to Elijah's ministry.The "youths" who mocked Elisha were not innocent children but disrespectful rogues. Their taunt to "Go up!" could have been a ridicule in reference to Elijah's assumption into heaven - thus a mocking of a sacred act of God.

Chapter 3

Though Jehoram, the new King of Israel, no longer tolerated the public worship of Baal, as had his father Ahab, he still tolerated the "sins of Jeroboam." To keep the nation of Israel divided from Judah, Jeroboam had built two golden calves and set them up as alternate gods for Israel to worship (in Bethel and Dan rather than in Jerusalem). He also ordained priests outside of the tribe of Levi and enacted his own religious festivals to rival those in Judah prescribed by God. (See 1 Kings 12:25-33)

The people of Moab paid tribute to Israel only as long as they feared Israel. They failed to acknowledge that Israel was God's chosen people.

The armies of Israel and Judah probably took the arid southern route into Moab (around the south end of the Dead Sea) more to avoid the fortified cities located in the north than in an attempt to surprise.

Edom at this time was a vassal state of Israel. The "King of Edom" mentioned here was appointed by the King of Judah. Edom did not have its own king until after its revolt against Jehoram, Jehoshaphat's son. (See 2 Kings 8:16 and 20)

When Elisha told Jehoram, "Go to the prophets of your father and the prophets of your mother," he was referring to Ahab and Jezebel, and to the fact that they had accepted both the prophets of Baal and non-Levites as their own. (1 Kings 22:6ff.)

God provided water for the armies of Israel, Judah, and Edom; but note that obedience on their part was required if they were to benefit. The water probably came in the form of flash floods coming down from the mountains in Edom. This water would have simply seeped back down into the earth had not the ditches and trenches been dug by the combined armies.

When Mesha, the King of Moab, saw the destruction of his land, he tried to make a desperate effort to form an alliance with Edom. That effort failed. Mesha then offered his own son as a burnt offering to the idol Chemosh. The result was "great indignation against Israel." While the exact meaning of this phrase is not known, the result was that Moab was spared from complete destruction, and Moabite raiders continued to plague Israel and Judah in the years to come.

Chapter 4
As swift and sure as was Elisha's wrath against the rebellious and disrespectful youths, so he here demonstrated a love and compassion for those who suffered, especially for those who were among the faithful in Israel.

Elisha spent a good deal of time travelling from Judah, through Samaria, and into Galilee. Shunem lay in his path of travel where a hospitable family provided room and board for him. (See application below.)

As did Elijah before him, Elisha spent a good deal of his time and effort prophesying against (and ministering to) the apostate northern tribes of Israel. Note the many parallels between Elisha's ministry and the events of Jesus' day: the cursing of the rebellious youth - the cursing of the fig tree; the jars filled with oil - the changing of water to wine; the birth of a son in old age - the birth of John the Baptist to Elizabeth and Zacharias; the raising of the woman's son - the raising of the Widow of Nain (Nain, ironically, was the city built on or near the ruins of the city of Shunem, where Elisha raised this child from the dead); and finally the feeding of the 100 - the feeding of the 5,000.

The mother of the dead child seemed to display a rare faith here, determining not to abandon hope and mourn for her son until she had spoken to Elisha. She seems to demonstrate a confidence in the God of Elisha.

Though Elisha acted only according to the command and by the power of the Lord, note the relative difficulty he had in raising this child compared to the simple words of the Lord Jesus.

STUDENT PRAYER

Dear Lord Jesus, at times I can be frightened about the road that lies ahead. Help me to remember that You will be with me wherever I go, just as You were with Elijah, Elisha and the other prophets and apostles. I know that I will change throughout my life, but I am glad that You will remain the same. In Your name I pray. Amen.

PRESENTATION

The Bible account presented today is too long to read in class. It is also too complex to attempt to present all parts in a single Sunday School lesson, especially for the younger students. Assign the reading of this entire lesson to the students the week before it is presented, and then choose from among its many parts what you will emphasize in your presentation. In doing this, remember the Inner Aim..

APPLICATION

. Emphasize to the children (in keeping with the inner aim) that the same Lord who worked so powerfully through Elijah and Elisha has also promised to be with each one of us today. He is just as powerful today as He was then, and cares just as much for each of His children today as He did then.

. Bring the attention of the students to the dedication which Elijah and Elisha show for the work of the Lord. Such dedication is still required today. Encourage the boys to consider serving as pastors or teachers, and the girls to consider the teaching ministry, emphasizing that there is great honor and blessing in the public ministry. Elisha knew the hardships that Elijah had faced, yet he desired to continue in that work. We may not witness miracles today as seen in the days of Elijah and Elisha, but we might be privileged enough to play a part in calling a sinner from death to Life.

. Though society today cares less and less, God does not look kindly upon any rebellion against any authority He has ordained. All are to show honor and respect to all those in authority over us. The incident with the bears and the insolent youths can be used to emphasize just how serious rebellion and lack of respect is in God's sight.

. Jehoram followed in many of the evil ways of his father Ahab. Each generation must be taught to reexamine and relearn the truths of God's Word for themselves. Only then can we avoid perpetuating any sins into which our fathers might have fallen.

. As God required the army of Israel to carry out a simple command in order for His blessing to be enjoyed, so He often today calls for obedience on our part so that we might enjoy the blessings He wants to give us. (Church attendance yields strengthening, prayer yields answers to prayer, a medical checkup yields an early diagnosis, honoring parents and superiors leads to a rich and peaceful life, etc.)

. The King of Israel had turned away from the Lord to idols and yet he expected the Lord to answer him at his beck and call. We cannot cast the Lord away from our lives and expect Him to watch over us as His children.

. The woman who cared for Elisha's needs was blessed in that service. The same promise holds true for laymen and laywomen today. (Matthew 10:41 NKJV) "He who receives a prophet in the name of a prophet shall receive a prophet's reward. And he who receives a righteous man in the name of a righteous man shall receive a righteous man's reward."

PASSAGES

These passages can be assigned as memory work or simply discussed in class as to how they fit the lesson.

Lower
Malachi 3:6 - For I am the LORD: I do not change.

Matthew 28:20 - Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.

Hebrews 13:8 - Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever.

Middle
Matthew 18:20 - For where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them.

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

Upper
Joshua 1:9 - Be strong and of good courage; do not be afraid, nor be dismayed, for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go.

Lamentations 3:22-23 - Through the Lord's mercies we are not consumed, because His compassions fail not. They are new every morning; great is Your faithfulness.

Revelation 1:8 - "I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End," says the Lord, "who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty."

HYMN CHOICES

O God of Jacob, by Whose Hand - TLH #434
Abide with Me! Fast Falls the Eventide - TLH #552:1-4
We Praise Thee, O God, Our Redeemer, Creator - TLH #568

STORY
Naaman and Elisha - 2 Kings 5

TEACHER PRAYER
Dear Father, In this age of technology and interest in the complex, help me to remember that the gospel message is beautifully simple. As I teach this lesson, allow me to impart the simplicity and the beauty of what *You* have to say. Though Your ways are above our ways, You have graciously revealed to us the mystery of being saved by grace alone. For this I am ever thankful. Amen.

VOCABULARY
Aram - A people and a nation named for Aram, a son of Shem and grandson of Noah. The Aramaean (Aramean) peoples inhabited the areas northeast of Israel (modern day Syria). They developed the Aramaic language much in use during Jesus' day.

Leprosy - A disease undoubtedly different than the disease known today as leprosy (*elephantiasis*

Graecorum). Biblical leprosy referred most often to a whiteness that may have disfigured those who suffered from it, but did not disable them. Interestingly a leper that was completely covered from head to toe by the whiteness of the disease was to be pronounced clean by the priests - apparently an indication that the disease was no longer contagious.

Abana and Pharpar - Rivers of Syria. The Abana is today known as the Barada and flows from the wooded hills of Lebanon into Syria and through Damascus. The Pharpar is a 40 miles long river flowing south of Damascus.

Rimmon - A Syrian idol also known as *Ramman* and *Hadad* - the Syrian Baal. "*Rimmon*" literally means "*pomegranate*" which because of its many seeds was used as a symbol of fertility by pagan cultures.

OUTER AIM
The Lord, through Elisha, heals Naaman of his leprosy.

INNER AIM
Do not despise the gospel for its simplicity.

BACKGROUND *(Rupprecht Volume 1, pages 366-371)*
Verses 1-8
Naaman was the commander of the army of Syria under King Ben-Hadad II. The country is also called Aram (see note above) after the grandson of Noah who settled this region. Note that Naaman was able to hold high office in Syria despite his leprosy, something that would not have been possible in Israel.

"…by him the Lord had given victory to Syria" - it should be neither troubling nor surprising for us to hear that the Lord also grants victories to those nations that have rejected him (cf. Amos 9:7). Against whom these victories were won we do not know, but we can have confidence that they served God's purpose of preserving Israel for the birth of the Promised Messiah.

Slavery was common in those days. Captives were considered war plunder and were sold at the slave markets in Damascus. Note how the young Israelite girl continued to serve to the best of her ability despite being torn from her home and family and sold as a slave. (See application below.)

Though Elisha traveled all over Israel and Judah, he spent most of his time teaching and prophesying among the northern Ten Tribes of Israel (Samaria).

The kings mentioned here were Ben-Hadad II of Syria and Jehoram, the son of Ahab, in Israel. (Jehoram is also called Joram to distinguish him from Jehoram the King of Judah - see notes in previous lesson.)

Tearing his clothes was an act of desperation and frustration on the part of Jehoram. Although he recognized that God (he did not use the more personal name Jehovah) could cure Naaman, he apparently did not expect that God would help him in his hour of need.

Verses 9-19

Elisha does not even appear before Naaman, but sends a messenger out to him with instructions to wash seven times in the Jordan River. Although Naaman was ceremonially unclean to the Jews, it is unlikely that that is the reason Elisha did not appear before him. Elisha wanted Naaman to understand that it was the power of the Lord, not Elisha himself, that would heal him. The 25-mile trip to the Jordan and multiple washings called for trust in the Lord's power.

It is not known whether Naaman's rage was caused by Elisha's breach of protocol by not coming out personally to greet him, or by the logically absurd remedy commanded by Elisha, or by a combination of the two. The point is that the humble simplicity of the cure almost caused Naaman to reject it. As noted by the Inner Aim above, this is the most important lesson of this Bible story. God's simple cure for sin (the gospel) is often rejected for its very simplicity.

Naaman's advisors serve him well. Lacking the pride of high position that had blinded Naaman, they served their master with sound advice.

While the miracle of healing caused Naaman to recognize and accept the supreme and unique power of the one true God, true saving faith comes not through the observance of miracles but through the hearing of the Word of God (Romans 10:17). Salvation came to Old Testament believers through faith in the promise of a Savior.

While Elisha himself appears before Naaman after he is cured, he refuses any gift or payment from him. Elisha wanted nothing to obscure the fact that God, not Elisha, had cured Naaman, and that the gift of healing had been freely given, not earned or purchased.

In asking for soil from Israel, Naaman may have been exemplifying the pagan notion of a localized god who must be worshipped only over native soil. This request may also have been a simple indication that Naaman now believed that nothing in Syria was as good as its counterpart in Israel
--not the god Rimmon, not the rivers that he had once thought superior, not even the soil itself. Whatever his thoughts, it should be noted that Elisha does not condemn the request.

Note the character of the man Naaman. During his return trip from the Jordan (about 25 miles) he had time to reflect on how his life had now changed. He recognized the God of Israel as the only true God, but he also understood his duties to King Ben-Hadad II of Syria. Those duties included physically supporting the King as he worshipped the idol Rimmon. Naaman recognized the compromising position into which this service would place him and brought the dilemma to the attention of Elisha. Here, again, Elisha offers no condemnation (see application below). True worship is a matter of the heart.

Verses 20-27
Gehazi, heretofore an exemplary servant of Elisha, gives in to greed. His reference to Naaman as "this Syrian" may also be an indication of bitterness or racial bigotry on his part.

Note how easily lying came to Gehazi after he gave in to the sin of greed.

Gehazi allowed the servants of Naaman to carry the booty, but only so long as Elisha could not see him. Nor did he want Naaman's servants to see that he hid the gifts in his own tent.

As is so often the case, sin begets lying, and one lie often leads to another.

Sin has its consequences. Gehazi was allowed to accept one gift from Naaman - his leprosy.

STUDENT PRAYER

Dear Father in heaven, There are times when I have a hard time taking You at Your Word. As I grow older and receive more education about this world, I pray that You will help me to continue to put my faith above my head knowledge. Though on my own I would not understand the news of my Savior, yet You have caused me believe it with all of my heart. Help me to treasure that news even when I am confronted by pressure to despise it. Amen.

PRESENTATION

This Bible account is too long to read in class. Assign its reading of this lesson to the students the week before it is presented, and then retell or summarize the story for your students in your own words.

APPLICATION

1. The chief application of this account is the parallel between Naaman's initial rejection of God's simple cure for his leprosy and natural man's rejection of God's simple cure for sin - the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ (salvation by grace through faith in Jesus Christ).
2. Paint a vivid picture in the minds of the students as to the trauma that must have been endured by the young Israelite maiden who was taken captive and sold into slavery. Lead them to imagine themselves in her position. Point out that she served her new masters well by offering advice and was a witness to her God that was above and beyond the call of her duties as a slave. Adverse conditions do not remove our calling as witnesses for our God and Savior. If anything, they make that witness all the more remarkable to the hearer.
3. King Jehoram serves as a negative example of what to do when faced (humanly speaking) with an impossible task. He gave way to despair. Our initial reaction may often be the same. From this lesson we learn to turn all such matters over to our God, for "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me." (Philippians 4:13)
4. As God through Elisha told Naaman to wash seven times in the Jordan River, so he at times calls for faithful, trusting obedience from his children in order to bless them. So today we bring our children to be baptized, not understanding how that simple act of applying water in connection with the Word of God can serve as a vehicle for the Holy Spirit and His work of creating saving faith in the human heart.
5. The gospel has been given freely *to* us; freely it should be given *by* us. Though Elisha refused the gifts of Naaman, he did not refuse all compensation. Clarify to the students that pastors and teachers are not paid for preaching and teaching the Word. Rather, the congregation provides for their earthly needs so that the pastors and teachers can carry on the Lord's work of ministry full-time and without distraction.
6. As Naaman recognized the difficulty he would have in carrying out his official secular duties as a new convert to the one true God, so also such dilemmas may well confront us. Ask the students to come up with examples in their own

lives (e.g., paying taxes to a government that does bad things, defending 1st Amendment rights to free speech, even when what is said is morally wrong, working as a policeman or judge to enforce laws with which he disagrees, etc.)

7. Sin blinds us and makes us do foolish things. Remind the students how Adam, once so wise, tried to hide from God in the Garden after he sinned. Here too note how Gehazi, who had witnessed such great things during his time of service under Elisha, was fooled by his greed into believing that he could fool the Lord whom Elisha served.
8. The fact that Gehazi had to hide the gifts from Elisha should have convinced him that what he was doing was wrong. Emphasize the need to listen to our conscience, which is a gift from our God to warn us when we sin or are being tempted to do so.

PASSAGES

These passages can be assigned as memory work or simply discussed in class as to how they fit the lesson.

Lower

Psalm 119:105 - Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.

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

1 John 1:7 - The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.

Middle

John 3:16 - For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.

John 20:31 - But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name.

1 Corinthians 1:25 - The foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men.

Upper

2 Timothy 3:15 - From childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.

Romans 1:16 - For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek.

1 Corinthians 1:18 - For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.

HYMN CHOICES

Preserve Thy Word, O Savior - TLH #264:4-5

O Word of God Incarnate - TLH #294:1-2

The Gospel Shows the Father's Grace - TLH #297:1-2, 5-6

STORY
Jonah - Jonah 1-4

TEACHER PRAYER
Dear Lord Jesus, there are times when I do not feel like obeying Your will. There can even be reluctance as I go about my work in this blessed call to feed Your lambs. Forgive me I pray, and give to me a heart that says (as You said or prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane), "Thy will be done." Amen.

VOCABULARY
Nineveh - The capital city of the Assyrian Empire located on the east bank of the Tigris River. The city was founded by Nimrod (Genesis 10:11) and was utterly destroyed in 612 BC by an army made up of Babylonians, Medes, and Scythians. Though the walled part of the city was three miles long and a mile and a half wide, the term "Nineveh, the great city" might well have included various outlying cities (compare "the Twin Cities," which include not only Minneapolis and St. Paul, but also the many other surrounding municipalities in that area).

Joppa - An ancient city located on the Mediterranean Sea about 30 miles NW of Jerusalem. Originally a city assigned to the tribe of Dan, Joppa served as the port for Jerusalem, receiving all the timber used in the construction of Jerusalem's great buildings. From here Jonah sailed in flight from the Lord. Peter later lived in Joppa with Simon the Tanner.

Tarshish - A city located on the extreme west end of the Mediterranean Sea (probably in Southern Spain). Jonah evidently tried to get as far away from the Lord as possible. The word, *Tarshish,* comes from the ancient Akkadian language and means *"smelting plant"* or *"refinery."* The ship on which Jonah sailed was very likely one of many ships that carried refined ore from the smelting plants in Tarshish to Jerusalem (through Joppa).

tempestuous - turbulent or stormy.

Sheol- The Hebrew name for "the place of the dead."

sackcloth - A course, rough cloth made of goat or camel hair, flax, or hemp, and worn as a symbol of mourning or repentance.

OUTER AIM
Jonah is called, flees, and is swallowed by a great fish before he carries the Lord's call to repentance to the great city of Nineveh.

INNER AIM
Our omnipotent God exercises His power in love, desiring all men to repent and be saved.

BACKGROUND *(Rupprecht Volume 1, pages 371-379)*
Most Bible scholars and historians place Jonah's ministry at about 782-772 BC. This fits well with the historical fact that the Assyrian kings of that period were less ruthless and aggressive than later kings, most notably Tiglath-pileser III who came to power in 745 BC. At this time, the Assyrian Empire had spread to the very borders of Israel, and Israel's destruction must have seemed inevitable to many.

Although the book of Jonah is best known for the incident with the great fish, the Scriptures emphasize the loving compassion of our omnipotent God. It is different from the other books of the prophets in that it is made up more of the biography of the prophet himself (Jonah) rather than the messages of God which that the prophet was to proclaim. Though Jonah was an actual prophet, many believe that he is here also symbolic of the nation as a whole. Israel had wandered from her mission of calling sinners to repentance and sought instead the destruction of all her enemies.

Chapter 1

Exactly why Jonah fled (or tried to flee) from the Lord's presence is a matter of some debate. There are several possibilities: 1) he feared the legendary cruelty of the Assyrians, 2) he prejudged the lack of effectiveness his message would have on the heathen nation, 3) he prejudged that his message would have the desired effect and did not want Assyria to be saved, but destroyed, 4) he knew his message would have the desired effect on the people of Nineveh and that his prophesy of destruction would come to naught, causing him personal embarrassment in the eyes of the Assyrians. Given Jonah's words in 4:2, one of the last two possibilities seems likely.

Since the connection between Israel and Tarshish was the smelting capabilities of the latter, the cargo thrown overboard by the sailors in an attempt to save their ship probably had something to do with the refining of ore or the re-supply of the refinery outpost.

Jonah's sleep brings to mind the time Jesus slept in a boat during a storm (Mark 4:38), yet Jonah's sleep was not the sleep of faith demonstrated by Jesus since Jonah was running from the Lord.

The casting of lots was used in ancient times both for gambling and to answer certain questions. Whether the lot in this case was directed by God, the devil, or chance, it rightly fell to Jonah and he did not hesitate to tell his shipmates about his God and his plight.

The sailors were honorable men - even calling on God by his personal name, Jehovah. They tried valiantly to save the ship with Jonah intact, but they were struggling against the will of God. Reluctantly they threw Jonah overboard according to his own recommendation.

Much is made of the great fish that swallowed Jonah, though that part of this story plays a relatively minor role in the overall message. The word used here is correctly translated "fish" rather than "whale." Though Jonah's preservation is certainly miraculous by all accounts, the relatively tiny throats of known whales are too small to allow the swallowing of an entire man. *(See Rupprecht Vol. 1, page 375 for his discussion of the "great fish.")*

The word translated "prepared" is used in connection with the great fish, the shade plant, the worm that destroyed it, and the scorching east wind. All these things God "prepared." The word itself carries the picture of a military officer giving an order to a subordinate.

Chapter 2

The Lord here teaches Jonah that not even through death can a man escape from His hand. It is quite possible that Jonah imagined that once thrown into the sea his inner turmoil would cease. His misery not only continued, it was magnified many times over. We can only imagine how terrible three days and nights in the dark belly of the great fish must have been.

Finally Jonah stops running from the Lord and instead turns to Him in praise and worship. He recognizes not only the futility of running from God, but also the folly of looking to any other source for help. He said, "Those who regard worthless idols forsake their own Mercy."

As petty and wrong-hearted as Jonah appears to be before and after this event, here he demonstrates great faith in the midst of what must have been terrible suffering. He not only acknowledges that "salvation is of the Lord," he also here offers a prayer of thanksgiving.

Chapter 3

God calls to Jonah a second time, indicating that although God took no pleasure in Jonah's suffering, He did not allow His word and will to be ignored or thwarted. (See application below.) This time Jonah obeyed.

The reference to Nineveh as "that great city" might also carry with it the idea of "greater Nineveh." Though the walled part of the city was only about four and one half square miles, Jonah's three-day journey could well have taken him to the outlying communities. *(See note on Nineveh above under Vocabulary and Rupprecht's notes in Volume 1, page 372.)*

When the Bible talks of "believing God" (as did the people of Nineveh) it does not refer simply to a mental acceptance of facts. "Believing" carried with it the inclusion of action, as the believer felt appropriate. Knowing the facts and yet refusing to act in harmony with them was considered the height of foolishness, while true wisdom was the prudent exhibition of knowledge through appropriate actions.

The national repentance of the heart of the Assyrian Empire was nothing short of miraculous. It is a testament to the power of God's Word and the need to preach law and gospel without prejudging what effect God's Word will have.

History and archeology bear out the assumption that violence and barbaric cruelty were among Nineveh's greatest sins. This is borne out in the King's command that every citizen "turn from his evil way and from the violence that is in his hands." Assyrian pottery and relief carvings depict unimaginable cruelty, including the gouging out of eyes, severing of tongues, flaying of live captives, and the impaling of prisoners upon sharpened poles.

It is important to recognize God's complete consistency, not fickle inconsistency. His consistent desire is that sinners everywhere repent and turn to Him. His desire is to bless us. Whenever man repents, God is always merciful, always forgiving.

Chapter 4

It is difficult to understand Jonah's displeasure at the Lord's mercy toward Nineveh. It could have been motivated by hatred of Assyria for which Jonah wanted destruction, not pardon. Perhaps in pride he felt that his warning of calamity would not be fulfilled. We do not know if Jonah asked to die out of a sense of humiliation, pride, or stubborn hatred of the gentiles. What is remarkable is that God demonstrates the same patient love toward Jonah that he displayed toward Nineveh.

Jonah went and sat on the east side of the city to see what would happen because Nineveh was protected on the west and south by the Tigris River. Any attack would have to come from the east or north.

God prepared and destroyed the shade plant as an object lesson for Jonah. Through the rise and destruction of the plant (for which Jonah greatly cared) God demonstrated His own loving concern for the 120,000 souls he had created in Nineveh.

The statement that Nineveh's inhabitants "cannot discern between their right hand and their left" refers to their natural spiritual ignorance apart from the Lord and His Word.

STUDENT PRAYER

Lord God, Heavenly Father, I confess that like Jonah, I have often thought that my way of doing things was better than Your way. I pray that You would move me to humbly submit to Your will. Increase my faith that, although I cannot see everything that You can, I will be able to trust that You know best. Forgive me also for being cold and loveless toward my neighbor. Help me to speak Your words of law and gospel from a loving heart-a heart that desires all men to be saved. Amen.

PRESENTATION

This Bible account could possibly be read in class, but it would be best to again assign its reading the week before it is presented. You could then retell or summarize the story for your students in your own words.

APPLICATION

1. We can neither run from God nor hide from him. Use Jonah's initial flight to demonstrate how foolish it is to try to hide from an all-powerful, all-knowing God. Then apply this fact to the life of a child. (God knows when we are lying; God sees when we take money from Mom's purse; God hears when we say a bad word, even if no one else does.)
2. Lead the students to imagine the horror of living for three days inside of the great fish. What would it be like? (pitch black, confined, smelly, irritating, nauseating, etc.) Then point out how Jonah turned to the Lord during this dark hour and was saved. We should learn to recognize hard times as the Lord's way of calling to us. The Lord tried to call to Jonah in less painful ways, but he refused to listen. Listen to God when He calls.
3. Jesus himself draws the comparison between Jonah in the great fish and Jesus in the tomb (Matthew 12:39-40). Jesus goes on in Matthew 12 to condemn those who in His day rejected His message of repentance and salvation through faith, even though someone greater than Jonah was delivering the message. We too have been warned. The people of Nineveh will also rise up on the Last Day to condemn us if we reject His call to repentance and faith.
4. God does not take pleasure in our suffering. He allows hardships so that we might take notice and obey. So also when Jonah had suffered through his ordeal, God called to him again.
5. Bringing the Word of God will very seldom make us popular with the world, for God's Word begins with the condemnation of the law. No one likes to be condemned, but only the hammer blows of the law can break the stubborn, rebellious pride of our sinful hearts. Think of how much courage it took for Jonah to speak law to the cruel inhabitants of Nineveh. What things today make us afraid to speak God's Word?
6. This lesson demonstrates how eager God is to forgive sinful mankind and to shower us with His blessings. Yet forgiveness comes only through repentance.
7. As God demonstrated to Jonah just how much more valuable human beings are than material things on this earth, so the students should be led to recognize that all our hearts are filled with the same selfish nonsense that clouded Jonah's understanding. (We might, for example, hope that the star player on the other team gets hurt so that our team might win; or we might lose sight of the fact that the life of a human being is more important than the earthly inheritance others might leave for us.)
8. Point out how foolish it would be to "not know your right hand from your left," and then help the student to realize that that is how unbelievers are spiritually. Even young children can be teachers of those who do not know God's Word or Jesus as their Savior.

PASSAGES

These passages can be assigned as memory work or simply discussed in class as to how they fit the lesson.

Lower

Deuteronomy 6:4 - Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one.

Proverbs 3:5 - Trust in the LORD with all your heart, And lean not on your own understanding;

Psalm 143:10 - Teach me to do Your will, For You are my God

Middle

Matthew 4:10 - You shall worship the LORD your God, and Him only you shall serve.

Matthew 7:24 - Therefore whoever hears these sayings of Mine, and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the rock

Matthew 16:24 - Then Jesus said to His disciples, "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me.

Upper

Psalm 90:2 - Before the mountains were brought forth, Or ever You had formed the earth and the world, Even from everlasting to everlasting, You are God.

Jeremiah 23:28 - He who has My word, let him speak My word faithfully. What is the chaff to the wheat?" says the LORD.

Colossians 3:17 - And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.

HYMN CHOICES

Take My Life and Let It Be - TLH #400
Jesus Lead Thou On - TLH #410
What God Ordains Is Always Good - TLH #521:1-4

STORY

The Overthrow of Israel. King Hezekiah - 2 Kings 17-20; 2 Chronicles 29-32

TEACHER PRAYER

Dear Lord Jesus, since by nature I am prone to idolatry, cleanse my heart and rule there. I make gods of my own wants and pleasures, and I trust in many things beside You. Forgive me for Jesus' sake. Now I ask for Your help in explaining the dangers of idolatry to these children. Please give me the knowledge to teach the truths of this lesson, and the strength to lead by example. Amen.

VOCABULARY

Hoshea - The last king of Northern Israel. He was placed on the throne by the Assyrian Tiglath-pileser, but later rebelled against him and was imprisoned. Scripture and history are silent as to his final fate.

Samaritans - A race of mixed Gentile and Jewish blood, formed when the remaining Jews (from both Israel and Judah) intermarried with the pagan peoples imported by Assyria to replace the exiled Jews. The ethnically pure Jews of Judah despised the Samaritans both for their mixed ancestry and for their worship of pagan idols.

Haran and Gozan - Cities located in the north of the Assyrian Empire. It was to these cities that the Israelites were relocated. (See the 6th note under Chapter 17 below for the irony here.)

Babylon, Cuthan, Ava, Hamath, & Sepharvaim - Assyrian cities located in the southeastern part of the Empire. It was from these cities that colonists were sent to inhabit northern Israel after the fall of Samaria.

Nehustan- The name given to the bronze serpent constructed at God's command by Moses in the wilderness. The name literally means: B*ronze Thing.* The people came to regard it as an idol and burned incense to it. When it was destroyed by Hezekiah it was some 650 years old.

Shalmaneser - A family name of five Assyrian kings. The name literally means: *"the god Shulman is ruler."* An excavated Assyrian obelisk depicts King Jehu of Israel paying tribute to Shalmaneser III. It was Shalmaneser V that laid siege to Samaria in this account. The siege of Samaria lasted three years. Since Shalmaneser V died sometime in 722 BC (the last year of the siege) it is not known whether he or his successor (Sargon) actually banished what was left of Israel. Sargon claimed credit in his inscriptions.

Tartan, Rabsaris, & Rabshakeh - These are not the names of men but titles referring to military rank in the Assyrian army. Literally *tartan* meant *"second in command," rabsaris* meant *"first eunuch,"* and *rabshakeh* meant *"chief officer."*

Nishroch - An idol worshipped by Shalmaneser V, believed to have a human body with the head and wings of an eagle.

Ararat - The name given to the area between the Caucasus Mountains and the Tigris River (modern day Armenia). The area is located north of the old Assyrian Empire and east of modern day Turkey. Though we know that Noah's ark came to rest on Mount Ararat, its exact location is not known.

Manasseh - During the first part of his reign Manasseh was arguably one of the most wicked kings ever to sit on the throne in either Judah or Israel. He was actually *worse* than the pagans the Lord drove out of the land before him. Since he came to the throne when he was only 12 years old, certainly his advisors (and perhaps also his mother Hephzibah) shared the blame for his return to such open and abominable idolatry. However, 2 Chronicles 33 tells of Manasseh's repentance and return to the Lord. He reigned for 55 years in Judah.

OUTER AIM

Israel is destroyed by Assyria. Because of her idolatry; Judah is spared under King Hezekiah; and King Hezekiah's life is lengthened as an answer to his faithful service and prayer.

INNER AIM

Israel was destroyed because she refused God's blessing and protection and turned instead to idols. Judah under King Hezekiah trusted in the Lord and was protected and blessed. (See also the notes under **Presentation** below.)

BACKGROUND *(Rupprecht Volume 1, pages 379-389)*

The time of grace for the Northern Ten Tribes of Israel is at an end. God raised up the Assyrians to carry them into exile, from which they never returned.

The key to understanding these four chapters is to recognize the same military threat that faced both nations. Israel fell, not because it was militarily weaker than Judah but because it was spiritually bankrupt. Their kings and their people had turned away from the one true God and had adopted the idols of the people they had driven out. Judah was spared because she and her king looked to the Lord for their deliverance. Later, when Judah also turned away, the Lord delivered them over to the Babylonians, preserving only a remnant for the sake of His promise.

Chapter 17

Hoshea was just another in a long line of evil kings in Israel. Though his evil was "not as the kings of Israel who were before him," he nonetheless "did evil in the sight of the Lord." Some Bible-era historians believe that Hoshea was ransomed from his first Assyrian imprisonment and then led a second rebellion against Assyria, which resulted in the destruction of Samaria and the permanent exile of Israel.

Although Assyria destroyed Samaria in 722 BC and carried many Jews off into exile, a fair number of Jews remained in the area. Hezekiah reached out to these remaining Jews, imploring them to return to the God of their fathers, but his words were met for the most part with ridicule (2 Chronicles 30:1-11). Some, however, returned to the Lord, and were gladly accepted back into the fold in Judah. The final deportation in the North was carried out by Esarhaddon in 670 BC. This final annihilation was foretold in Isaiah 7:8.

Israel was destroyed for her idolatry. Her sin of turning away from the Lord was compounded by her refusal to hear the many prophets God sent to call Israel to repentance. They failed to learn the lesson taught to Jonah in the belly of the great fish: "Those who regard worthless idols forsake their own Mercy."

2 Kings 17:18 tells us, "Therefore the LORD was very angry with Israel, and removed them from His sight; there was none left but the tribe of Judah alone." Though individual Jews remained in Samaria after the deportation, Israel as a nation ceased to exist.

Jeroboam was the first king of Israel after Solomon's kingdom was divided. "The sins of Jeroboam" refers to the many evil practices initiated by Jeroboam, including the building of the golden calves in Bethel and Dan, the erection of the high places, alternate feasts not prescribed by God, and the establishment of a priesthood outside the tribe of Levi.

Assyria resettled the area with pagans who carried with them their foreign gods. It is the height of irony that the new inhabitants of Israel come from the same area as the original patriarch Abraham (a native of Ur); and that the apostate Israelites were exiled in part to the hometown of the matriarch from whom they all sprang -Rebekah, the wife of Isaac, who was a native of Haran.

Although an increase in predators and other wild animals was common in the areas where great battles were fought (due to an abundance of carrion and a decreased human population), the lions in Samaria were sent by God for a purpose. Although the people brought to Samaria continued to worship their pagan gods, they at the very least had to be taught to fear the Lord. This God accomplished this by sending the lions.

The people who resettled Samaria superstitiously believed that the observance of certain local customs or rituals would appease the local God. Thus they "feared" the Lord, but did not worship Him or serve Him.

Chapter 18

Note the roller coaster of sin and righteousness on the part of the kings in Judah. Jotham was a righteous king who was the father of Ahaz. Ahaz was an evil king and the father of the righteous king Hezekiah. Hezekiah was a righteous king and the father of Manasseh, an evil king. Manasseh later repented and returned to the Lord. After returning to the Lord, Manasseh was succeeded by his son Amon, an evil king. Amon was succeeded by his son, Josiah, a righteous king. Righteous Josiah was succeeded by Jehoahaz, an evil king.

The Bible tells us that Hezekiah was without equal among the kings of Israel and Judah. Some wonder if this statement includes David and Solomon. The statement in 18:6 that Hezekiah "held fast to the LORD; he did not depart from following Him, but kept His commandments, which the LORD had commanded Moses" seems to indicate that Hezekiah was the greatest of *all* kings. David committed adultery and murder in connection with Bathsheba, and Solomon turned to other gods in his later years.

We have an insight in 2 Chronicles 30 as to Hezekiah's mission spirit. He reached out to the fallen Jews to the north and invited them to return to their true God.

Roughly halfway through Hezekiah's 29-year reign Judah is attacked by Assyria. When the fortified town of Lachish falls, Hezekiah strips the treasury and the temple for tribute in an effort to appease Sennacherib, the Assyrian king. Having received the tribute, Sennacherib advances on Jerusalem anyway.

Unlike Israel to the north, Judah turned to the Lord when danger threatened. Though they armed themselves, Hezekiah warned them to trust not in weapons but in the Lord (2 Chronicles 32:5-9).

The three military officials sent by Sennacherib to Jerusalem make the fatal mistake of blaspheming the God of Judah.

Chapter 19

Great faith was required on the part of the king and people of Judah. Assyria had crushed all who dared to stand in her way. They had carried northern Israel into exile. They were capable of sustaining sieges for years. According to human reckoning, Jerusalem's cause was all but lost. Yet the Lord demonstrated His power in rescuing those who put their trust in Him alone.

Note how Hezekiah literally takes his case to the Lord and lays it out before Him. The Lord did not need to have the letter of Sennacherib brought to His temple for Him to know what it said, but doing so demonstrates Hezekiah's complete reliance on the Lord. This is the kind of trust the Lord wants to see in His people.

The great prophet Isaiah was a contemporary of Hezekiah. In his prophesy from the Lord he mentions a "hook in your nose and… bridle in your lips." The barbaric Assyrian kings were in the habit of piercing the nose and/or lips of conquered kings, inserting rings, and leading them about by ropes fastened to the rings. In picturesque language, the Lord was letting the Assyrians know exactly who was in charge and who possessed the ultimate power and authority. The one true God detests sinful pride, arrogance, and blasphemy.

The Word of the Lord through Isaiah was, of course, fulfilled. Though some have tried to reduce the miraculous slaughter of the Assyrians to an outbreak of bubonic plague (or the like), we have no reason to doubt the text's clear words that an angel (or Angel) of the Lord personally killed 185,000 men, and did so in a single night. The number 185,000 is in perfect harmony with the historical record of the typical size of an Assyrian army during this period.

Although Sennacherib was spared by the angel of the Lord, he returned to Nineveh in shame and defeat and was soon murdered by his own sons as he worshipped his pagan god, Nisroch.

Chapter 20

The fact that the Lord heard and granted Hezekiah's prayer is evidence of the condition of Hezekiah's heart when he offered it. The Lord is not fickle when it comes to carrying out His will. He consistently desires to bless His servants with that which is best for their salvation.

Note the blessing and the curse Hezekiah received in being told that he would live another fifteen years. Death comes to all men, but knowing beforehand could well have been a terrible burden. Also of interest is the fact that his son and heir, Manasseh, (who led Judah back into grievous idolatry) was born three years after Hezekiah was healed.

God healed Hezekiah, but just as Jesus later used the visible remedy of mud made with his own saliva to cure a blind man, here the remedy of a fig poultice is used.

Ahaz refused a sign from God and was condemned for it (Isaiah 7:11-12). Hezekiah does not make the same mistake. Exactly how the Lord made the shadow on the sundial retreat ten degrees is not known.

Hezekiah's life is lengthened, but the stage is set for the fall of Judah when the king shows the envoys from Babylon all the treasures in the royal city. We are told in 2 Chronicles 32:31 that God brought the Babylonian diplomats as a test for Hezekiah - "that He might know all that was in his heart." Apparently Hezekiah gave in to the sin of pride when he paraded the treasures of Judah to impress the Babylonians. As prophesied by Isaiah, Babylon returned and plundered Judah in 597 BC.

STUDENT PRAYER

Heavenly Father, I have seen in Your Word the price that must be paid for idolatry and rebellion. Help me to remember that there are idols all around us, even today. Help me to remember that an idol is not only wood or stone, but whatever I fear, love, or trust above You. Keep me from that which hurts me, and give me the strength to love you with all my heart, soul, and mind. Amen.

PRESENTATION

This account is obviously too long to read in class and should be assigned reading for the students (preferably before the class). In presenting the lesson, note that Chapter 17 deals with Israel's fall and the reasons for that fall - idolatry. Chapters 18 and 19 stand in contrast, for there we read that the same Assyrian military threat that destroyed Israel was turned away from Judah because of faithful obedience to the Lord on the part of Judah under King Hezekiah. Chapter 20 deals with Hezekiah's sickness and recovery, again emphasizing that the Lord is ready and willing to bless us when we turn to Him in time of need rather than to idols.

APPLICATION

1. Militarily Israel was probably stronger than Judah, yet Judah survived the Assyrian invasions. Try to solicit from the students the reason why Judah survived and Israel did not (God was with them). Next, ask them for other examples where God's people won against impossible odds because God fought for them (David and Goliath, King David against Saul, Elijah against the prophets of Baal, Elijah and the bands of fifty soldiers, Gideon, etc.)
2. Have the children list some of the idols common today (money, pleasure, boats, cars, cabins, celebrities, sports heroes, etc.)
3. Imagine how difficult it was to be a God-fearing prophet of God in Israel during these times. Lead the students to recognize how God might call upon them to make some difficult witnesses or confessions. Out of love for our Lord Jesus we should never keep silent when we have a chance to tell others what we believe.
4. As the Lord sent lions to get the attention of the new inhabitants of Samaria, so the Lord may allow some hard things to come into our lives. Have the students give examples. What should be our reaction when God allows hardships to occur?
5. The unbelievers in Samaria "feared" the Lord but did not believe in Him nor serve Him. What do we mean when we say we should "fear God above all things"? (Love and respect Him.)
6. Though his father was evil, Hezekiah recognized that the shrines to the pagan idols in Judah were evil and destroyed them. Demonstrate to the children with examples how each new generation needs to carefully examine even those customs they take for granted, contrasting them to God's Word to see if they are God pleasing. For example, dressing up like a devil on Halloween is not something the Christian will want to do since it glorifies and trivializes evil.
7. Point out to the students the confidence and the comfort that we can have in our hearts when we lay our needs before the Lord in prayer. He will answer in the way He knows to be best.
8. Proverbs 16:18 says, "Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall." Ask the students how and when this passage applied to King Hezekiah? (When he pridefully displayed all of his wealth to the Babylonian diplomats.) Ask for examples of how this saying applies to us *spiritually* even today.

PASSAGES

These passages can be assigned as memory work or simply discussed in class as to how they fit the lesson.

Lower

Genesis 39:9 - How then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?

Psalm 37:5 - Commit your way to the LORD, trust also in Him, and He shall bring it to pass.

1 John 5:21 - Little children, keep yourselves from idols.

Middle

1 Thessalonians 4:7-8a - For God did not call us to uncleanness, but in holiness. Therefore he who rejects this does not reject man, but God.

Jonah 2:8-9 - Those who regard worthless idols forsake their own Mercy. But I will sacrifice to You with the voice of thanksgiving; I will pay what I have vowed. Salvation is of the LORD."

2 Peter 3:5 - For this they willfully forget that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of water and in the water.

Upper

Psalm 1:1 - Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stands in the path of sinners, nor sits in the seat of the scornful.

Romans 12:2 - And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

Galatians 2:20 - "I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.

HYMN CHOICES

Lord, to Thee I Make Confession - TLH #326
The Man Is Ever Blest - TLH #414
Abide with Me! Fast Falls the Eventide - TLH #552:5-8

STORY

The Babylonian Captivity - 2 Kings 22-25; 2 Chronicles 34-36; Jeremiah 34-39

TEACHER PRAYER

Dear Lord, I thank You for all the comforting promises that I find in Your Word. Surely despair would have engulfed me long ago had You not comforted me with Your promises. I thank you especially this day for the assurance that You not only create faith, You also preserve it. Direct me in this lesson to impart the same comfort to Your children. May the message of this lesson give them confidence and peace as they grow up facing the many enemies on every hand. Amen.

VOCABULARY

Josiah - The last righteous king of Judah before the Babylonian Captivity. He was the great grandson of Hezekiah and began ruling when he was eight years old. Of all the kings in Israel, Josiah was the most zealous in keeping the Lord's commandments and ordinances.

Bethel - One of the two cities of Israel (along with Dan) where Jeroboam set up his golden calves for worship. Josiah recognized the abomination in Israel and was able to desecrate the pagan worship areas there while Assyria was preoccupied with the rising Babylonian Empire.

Brook Kidron - A usually dry riverbed that flows only with the runoff waters of spring, emptying eventually into the Dead Sea. By Josiah's time it had become the receptacle for all manner of unclean things, swept clean each spring by the torrential runoff.

Perverted persons - Temple prostitutes, both men and women, who performed all manner of sinful acts in the name of their pagan religions.

Topheth - The site somewhere to the south and west of Jerusalem where worshippers of Molech made their children pass through the fire (burning them alive). Topheth was located in the Valley of Hinnom, known later by the Hebrew name of Gehenna. The place was destroyed and desecrated so thoroughly by Josiah that its exact location is not known. The entire area became a pit for every kind of waste and carrion. Funeral pyres were common there, as were all of the vermin generally found around decaying flesh. Jesus later used the place as a graphic portrayal of hell - *"where 'their worm does not die, and the fire is not quenched.'"* (Mark 9:44 ff).

Mount of Corruption - A hill, believed to have been located south of the Mount of Olives, where Solomon erected worship sites to the pagan gods Ashtoreth, Chemosh, and Milcom.

Nebuchadnezzar - King of the Babylonian Empire for over 42 years (604-562 BC). He was probably of mixed Chaldean and Babylonian ancestry, and is known as much for his building and beautification projects as for his military campaigns.

Nebuzaradan - The Babylonian Officer ("Chief of the Slaughterers") who served under Nebuchadnezzar during the deportation of Judah. His name means *"Nebo has given offspring."* He seems to have been civil in his dealings with the conquered Jews of Judah.

Riblah in Hamath - Located over 200 miles NNE of Jerusalem, the area was occupied by the Egyptian Necho after the defeat of Judah under King Josiah. It was here that Josiah's son, King Jehoahaz, was imprisoned after he succeeded his father. Later the area was taken from Egypt and used as a staging area

by the Babylonian invaders during their conquest of Judah and Phoenicia. It was to this place that Nebuzaradan led many of the leaders from Jerusalem after that city's destruction, where they were executed by Nebuchadnezzar. Hamath is the name of both a city and the region in which it is located.

Chaldeans - A race of people from the Kurdistan Mountains known for their military aggression and their study of astronomy and astrology. The Chaldeans were in large part responsible for the destruction of the Assyrian Empire and the establishment of the Babylonian Empire. The Babylonian Empire is also rightly called the Chaldean Empire, although Babylonia was made up of many ethnic peoples. It is probably fair to say that every Chaldean became a Babylonian, but not every Babylonian was a Chaldean. Abram (Abraham) was originally called from Ur of the Chaldees.

OUTER AIM

Because of her idolatry and perversion, Judah is delivered over to her enemies; but a faithful remnant is preserved, both in Judah and in Babylonia.

INNER AIM

Though God punishes those who reject Him, He preserves His children and keeps His promises.

BACKGROUND *(Rupprecht Volume 1, pages 389-395)*

Though the reforms brought by Josiah were indeed God-pleasing, the evil wrought in the early part of Manasseh's reign was not easily undone. The Jews had broken the conditional covenant God had made with them as a nation (Exodus 19-24) and therefore God no longer acted as their national defender. However the covenant that God would send a Savior from the Jews was an unconditional covenant, therefore God preserved a remnant in Babylon to fulfill His promise.

Chapter 23

Josiah's reforms were both thorough and genuine. He not only destroyed all of the pagan worship sites in Judah and reestablished the correct celebration of the Passover, he also desecrated all of the pagan worship sites in what had been Northern Israel (Samaria) - including the destruction of the infamous 300 year old alternate worship site erected in Bethel by Jeroboam. He was able to do this because of the power vacuum that existed during this time. Assyria was fast declining on all fronts. Egypt was opportunistically just beginning to occupy weakened Assyrian territories in the west, and the Chaldeans were chipping away at the Assyrian Empire in the east.

For background on "the tomb of the man of God" mentioned in 23:17-18, and for the prophesies made by that man of God concerning Josiah's acts, see 1 Kings 13.

Though the Passover was celebrated under King Hezekiah (2 Chronicles 30) that is not in conflict with 2 Kings 23:22 in this section, since "*such* a Passover" referred to a ceremonially correct Passover, which was not celebrated until the time of Josiah.

While Hezekiah's greatness lay in his unparalleled trust in the Lord (2 Kings 18:5) Josiah's greatness lay in his unparalleled zeal for the Mosaic Law which was rediscovered during his reign (2 Kings 23:25). 2 Kings 18:5 and 23:25 are therefore not in conflict.

Note the shift in power evident from Egypt's alliance with Assyria (23:29). Egypt, once mightily threatened by Assyria, now allies itself with its old enemy because Babylonia has become the greater threat.

Egypt ruled Palestine until the power struggle between Assyria and Babylon was settled.

Chapter 24
Nebuchadnezzar was the second king of the Babylonian Empire. He succeeded in subduing most of the territory that had once been held by the Assyrians. It is clear that God raised up Nebuchadnezzar as a punishment to Judah for the evil of its kings and people.

Jehoiakim, the grandson of Josiah, became Nebuchadnezzar's vassal. After his rebellion he was replaced by his son, Jehoiachin. Jehoiachin was king in Jerusalem when the city was plundered and the cream of the Jewish people carried off into exile. Jerusalem was not destroyed until Jehoiachin's Uncle, Zedekiah, became king and rebelled against Babylon.

Chapter 25
The city walls were both the blessing and the curse of ancient cities under siege. Starvation often accomplished what enemy armies could not. So it was in Jerusalem during the 1½-year siege of Nebuchadnezzar.

Nebuchadnezzar often demonstrated mercy toward those who surrendered to him, but he demonstrated harshest cruelty to those who refused. It is hard to imagine the horror to which Zedekiah was subjected -forced to witness the execution of his sons before being blinded. Yet so the prophecy of Ezekiel 12:13 was fulfilled, *"I will also spread My net over him, and he shall be caught in My snare. I will bring him to Babylon, to the land of the Chaldeans; yet he shall not see it, though he shall die there."*

As the Lord had now withdrawn from the nation of Judah, so also he allowed the temple that had once borne his Name to be destroyed by the pagan Babylonians. Yet He did not forget His promise, His unconditional covenant to send a Savior. Therefore now He resided in the hearts of the remnant of Israel.

As the gold and silver had been carried off during the first plunder of Jerusalem a decade earlier, so now also all of the bronze articles are carried off to Babylon - a quantity beyond measure. Many of these articles had been made by Solomon over 350 years earlier.

Once again we see that while Nebuchadnezzar offered life in exile to those who surrendered to him, those who did not faced dire consequences. So in verses 18-21 we read of the execution of many of the officials who occupied positions of authority during the last rebellion.

Even after the destruction of Jerusalem those who remain demonstrate that they have learned nothing. The military leaders who had escaped the Babylonians assassinated their own governor, Gedaliah, as well as their Chaldean overseers. In a panic (and contrary to the command of the Lord through Jeremiah) those that are left flee in fear to Egypt. Thus, for them, the Exodus was reversed.

Refer to the sections in Jeremiah 34-39 for the relationship between the Prophet Jeremiah and the various rulers of Judah during this period. Note that the rulers, from first to last, were always given fair warning by the Lord through His prophets. They refused to hear and heed the Lord's commands, and their folly proved to be fatal in the end.

Rupprecht gives the following list of Nebuchadnezzar's deportation of Judah: *"In the first year of Nebuchadnezzar's reign: Daniel and a few others; in his eighth year: 10,000 persons; in his seventeenth year: 3,023; in his eighteenth year: 832; in his twenty-third year: 745. Total, ca. 14,600."*

STUDENT PRAYER

Heavenly Father, with every year I become more aware of the dangers that are all around me, including my own sinful flesh. It makes me so happy to learn that You have promised to take care of me, just as You preserved the nation of Judah. I am comforted that You will not leave me, and I pray that the Holy Spirit would continue to live in me, that I might always remain faithful to You. In Jesus' name I ask this. Amen.

PRESENTATION

This account is obviously too long to read in class. Although the teacher should read all of the material from 2 Kings and Jeremiah as a preparation toward mastering the material, only the upper grades should be expected to do the same. The teacher will need to draw up an outline of the points to be covered in the telling of the story. In studying and presenting this material, note that those who obeyed the word and will of the Lord were spared. Note also, however, that even the righteous prophet Jeremiah suffered terribly for a time. God has never promised us a life of ease when we follow Him, but He has promised to make all things work for our spiritual good.

APPLICATION

1. Sin has consequences. Though King Manasseh turned away from his evil during the latter part of his reign, and though Josiah brought many reforms in Judah, the perversion and idolatry was too engrained in the people of Judah. They quickly turned again to their evil ways after the passing of Josiah, and eventually the Lord drove them from His sight. Emphasize to the students that God does not tolerate sin and rebellion indefinitely. No one "gets away with" sin.
2. Use the gruesome account of Zedekiah's punishment as evidence of how fearful a thing it would be to be abandoned by God. (May be suitable only for the older students.)
3. The history of the Jewish nation is a history of great tragedy. Though God preserved a remnant for the sake of His promise, Israel again rejected her God and Savior, and Jerusalem was again destroyed in 70 AD, this time by the Romans. Even today the Jewish nation is either scattered around the world, or lives embattled in Palestine, surrounded by enemies and rejected by God. God did not just reject Judah for a time. He rejected the nation of Israel for all time, preserving a remnant only for the sake of His promise. Today's "Israel" is the Christian Church.
4. Demonstrate to the students how obedience to the Word of the Lord does not always exempt us from suffering. Jeremiah was faithful, yet he suffered terribly. To suffer for the sake of the Word of God, however, has positive eternal consequences. To turn from Him in the face of hardship has dire, eternal consequences. Have the children give examples of how they might have to suffer in their day for speaking the Word of God (unpopular in school, subjected to ridicule, thought of as odd or old fashioned, etc.).
5. Discus with the students some of the evil practices in our own country today. How do they compare with the evil in Israel and Judah? What can we do to help? Why does God preserve America?

PASSAGES

These passages can be assigned as memory work or simply discussed in class as to how they fit the lesson.

Lower

Psalm 124:8 - Our help is in the name of the LORD, Who made heaven and earth.

2 Timothy 2:19 - The Lord knows those who are His.

1 Peter 1:5 - [You] are kept by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

Middle

Luke 22:32 - But I have prayed for you, that your faith should not fail; and when you have returned to Me, strengthen your brethren.

Romans 11:5 - Even so then, at this present time there is a remnant according to the election of grace.
2 Thessalonians 3:3 But the Lord is faithful, who will establish you and guard you from the evil one.

Upper

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

1 Corinthians 10:13 - No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it.

John 10:27-28 - "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me. {28} "And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand.'

HYMN CHOICES

Praise to the Lord, the Almighty - TLH #39:3-5
O Little Flock, Fear Not the Foe - TLH #263
Lord Jesus, Thou the Church's Head - TLH #477

STORY
Daniel - Daniel 1-2

TEACHER PRAYER
O Lord, You have taught us to pray, "Thy Kingdom Come." You have thereby taught us to petition the Holy Spirit for growth of faith in Christ and love towards all. But you have also taught us to pray forYour final victory over all the Kingdom of the world.

VOCABULARY
Kingdom- not a local or static concept, but His worldwide regal rule in the hearts of believers and the nations.

OUTER AIM
Earthly kingdoms rise and fall; The KINGDOM OF GOD destroys all earthly kingdoms and shall stand forever.

INNER AIM
Although our nation and all nations will one day be destroyed, we are believers and members of the Kingdom of God and so shall live forever.

BACKGROUND
1. The setting for the book of Daniel is the time of indignation, of judgment upon Israel. The Ten Northern Tribes had been destroyed and deported. The judgments, announced by Jeremiah, were about to fall on Judah.

2. There is always mercy in the midst of judgment. The Jews tended to identify the KINGDOM OF GOD with the nation of Israel. When Judah and Jerusalem with the temple fell, it appeared as though the KINGDOM was being destroyed.

3. Note that there were three deportations--at the time of Jehoakim (II Chron. 36:5-8). Daniel and his three friends were beneficiaries of that first deportation. The second under Jehoiachin (II Chron.36:9-10) Ezekiel was the beneficiary of that deportation. Final deportation occurred under Zedekiah--586. Daniel, his friends, and Ezekiel were spared the horrors of the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple. The man who bestowed these blessings was the same man who was the instrument of judgment upon Israel. While the KINGDOM seemed to be destroyed, the destroyer was the agent for the "underground" onward march of the KINGDOM--Nebuchadnezzar.

Themes:
- You're never too young or too old to bear witness to your faith!
- Teenagers: Use Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego as role models.
- God always tests the faith of His own.

STUDENT PRAYER

Lord, send me Your Holy Spirit that I may grow in grace and knowledge.

PRESENTATION

Chapter 1 - Confessing: Daniel made a great confession as he took the initiative by taking his case to the chief of the eunuchs who passed it on to his steward. The steward approved a ten-day trial of a menu of vegetables and water.

Daniel and his friends appeared more healthy than the young men who had dined at the king's table. Note the character traits of Daniel--always a gentleman, humble, gracious, honest, sociable, able to project himself without tooting his own horn.

Chapter 2 - Nebuchadnezzar's Dream - The learned members of Nebuchadnezzar's cabinet, all of whom were spiritual quacks, were unable to interpret Nebuchadnezzar 's dream, especially since he did not tell them his dream. (There is a difference of opinion as to whether Nebuchadnezzar forgot his dream or simply would not reveal it in order get a true interpretation of the dream.) Nebuchadnezzar 's most learned men declared it to be impossible for anyone to interpret a dream without knowing what the dream is, v 10. The demand of Nebuchadnezzar and the response of his learned men reveal the bankruptcy of heathenism. Nebuchadnezzar 's solution: execute all his wise men on the grounds of their ignorance.

Nebuchadnezzar 's dream revealed and interpreted-Daniel and his friends were under the death sentence, but Daniel requested time through Arioch. Note again Daniel's relationship with people in high places in Nebuchadnezzar's government. Note also how the Lord moved Arioch to heed the request of Daniel. Arioch no doubt knew that Nebuchadnezzar was more interested is learning the interpretation of the dream than in executing his wise men. Daniel and his friends took the matter to the Lord in prayer.

The Lord revealed the secret. Daniel glorified and thanked his God, vs. 20-23. Arioch brought Daniel to Nebuchadnezzar, claiming that he had found a man among the captives who could interpret Nebuchadnezzar 's dream. Daniel again gave all glory and thanks to his God. Through the dream the Lord God would reveal the fate of the kingdoms of this world and their final destructon by the KINGDOM OF GOD. This flow of history was revealed to Nebuchadnezzar in the form of a great colossus. The head of gold--the neo-Babylonian Empire, the breast and arms of silver--the Medo-Persian Empire, the belly and thighs of bronze--the Grecian Empire, the legs and feet of iron/clay, the Roman Empire. Nebuchadnezzar and his kingdom were represented by the head of gold. Subsequent kingdoms were represented by parts of the colossus. (It would be good to have a map available at this point to show the locations of the nations mentioned here.)

Then there appeared a stone, cut without hands which struck the image and destroyed it completely. STONE--see Ps.118:22 and Isaiah 28:16-the KINGDOM OF GOD, which became a great mountain and filled the whole earth.

Earthly kingdoms rise and fall; The KINGDOM OF GOD destroys all earthly kingdoms and shall stand forever.

APPLICATIONS

- The United States of America is the mightiest kingdom on the face of the earth at this time in history, but it's an earthly kingdom and doomed to destruction.
- As one empire replaced a former, the Lord was preparing His Kingdom, Daniel 2:44.
- Comfort--the Lord is always in complete control! Therefore "Do not fear, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the KINGDOM," Luke 12;32.

PASSAGES

These passages can be assigned as memory work or simply discussed in class as to how they fit the lesson.

Luke 17:20-21 - The kingdom of God does not come with observation; nor will they say, "See here!" or "See there!" For indeed, the kingdom of God is within you.

Ps. 2:4 - He who sits in the heavens shall laugh; the Lord shall hold them in derision.

HYMN CHOICES

Crown Him with Many Crowns - TLH #341
A Mighty Fortress Is Our God - TLH #262

STORY
The Three Men in the Fiery Furnace - (Daniel 3)

TEACHER PRAYER
Lord Jesus, grant me grace to bear whatever persecution may come for Your Name's sake, knowing that no trial can be hotter than the fiery furnace!

VOCABULARY
satrap - A prince with little authority serving an absolute ruler

OUTER AIM
To understand our Lord's training program for His own.

INNER AIM
To realize that our Lord never tests us beyond what we are able to bear.

BACKGROUND
Nebuchadnezzar 's dream of the great colossus, with him and his empire being the head of gold.

Account - Nebuchadnezzar made an image completely overlaid with gold--not solid gold.

Dimensions--90 feet high and nine feet wide. Erected in the Plain of Dure--province of Babylon. Assembling of all political personages for the dedication of the image. At the sound of the music, all were to fall down and worship the image. The penalty for failing to worship the image was death in the fiery furnace.

The image - represented the man-made god--King Nebuchadnezzar. All the nations had their gods. The gods of the Babylonians outranked the gods of the other nations because they had given Nebuchadnezzar the victory over all other nations and their gods. From worshipping the gods of Babylon, it became easy for Nebuchadnezzar to cross the line and consider himself to be the chief god to be worshiped. So the command to worship the image was a command to acknowledge the gods of Babylon as superior to all other gods and Nebuchadnezzar as the highest and greatest of all gods on the earth. There is reason to believe that King Nebuchadnezzar erected this massive image after the fall of Judah and Jerusalem. He, as god, had conquered the God of the Jews. The bowing was thus a religious and civic function. Failing to bow would be the double crime of blasphemy and rebellion.

The Accusation - Certain Chaldeans accused Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego of failing to fall down and worship the image of Nebuchadnezzar. Accusers were political opponents of the three men. Though enraged by the fact that anyone would dare to disobey his command, Nebuchadnezzar sensed the reason for the charges brought against the three men. He offered them a second chance.

STUDENT PRAYER

Lord, grant me grace to obey the Holy Spirit when He lays on my heart the words of the Scriptures.

PRESENTATION

V. 16: "we have no need to answer you in this matter." No arrogance or fanaticism! The three are simply acknowledging the correction of the indictment made against them and declaring that there is no defense or apology that need be made. They cast themselves utterly upon God. It is a case where they were compelled to serve God rather than man, and for their noble faith they are evidently honored by the writer of the epistle to the Hebrews as those who by faith "quenched the violence of fire," Heb. 11:34,"

V. 17: "If our God whom we serve is able to deliver us..." There is here no doubting the omnipotence of the Lord God--His ability to save. The reference is to the "ethical
ability" i.e, "the ability limited by the divine holiness and righteousness, not the omnipotence of God as such,"

The Lord could have saved all martyrs down through the ages, but he chose to let most die for their faith. The three repeat their refusal to bow down to Nebuchadnezzar 's image.

Deliverance-Nebuchadnezzar is furious. The furnace was heated the furnace seven times hotter. The three men were bound in their clothes, and thrown into the furance by Nebuchadnezza's mighty men. The furnace was shaped like a beehive, fueled from the top with an opening on ground level. Mission accomplished, but outcome was entirely different from what Nebuchadnezzar expected.

Nebuchadnezzar, and apparently only he, saw four men walking around in the furnace. The fourth was described by Nebuchadnezzar as "a son of the gods," actually the pre-incarnate Son of God.

Nebuchadnezzar called to the three men to come out of the furnace. There were no bodily burns, their hair was not singed, garments were not burned, and there was no smell of fire on them.

Reaction of Nebuchadnezzar -- His decree: "...that any people, nation, or language
which speaks anything amiss against the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego
shall be cut in pieces, and their houses shall be made an ash heap, because there is no other God who can deliver like this," v. 29.

Compare Nebuchadnezzar 's word after Daniel revealed his dream and gave the
interpretation thereof, 2:41: "Truly your God is the God of gods, the Lord of kings, and a revealer of secrets."
Nebuchadnezzar never rose above pagan polytheism.

APPLICATION

1. In our society the parallel of pagan polytheism with its many gods is an appeal to a generic god. As Nebuchadnezzar considered Jahve as one of the gods, on occasion even the greatest of the gods, so the Holy Trinity was considered to be one form of "god."

2. Comfort: No matter what the situation may be, our God is able to save us, but we must always prayer, "Thy will be done."

PASSAGES

These passages can be assigned as memory work or simply discussed in class as to how they fit the lesson.

Ps. 46:1 - God is our refuge and strength, A very present help in trouble,

I Cor. 10:13 - God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it.

HYMN CHOICES

In the Hour of Trial - TLH #516
If Thou But Suffer God to Guide Thee - TLH #518

STORY
Daniel in the Lions' Den - (Daniel 6)

TEACHER PRAYER
Lord, grant me grace to confess You wherever, however, and whenever you call for my confession.

VOCABULARY
Satrap - a prince, with little or no authority, who is serving an absolute ruler

OUTER AIM
To realize that one's whole life is either a denial or a confession of our God.

INNER AIM
To remember always that your values are your confession.

BACKGROUND
Daniel's term of service - Deported in 605 BC, some nineteen years before the third deportation in 586 BC. He served through the passing of the kingdom from the Babylonian to the Medo/Persian kingdom. Daniel continued until the first year of King Cyrus, 1:21. The point is that Daniel was a very old man when the events of this chapter took place.

Daniel's Service: Darius established 120 satraps over this kingdom, then three governors over the satraps. Daniel was one of the three governors. Because of his distinguished service Darius contemplated putting him over the entire kingdom, 6:1-3.

Plot of the Satraps and Governors: Jealousy motivated the satraps and governors, as in chapter 3:8ff--the accusers of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. The satraps and governors failed in their effort to find any malfeasance in Daniel's administration of his
govermental responsibilities. He was an honest civil servant. The satraps and governors had observed one factor in Daniel's life--his daily worship of his God. Three times a day Daniel knelt in prayer, facing Jerusalem. His worship was to be his undoing! His political opponents prevailed upon the king to pass a statute forbidding anyone from petitioning God or man for thirty days, except the king. Disobedience punishable by death in the lions' den. Flattered and unthinking, Darius passed the irrevocable law, 6:4-9.

Obeying God comes before Obeying Man: The political enemies of Daniel had their flunkies in Daniel's household, who reported that Daniel continued his practice of praying in his upper room with the window open facing Jerusalem. Daniel made no effort to hide his prayer life. Without any heroics Daniel disobeyed the imperial statute because it ordered him to do what his God had forbidden him to do, 6:10.

Condemned, but delivered: Daniel's political opponents brought charges against him which Darius had to honor because Daniel had transgressed an irreovable law of the empire. Darius made every effort to secure the release of Daniel, but he was trapped by the foolished statute that he had signed into law. Daniel was lowered into the lions' den to spend a secure night while Darius spent a sleepless night fasting. Early the next morning Darius went to the den and called. Daniel who responded, reporting that his God had sent His angel to deliver him. Daniel was delivered, his opponents thrown to their deaths in the lions' den, 6:11-23.

Darius honored the God of Daniel, 6:25-27, even as Nebuchadnezzar had, 3:28-29.

STUDENT PRAYER

Lord, teach me to confess You not only with my lips, but with my whole life!

PRESENTATION

. We ought to obey God rather than men, Acts 5:29.

. There is no time that is not the right time to confess your faith.

. There is no peril from which our God can't save us.

APPLICATION

What are your plans for the future?
What part does the Lord play in your plans?

PASSAGES

These passages can be assigned as memory work or simply discussed in class as to how they fit the lesson.

Matt. 10:32-33 - Therefore whoever confesses Me before men, him I will also confess before My Father who is in heaven. But whoever denies Me before men, him I will also deny before My Father who is in heaven.

Rev. 2:10 - Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life.

HYMN CHOICES

Take My Life and Let It Be - TLH #400
I Am Trusting Thee, Lord Jesus - TLH #428

STORY
Esther

TEACHER PRAYER
Grant me, Lord, greater insight in the working of your providence which works all things for my temporal and eternal good.

VOCABULARY
Proper Nouns - Ahasuerus - Xerxes - Esther - Star

Political nouns - Satrapy - Province

OUTER AIM
To understand that the might of the nations are but pawns in the hands of the Almighty.

INNER AIM
To be comforted in the knowledge that all things work out for good for God's people.

BACKGROUND
Time Frame - The history recorded in the book of Esther took place durthe era that the Jews were under the Persian Empire, specifically between the sixth and seventh chapters of Ezra, that is after the return of Zerubbabel, but before the return of Ezra. (As there had been three deportations, so there were three returns--538, Ezra 1-6; 458 or 7, Ezra 7-10; and 445, Nehemiah 1-13).

King Xerxes - attempted to conquer Greece. His father Darius failed, being defeated in the battle of Marathon in 490 BC. Xerxes likewise failed, being defeated in the sea battle at Salamis and the land battle at Platea. To get his army into Greece Xerxes had a pontoon bridge built across the Hellespont. A storm destroyed the bridge. Xerxes was enraged, had his construction engineers executed, and the seagod chained and whipped! Example of his hotheaded, irrational behavior.

Characters-Plot: Xerxes held a banquet, ordered Queen Vashti to appear so he could show off her beauty, but she refused to come. Xerxes had her deposed as queen and ordered an empire-wide beauty contest to be held to find a new queen. Esther was chosen. She was a cousin of Mordecai who appears to have been a minor official in the Persian Court. Enter Haman, an officer of the King who hated Mardecai because he refused to honor him by bowing down to him. Haman plotted the destruction of all Jews in the empire. His plot backfired to his own destruction and blessing for the Jews.

STUDENT PRAYER
Lord, grant me grace to take all my cares to You, for You have assured me that you care for me.

PRESENTATION
. 1. Xerxes' banquet, his deposing Queen Vashti, the beauty contest with Esther being crowned Queen.

2. Mordecai had exposed the assassination plot against the King. His action had been officially recorded.

3. Xerxes couldn't sleep one night, ordered chronicles to be read, discovered that Mordecai had not been honored, ordered Haman to arrange a suitable honor. Haman thought he was to be honored, but ended up bestowing his prescribed honor on Mordecai.

4. Xerxes acknowledging Esther, offering her up to half of his kingdom, accepting her repeated invitation to her banquet. Haman accused, executed. The Jews saved. Mordecai elevated to a position of power. (Joseph, Daniel, and Mordecai--Jewish statesmen in earthly kingdoms.)

APPLICATION

Features of the Book:
1. No mention of God in the book. No reference to Esther in the NT or Dead Sea Scrolls.

2. Pride precedes the fall. ""Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall," I Cor. 10:12.

3. Man proposes; God disposes! God's providence achieves His purposes in history.

4. God blesses earthly empires with God-fearing leaders--Joseph, Daniel, Mordecai.

PASSAGES

These passages can be assigned as memory work or simply discussed in class as to how they fit the lesson.

Gen. 50:20 - But as for you, you meant evil against me; but God meant it for good, in order to bring it about as it is this day, to save many people alive.

Ps. 37: 5 - Commit your way to the Lord, Trust also in Him, And He shall bring it to pass.

HYMN CHOICES

Jesus, Lead Thou On - TLH #410
Jesus! and Shall It Ever Be - TLH 346

STORY

Job's Trial and Patience - Job 1, 2:1-10, 19:25-27; 38:1-3; 40:1-5;
42:1-6; 42:10-17 You may want to bring in some selected verses from chapters 38-41.

TEACHER PRAYER

Dear Lord Jesus, You suffered the agonies of body and soul to redeem me, a lost and condemned sinner. Thank you for this redemption. Help me to bear with patience whatever afflictions You send me and help me to believe that You are only permitting them only for my own spiritual good. Help me look to You and Your Word again and again for strength in all the trials and temptations of my life. Guide me with Your Spirit in preparing this lesson to show this truth to the children entrusted to my care. Lord hear me for the sake of Your innocent suffering and death. Amen.

VOCABULARY

Uz - probably that portion of the Arabian Desert east of Edom
sons of God - angels, called sons because they were created by God
potsherd - broken piece of pottery

OUTER AIM

Job trusted in God even in the midst of tremendous suffering.

INNER AIM

God taught Job that He was in control of Job's life in good times and in bad. We learn that God gives to us only what is for our best.

BACKGROUND

The first lesson on Job entails three major portions:

a. Job 1:1-5 repentance and confession
b. Job 1:6-22 humble submission to God's will
c. Job 2:1-10 genuine trust in the Triune God, as opposed to hypocrisy

The second lesson is Job's confident words of trust in His Redeemer:
Job 19:25-27

The third lesson describes God's rebuke of Job for questioning God's love for him. We hear of Job's repentance and of how Job's life ends after the trials and sufferings are all over:
Job 38:1-3; 40:1-5; 42:1-6; 42:10-17

Job 1:1-5
Job exemplifies a concerned Christian father by his actions after his children's celebrations. Job was concerned about their spiritual life and would have a burnt offering sacrificed for his children, thinking "It may be that my sons have sinned and cursed God in their hearts." This was Job's regular custom.

His name meant "one ever returning to God." He found nothing in all the material possessions God had given to him (they were many - ten children, 7,000 sheep, 3,000 camels, 1,000 oxen, 500 donkeys, a large number of servants, and a great reputation) which could make his spirit rich except a sorrow over sin, and a repentant faith in a forgiving God. He craved this kind of spirituality for his children also, thus the gathering of his family for regular purification ceremonies.

Job would be ready to pray with David that beautiful penitential Psalm 51, in which the believer relies on God's mercy and grace for the forgiveness of all his transgressions. He would be at the back of the temple with the publican, smiting his breast, eyes cast down, admitting no worthiness in himself.

Applications for Job 1:1-5:

1) Encourage children to set aside a daily heartfelt repentance time. Bedtime is an excellent time to discuss the day's shortcomings and sincere sorrow for wrong doings. Hymn 653 v. 2 is a good prayer, "Jesus Savior, wash away..."

2) Discuss the unburdening of the soul to a pastor, parent, teacher or Christian friend in times of grievous sins which really trouble the conscience.

3) Note the sons giving feasts in their homes and inviting their sisters-family love and concern shown.

4) Job offered a burnt offering for each of his children-generous giver, sparing nothing for the Lord-regularly-not just when he felt like it or when he had leftovers--(widow and her mite).

Job 1:6-22
Vs. 6 the sons of God - angels, because they were created by God and in contrast to Satan and his angels, who had forfeited the right to be called by that name.

came to present themselves-to report, amid reverent shouts of praise (Isaiah 6:3) how they had done God's commands (Psalm 103:20-21) and to ask what they were to do next.

Satan...means Adversary. Enemy of God and man - delighting in injuring and harming men in their body, inflicting temporal losses of every description (John 8:44), and ultimately leading them to unbelief and a place with him in "the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels." (Matt. 25:41)

Vs. 7 from going to and fro on the earth, and from walking back and forth on it. Satan walks about-prowls about as a lion, seeking whom he may devour, bodily and spiritually (I Peter 5:8)

Vs. 8 My servant Job, that there is none like him on the earth. The Lord gives Job the highest praise, a good example of a truly pious Christian Vs. 10-11 Satan wanted Job to look like a hypocrite. Day and night Satan is the accuser of God's people. Revelations 12:10, Zechariah 3:1. (He is also called the devil meaning slanderer.)

Vs. 12 The Lord allows Satan to afflict Job and all Christians for our soul's benefit. Note the limit to which God keeps Satan, mighty but not Almighty as is God.

Vs. 15 Sabeans...Arabian horde from Sheba, a country bordering the Red Sea.

Vs. 16 fire of God...a terrific lightening storm or a shower of brimstone

Vs. 17 Chaldeans...people from Chaldea (Babylonia) which was situated on both sides of the Euphrates River and bordered on the Persian Gulf.

Vs. 20 tore his robe and shaved his head...Oriental signs of deep grief and sorrow. He had sustained an

extraordinarily heavy loss in one day:

1) his oxen and mules; 2) his sheep; 3) his camels; 4) all his servants, farm laborers, shepherds, herdsmen, and by far the greatest loss 5) all of his children.

Vs. 21 Words of a truly meek Christian: "The LORD gave, and the LORD has taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD." The Giver of all good gifts had a right to take from him everything that He had given him, a model of patient submission to the will of God.

Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane is the supreme example of submission to God's Holy will. Review His earnest prayer before His Father's throne in full knowledge of the coming suffering, agony and tortuous death He was soon to undergo; yet, He prays "not My will but Thine be done." Uncomplainingly Jesus suffered for all of us.

STUDENT PRAYER

Dear Heavenly Father, please give me patience to accept all of the troubles, trials and tribulations that You allow to come my way. Give me strength through Your powerful Word to stand firm in my confidence and trust in You and Your Son, my Savior, Jesus. Help me to always remember that You permit these troubles to come to us Christians out of Your love for us, and that You will use them for our eternal good. Lead me to acknowledge my sins which so often bring troubles upon me. Wash me daily with Jesus' blood. Help me focus my heart upon the perfect peace and joy of the heavenly home You have promised us through Jesus. We ask this in our Savior's name. Amen.

PRESENTATION

1) Foremost in our prayers should be the words of Christ, "Thy will be done." Encourage the students to discuss the content of their prayers.

2) Discuss our frequent complaining attitude, despairing in adversity instead of praising God through it all. We accept the good from the Lord without question, why not the bad which we by nature deserve. Romans 5:3; James 1:2

3) Discuss Satan as a very real adversary, not some boogeyman out there to scare us. I Pet. 5:8

4) Explain the limits of Satan's powers. Show forth the omnipotence (unlimited power) of the Triune God. The Son of God on earth could even cast out demons (thousands at a time).
Luke 8:26-39 We can also resist the devil with faith in Christ. I Peter 5:9

Job 2:1-10
vs. 3 Have you considered my servant Job?... Have you observed how faithful he has remained in the great trial which has come upon him?

vs. 4 Skin for skin! Yes, all that a man has he will give for his life...Satan would like to see Job suffer still more, he delights in harming man.

vs. 6 spare his life...In order to test Job's faith, the Lord permitted Satan to cause him great bodily suffering, but again He limited Satan's power.

vs. 7 painful boils...The disease was the worst form of leprosy, with horrible ulcers or boils and a swollen condition of the joints which would make him helpless. (Rupprecht pg. 142) *Job's*

vs. 8 And he took for himself a potsherd with which to scrape himself...extreme itching from the festering sores so that he used this method to give himself some relief by scratching himself with a broken piece of pottery.

vs. 9 his wife said...To see his wife turn from him with blasphemy on her lips only added to Job's misery. (Luther's explanation to the Sixth Petition: "the world and our flesh may not deceive us nor lead us into misbelief, hopelessness, or any other shameful or sinful acts.")

vs. 10 shall we indeed accept good... Job reveals his strong love for God in rebuking his wife. A beautiful answer!

APPLICATION

1) Encourage some discussion on two-faced people, how they say one thing to someone and then turn around and do or say the opposite to someone else to look good in the eyes of all. Hypocrisy is detestable. So, too, here the devil tried to prove that Job spoke only good of the Lord when he had his health. How did Job prove the devil wrong?

2) Coming to church on a Sunday, singing praises, worshiping the Savior for an hour and then living like the rest of the world shows no genuineness of heart.

3) Job's wife tried to get him to commit blasphemy. Are we like her when our loved ones have problems and we give ungodly advice instead of Scriptural counsel? Our example to those in need or to those younger than we should be of godly concern to us. "But whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to sin, it would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck, and he were drowned in the depths of the sea." Matt.18:6

4) The New Testament lesson of Ananias and Sapphira brings home with fearful power the dangerous game of playing the hypocrite. "Be not deceived, God is not mocked."

5) The Lord does permit some trials, troubles and temptations to come to each of us (lengthy sickness, father looses job, parents become sick, death of a loved one, friends turn against us, school work is very difficult.) But God won't tempt us beyond what we are able to bear. He will make a way to escape. I Corinthians 10:13 When these troubles come to us, God wants us to remain firm in our faith and to not turn away from Him. God cares for us. In His love He will give us only that which is best for us, even though at times it may seem that God does not love us. We never need to be afraid or worried that God will forget about us or let our troubles overcome us. II Corinthians 12:10

Job 19:25-27

Job in his anguish, pain, sorrow and grief yet yearns, hungers and thirsts after the righteousness of His God. He has no righteousness of his own with which to stand before His God. In confident faith He cries out: "I know that my Redeemer lives!" His belief that he shall see God face to face surprises many who believe that the Judeo-Christian religion was an evolutionary (progressive) teaching. How could Job who lived during the days of Abraham be so clear on such a teaching as the resurrection? Job's desire was to be clothed with Christ; his Redeemer here on earth; but even more than that, to be clothed with his Savior for an eternity. "How my heart yearns within me!"

Job 38:1-3; 40:1-5; 42:1-6
After making this remarkable confession, Job, too, began to complain and murmur about his lot in life. He felt he was being treated unfairly and cruelly by God and that he did not deserve it. God then comes to Job by speaking to him out of a whirlwind. He asked Job why he questioned HIS rulership of his life.

Job 38-41
Job speaks of God's wonderful, merciful works by means of confession of his unworthiness "Behold, I am vile; What shall I answer You? I lay my hand over my mouth...Therefore I have uttered what I did not understand, things too wonderful for me, which I did not know...I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear, but now my eyes see You. Therefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes."

Job 42:10-17
The LORD graciously restores to Job far more than was taken away from him. 14,000 sheep; 6,000 camels; 1,000 yoke of oxen; 1,000 female donkeys. He had seven more sons and three more daughters, the most beautiful of all the land. What a merciful God we have.

PASSAGES

These passages can be assigned as memory work or simply discussed in class as to how they fit the lesson.

Lower
Romans 8:28a - "We know that all things work together for good to those who love God."

Middle
Romans 12:12 - "Rejoicing in hope, patient in tribulation, continuing steadfastly in prayer."

James 1:2 - "My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials."

Upper
Isaiah 41:10 - "Fear not, for I am with you; Be not dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, Yes, I will help you, I will uphold you with My righteous right hand."

HYMN CHOICES

I Know that My Redeemer Lives - TLH #200
If Thou but Suffer God to Guide Thee - TLH #518
What God Ordains is Always Good - TLH #521

STORY
Return from the Captivity and the Rebuilding of the Temple - Ezra 1-10, Nehemiah 1-8

TEACHER PRAYER
Heavenly Father, I thank You for the grace and mercy You revealed in preserving Your chosen Old Testament people Israel. You brought them home to the land promised to Abraham and made sure that the promise of the Messiah would be fulfilled in the fullness of the time. Bless this hour we spend in Your Word. Amen.

VOCABULARY
Cyrus - king of Persia who signed the decree returning the Jews to their homeland
Zerubbabel - descendant of King Jehoiachin, who led the first expedition
Jeshua or Joshua - the high priest and religious leader
Darius - King of the Medes
Ezra - a priest or scribe
Nehemiah - cupbearer of the king of Persia, who led the third expedition
Samaritan - a mixed race of people with a mixture of religious beliefs despised by the Jews

OUTER AIM
God Delivered His People From Their Captivity and Brought Them Back to the Promised Land

INNER AIM
God Delivers Us from Every Trial

BACKGROUND
Ezra continues the Old Testament history of the chosen people of God, the Jewish nation. The northern kingdom of Israel disappeared from the stage of history when it was taken into the Assyrian Captivity (722 BC) because of its wickedness and unbelief. The Southern kingdom of Judah was not much better. However, because of the promise of the Messiah, God preserved the tribe of Judah. In 512 BC, the kingdom of Judah was taken captive by Nebuchadnezzar and the Babylonian empire. The Babylonian Empire was replaced by the Medes and the Persians.

Ezra shows how God fulfilled His promised to return His people to the land promised to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. After seventy years of captivity, a remnant of the Jews chose to leave Babylon and return to the Promised Land.

Ezra relates the story of two returns from Babylon: the first led by Zerubbabel to rebuild the temple (Ezra 1-6), and the second under the leadership of Ezra, the scribe, to rebuild the spiritual condition of the people (Ezra 7-10). Sandwiched between these two accounts is a gap of nearly sixty years. Nehemiah is a contemporary of Ezra and leads the third and last return to Jerusalem after the Babylonian exile. Nehemiah challenges God's people to rebuild the shattered walls of Jerusalem. In spite of opposition, the walls are rebuilt in only fifty-two days.

STUDENT PRAYER

Dear Jesus, help us today to understand Your perfect love for all people. We thank You that You came to seek and to save that which was lost. We ask that You bless our study this morning so that we may understand Your grace in our lives. Help us to realize how important it is that we hear and keep Your Word. Deliver us from every evil of body and life. Amen.

PRESENTATION

Introduction:

The return of the Jewish people in Exile was no accident of history. Isaiah had prophesied that it would happen through King Cyrus who would set the captives free (Isaiah 44:24-45:13). The Lord had revealed through Jeremiah that the Babylonian Captivity would last for only seventy years. All this was put into motion by the intercessory prayer of Daniel.

I. The work of Zerubbabel (Ezra 1-6)

The Lord caused King Cyrus II of Persia to issue a decree authorizing the return of the Jews to Palestine. He also returned them to the gold, silver, and vessels that Nebuchadnezzar had taken when the temple had been destroyed. Zerubbabel, the governor of Judah, and Jeshua or Joshua, the high priest, led 49,897 Israelites back to Palestine in 537 BC. It is probable that Sheshbassar and Zerubbabel were the same person. After the fall of Jerusalem, there were no kings from David's family who reigned. This heightened the anticipation when Jesus claimed to be the promised Messiah-King.

The returnees proceeded to build an altar at Jerusalem. The various offerings commanded by Moses were reinstated and the Feast of Tabernacles was observed. In fact the foundation for the new temple was also laid. Some of the older people wept because this second temple was so inferior to the temple Solomon had built.

The Samaritans were Jews who had remained in Palestine when Judah was carried off into captivity. They had intermarried with the heathen people in the area and their religion was part true and part pagan.(Cf. John 4) Zerubbabel and Jeshua refused the offer of Samaritans to help in order to prevent their worship life from being corrupted by the watered down religion of the Samaritans. The Samaritans then did everything possible to frustrate the rebuilding of the temple (Ezra 4:4-5). The temple project came to a halt for sixteen years until it was restarted under Darius, King of Persia. It took twenty years to finish the rebuilding of the temple. To encourage His people, the Lord sent the prophets Haggai and Zechariah to His people. Darius found the original decree of Cyrus and authorized money from the treasury to complete the work.

II. The Second Return and the Reforms of Ezra (Ezra 7-10)

Note that there is a gap of about fifty-eight years between Ezra 6 and Ezra 7. The second large contingent of exiles returned to Jerusalem eighty years after the first under the leadership of Ezra, a priest. Ezra had studied the Mosaic law and sought to put it into practice (Ezra 7:10). Ezra returned with about 1,800 men and their families from Babylon during the reign of Artaxerxes I. Artaxerxes gave Ezra full authority to function officially in Judah with the backing of the Persian king. This included government funding.

Ezra recruited Levites (priests from the tribe of Levi) for the journey. Even though they did not have a military escort, the Lord protected this small group (Ezra 8:31). When they reached Jerusalem, they presented Burnt Offerings and Sin Offerings to the Lord. They also presented the legal documents from Artaxerxes (Ezra 7-8).

It came as a surprise to Ezra (not a surprise in view of the history of Israel) that many of the Jews, who had returned, had defected from the worship of Jehovah. This included the "officials and chief men" (Ezra 9:2). This so distressed Ezra that he pulled the hair from his head and beard. Ezra, then in a lengthy prayer, confessed Israel's guilt and reminded them of Israel's past wrongdoing. He also reminded them of God's judgments and God's grace in bringing them back from captivity. Listen to Ezra's words, "And after all that has come upon us for our evil deeds and for our great guilt, since You our God have punished us less than our iniquities deserve, and have given us such deliverance as this,{14} should we again break Your commandments, and join in marriage with the people committing these abominations? Would You not be angry with us until You had consumed us, so that there would be no remnant or survivor? {15} O LORD God of Israel, You are righteous, for we are left as a remnant, as it is this day. Here we are before You, in our guilt, though no one can stand before You because of this." (Ezra 9:13-15)

The chief issue was the intermarriage with the pagan women of the nations around them. The priests and Levites led a move "to put away all these wives and their children" (Ezra 10:3). The people responded with a confession of sins and an amending of their sinful actions. Later John the Baptist would call upon Israel to "bring forth fruits in keeping with their repentance." In spite of the fact that divorce was forbidden, the preservation of the religious obedience of Israel was more important. This was to be a time of repentance and renewal for Israel.

III. Rebuilding the Walls of Jerusalem (Nehemiah 1-7)

About ninety years had passed since the returned exiles had been in Judea. The temple had been rebuilt under Ezra, but they had never succeeded in rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem. God used Nehemiah, to accomplish His purposes. Nehemiah, like Esther, was a resident of Susa, and he was the cupbearer for Artaxerxes, the King. The cupbearer was responsible for tasting the wine for the king (cf. Joseph in prison). Nehemiah learned that the Jews in Judea were in trouble and that the walls and gates of Jerusalem were in bad shape.

When Artaxerxes wondered why Nehemiah was so sad, Nehemiah told him about the problems in Judea. Nehemiah asked for a leave of absence and documents authorizing him to procure the needed materials to finish the wall. Nehemiah was given a twelve-year leave of absence and the rank of "governor." Nehemiah laid down the "mission." "Then I said to them, 'You see the distress that we are in, how Jerusalem lies waste, and its gates are burned with fire. Come and let us build the wall of Jerusalem, that we may no longer be a reproach.'" (Nehemiah 2:17).

This work was opposed by Sanballat of Samaria, Tobiah of Ammon, and Geshem of Arabia. Because of the danger, Nehemiah wanted to get the walls rebuilt as fast as possible. He assigned work parties to certain sections of the gates and defensive towers so that work on the wall could go on simultaneously. When the walls were about half height, Nehemiah got wind of a surprise attack by their enemies. Nehemiah organized the workers so that half of them worked on construction while the other half stood guard duty. Even those who worked were equipped with swords.

Unfortunately, there were also internal forces at work which threatened the success of God's people. Some of the Jews, contrary to provisions of the Old Testament Law, were taking interest from their fellow Jews. Priests, too, were guilty of lovelessness. Nehemiah sought to institute a spiritual reform.

There also were plots to kill Nehemiah and appeals to Artaxerxes to stop the project. In spite of this, the walls were rebuilt in a record fifty-two days. Nehemiah also sought to get people to move into the city of Jerusalem.

IV. The Renewal of the Covenant (Nehemiah 8-12:26)
On the first day of the seventh month, the Jews assembled in Jerusalem in order to read the Mosaic Law. The Mosaic Law had been greatly neglected. Ezra read the law from early morning to noon from a platform. The Levites helped the people to understand the law (Nehemiah 8:7-8). Nehemiah and Ezra counseled the people not to grieve because of their neglect of the law but to be strengthened in the joy of the Lord's forgiveness. The next day the people learned about eight festival days required by the law including the "Festival of Booths."

Then the people participated in their last known covenant-renewal ceremony. This included expressions of repentance, readings from the law (five books of Moses), and confessions of sins. Ezra led a prayer for the people (Nehemiah 9:6-37). This included a history of Israel's ingratitude and rebellion (the Law), Jehovah's forgiving nature and His acts of love and mercy toward the people (the Gospel). At this time many people signed a document reaffirming their obedience to the Mt. Sinai covenant. They pledged to live according to the law of God. This included refraining from two common practices - marrying pagans and profaning the Sabbath. They also were to support the work of the Temple by an annual tax and by observing the laws regarding the tithes (tenth of income).

V. The Dedication of the Walls and Nehemiah's Second Visit (Nehemiah 12:27-13:31)
The walls of Jerusalem were dedicated with great joy. After the priests purified themselves, they purified the people, the walls, and the gates. They ended up at the temple where sacrifices were offered in gratitude for the renewal of joy the Lord had brought into the lives of these transplanted exiles. Persons were appointed to take charge of the collection and the distribution of the tithes. The orders of singers and gatekeepers begun by David were reestablished.

His work finished, Nehemiah returned to King Artaxerxes in Susa. When Nehemiah left, things reverted to type. So Nehemiah had to return and deal with the following problems. The High Priest had made peace with Tobiah, the Ammonite, and even had housed him in the Temple. The people were neglecting the support of the Levites by withholding tithes. There also was widespread neglect of the Sabbath (Nehemiah 13:17-18). Lastly, many were involved in mixed marriages including a grandson of the High Priest (Nehemiah 13:4-31).

APPLICATION

God keeps His promises. In the return from exile, God kept His promise to return His people from Babylon after seventy years. More important, God was keeping His promise to send a Messiah to deliver His people. Explore the promises that God has kept in the lives of your children.

God controls the affairs of mighty nations to bring about the saving of many people. Consider how God used the Roman Empire to make sure that Jesus was born in Bethlehem and provided for the spread of the Gospel throughout the world. God still controls the events of history for the good of those who love Him.

God's Old Testament people continually tested the mercy and patience of God. These examples are written for our learning that we do not fall away through sin. God's people tended to ignore the study of Scriptures.

When God's people came back from the Exile, they were more interested in rebuilding their own expensive houses, than in building a house of worship for the Lord. How do we today allow our priorities to become mixed up and confused?

God always preserves a remnant or small remainder of believers no matter how affairs may deteriorate in society or our nation. This is the lesson of the story of Ezra and Nehemiah.

PASSAGES

These passages can be assigned as memory work or simply discussed in class as to how they fit the lesson.

Joshua 24:15 - "But as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD."

Haggai 1:4 - "Is it time for you yourselves to dwell in your paneled houses, and this temple to lie in ruins?"

Matthew 15:8-9 - “These people draw near to Me with their mouth, and honor Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me. {9} And in vain they worship Me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men."

HYMN CHOICES

Great Is the Lord, Our God - TLH #636
Guide Me, O Thou Great Jehovah - TLH #54
Built on the Rock the Church doth Stand - TLH #467