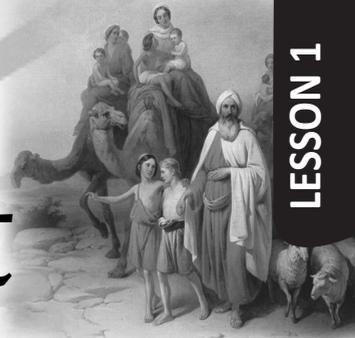


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Old Testament



Genesis



LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- Introduce the children to the Old Testament.
- To help them understand that the covenant God made with Abraham includes both physical and spiritual blessings.
- To assure children they can be part of the Abrahamic promise and all the promises in the Bible by faith in Jesus.



SCRIPTURE PORTION

Genesis chapters 12, 13, 15, 17 and 22



RECAP

- What did we learn last week?
- Recite last week's Memory Verse.



MEMORY VERSE

Ephesians 1:3 (CEV) "Praise the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ for the spiritual blessings that Christ has brought us from heaven!"

Material Needed:

Laptop (to play video)

**ATTENTION GETTER**

1. How many books are there in the Bible?
66
2. How many men wrote the 66 books of the Bible?
40
3. What is the main theme of the Bible?
God's message of salvation; His plan of redemption.
4. How many books are there in the Old Testament?
39 books
5. What is the meaning of 'Testament'?
Covenant

**INTRODUCTION**

The Old Testament is a collection of thirty-nine books. These books contain the fulfillment of the covenant and promises God makes with Abraham.

The promises of:

- A Great Nation
- Land
- And Seed

Through this covenant God begins to work out His plan of redeeming mankind from sin. God chose to fulfill His plan of salvation through Abraham's offspring who He made into a Great Nation—The Israelite Kingdom and His Seed—His Son—Jesus Christ.

Let's look at a video that gives us a summary of the entire Old Testament. This gives us a better idea of what we will be studying in this series on the Old Testament.

Note to the Facilitator

Since the video presentation is too quick, it would be good to play it twice over so that the children understand everything that is said. Then briefly discuss and move on with the lesson, or you could stop playing the video at regular intervals, replay and discuss.

Video Presentation

Video: Old Testament in 5 minutes.

Duration: 5 minutes and 25 seconds

Say

The initial few seconds of the video tell us about the first few chapters of the first book of the Old Testament—the book of Genesis.

The first and second chapters of Genesis are really wonderful and exciting to read. They tell us;

- How God created a perfect world and how He created Adam and Eve in His image.
- The friendship God shared with Adam and Eve.
- How everyone lived in peace and perfect harmony.

When everything seemed so good and perfect it saddens us to read how Adam and Eve sinned against God. In the chapters that follow we learn how sin and evil carried on as a result of their disobedience.

Hatred and murder – Cain murders his brother Abel

Rebellion and Disobedience – The flood

Pride and Arrogance – The Tower of Babel

All this resulted in God's curse and punishment.

Separation – Adam and Eve were sent out of the garden.

Pain – Adam and Eve had to work hard to eat.

Death – The flood that killed everyone except for Noah and his sons.

Destruction – The flood destroyed the whole world.

I. Promises God Made to Abraham

Being born with that sinful nature inherited from Adam, man continued to fall into greater evil. This is when we read of God's love and plan to redeem mankind from sin. God did this by making a covenant (an agreement) with one faithful man, Abraham.

In our lesson today we will look into the various instances when God makes those promises to Abraham regarding a Great Nation, Land and Seed.

Call of Abraham

When Abraham was 75 years old God spoke to him. God told Abraham to leave his father's land and go to a strange, unknown land that He would show him. God made a promise to Abraham.

Let us read the promise God gave Abraham in Genesis 12:2, 3.

Read Aloud

Genesis 12:2, 3: "I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you."

The promise must have seemed unbelievable to Abraham because his wife Sarah was childless (Genesis. 11:30-31) and both of them were old and past the age of having a child. Yet, Abraham obeyed God without asking any questions.

Abraham took his wife, his nephew Lot, and his family and set out, not knowing exactly where he was going but was obedient to the voice that led him to the Promised Land. When Abraham reached the land of Canaan, God appeared to Abraham said, "To your offspring I will give this land."

In these two instances God promised:

- To make Abraham into a great nation.
- To give his offspring the land of Canaan.
- All peoples on earth will be blessed through him—because Jesus the Saviour of the world would be born into his family line. So this promise is fulfilled when Christ Himself—the Seed, blesses with the gift of salvation, all those who believe in Him.

Abraham Chose to Stay in the Land God Promised to Give His Descendants

Let us look at the third instance in Genesis chapter 13. The herdsmen of Abraham and Lot begin to quarrel because each group wanted the more green fertile places. Abraham did not want their herdsmen to quarrel with each other. So Abraham decided to part ways with Lot. Lot chooses to stay in the well watered plain of Jordan. Abraham chose to stay in the land God promised to give his offspring—the land of Canaan. Since Abraham chose what God had portioned for him God reaffirmed His promise with Abraham.

(Ask the children to read Genesis 13:14-17 and let them give the answer-the promise God gave regarding making Abraham into a great nation and regarding the land.)

Answer:

Great Nation – God will make Abraham’s offspring as numerous and uncountable as the dust of the earth.

Land – will belong to Abraham’s offspring forever.

II. God’s Covenant with Abraham

In the fourth instance God spoke to Abraham in a vision. Abraham was anxious about the promise of a nation being formed through his descendants because as yet he did not have a son and was past the age (past 85 years) of having one. Abraham wanted to know for sure if his offspring would possess the land. As an assurance God makes a covenant with him. Though Abraham and his wife were old, yet he believed God’s promise and the Bible says it was credited to him as righteousness.

(Ask the children to read Genesis 15:5, 7, 18 and 19. Let them give the answer - the promises God gave regarding a great nation and regarding the land.)

Answer:

Great Nation – God promised Abraham that it would be through his very own son and his descendants that He would make into a great nation. He would make Abraham’s offspring as numerous and uncountable as the stars in the sky.

Land – Abraham’s offspring will take possession of the land of Canaan. God promised to give him much more land than what he had initially promised.

III. God’s Covenant of Circumcision

When Abraham was ninety nine years old, God appeared to him and asked Abraham to live a blameless life before Him. Then God said He would confirm His covenant as an everlasting covenant and greatly increase his numbers. As a sign of the covenant between Him and Abraham God asked Abraham to circumcise every male in his household.

(Ask the children to read Genesis 17:3-8. Let them give the answer - the promises God gave regarding a great nation and regarding the land.)

Answer:

Great Nation – God promised to make Abraham the Father of many nations and many kings would arise from his descendants.

Land – God promised to give the land to Abraham and his offspring as an everlasting possession.

IV. The Promise of Blessing Through Abraham’s Seed

Just as God promised Abraham, his wife Sarah gave birth to a son and they named him Isaac. When Isaac was a young boy God wanted to test Abraham to see if he loved God more than his son and if he had the faith to trust in His unconditional covenant. God asked Abraham to sacrifice his only son.

Though this was a terribly hard thing for Abraham to do, yet he woke up early the next morning and took his only son to sacrifice him on the mountain that God had told him of. When Abraham reached the mountain he built an altar and laid his only son on it. When he lifted his hand and was about to slay his son, an angel of the Lord called out to Abraham and told him not to lay a hand on the boy. God showed Abraham a ram that was caught in a bush nearby which he offered as a sacrifice.

When God saw that Abraham loved, trusted and obeyed Him to the extent that He was willing to sacrifice his ONLY son God blessed and reaffirmed His promise to Abraham.

(Ask the children to read Genesis 22:16-18. Let them give the answer- the promises God gave regarding a great nation and regarding the Seed.)

Answer:

- Great Nation – God promised to make Abraham’s descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and the sand on the seashore.
- Seed – Through Abraham’s Seed—referring to the Messiah—Jesus Christ, God will bless all the nations of the earth.

The covenant God makes with Abraham was not just a physical blessing of an everlasting possession of the land, a great nation as numerous as the stars in the sky and sand on the seashore and overcoming their enemies. It is spiritual blessing as well.

It is a Spiritual blessing as well because through the covenant God makes with Abraham God intended to bring salvation to all the nations on earth—to the entire human race. God did this through the Seed—His Son—Jesus.

The fulfillment of most of the promises happened way in the future. In his lifetime, Abraham was able to see the fulfillment of just one of the promise—a son. Yet, Abraham believed that God was faithful in keeping His covenant He made with him.

At the end of this series we will see how God was faithful and fulfilled the covenant He made with Abraham.



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Note: All discussion questions must be answered by the children, and NOT by the teacher. The guidelines given here are only meant to assist the teacher during the discussion.

Why did God make His Covenant and choose to carry out His plan for the entire mankind through just one man—Abraham?

The following passages will help you find the answer:

Genesis 12:1: “The Lord had said to Abram, ‘Leave your country, your people and your father’s household and go to the land I will show you ...’”

Genesis 12:4: “So Abram left, as the Lord had told him ...”

Hebrews 11:8: “By faith Abraham, when called to go to a place he would later receive as his inheritance, obeyed and went, even though he did not know where he was going.”

Genesis 26:4-5: “... all nations on earth will be blessed, because Abraham obeyed me and kept my requirements, my commandments, my decrees, and my laws.”

Genesis 15:6: “Abraham believed in the Lord, and it was credited to him as righteousness.”

These verses mention that God chose Abraham because he had faith, a faith that was seen by his obedient actions. During the time of Abraham, people had different ideas of who God was. That was because they did not know God’s name, they did not have a Bible or have a personal relationship with God.

In spite of these factors, when God spoke to Abraham, he trusted and obeyed God. Even though Abraham had not seen or learnt about God earlier, he obeyed God. Even though he did not know where God was asking him to go, he simply obeyed God and made that journey in faith. In spite of being old and not physically fit to have a child, Abraham believed when God told him that he and his wife would have a son.

He obeyed God and kept His commandments, decrees and laws. That is why God was pleased with Abraham’s faith and obedience.

Genesis 22:18 says, “In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice.” Who is the seed referred to in this verse? To find the answer read **Galatians 3:16**.

Galatians 3:16 says that the Seed refers to Jesus Christ. The genealogy of Jesus Christ in Matthew chapter 1 is traced back to Abraham. It is through Jesus’ death on the cross that all the nations and families of the earth are blessed.

God made the promises to Abraham and his descendants many thousands of years ago. Today, how does it help us to know the promises God made to him?

The following passages will help you find the answer:

Genesis 12:1-3: “The Lord had said to Abram, ‘Leave your country, your people and your father’s household and go to the land I will show you. I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and **all peoples on earth will be blessed through you.**”

Genesis 22:17-18: “... and your descendants shall possess the gates of their enemies. **In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed**, because you have obeyed My voice.”

Galatians 3:26-29: “You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus, for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. **If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.**”

According to these verses God told Abraham that through him and his offspring all the peoples of the earth will be blessed. So when we believe in Jesus we are regarded as Abraham’s seed and we too will be blessed. Though we are not Israelites—physical descendants of Abraham, yet we will be blessed when we believe by faith that Jesus is God; believe He died for our sins, ask Him forgiveness for our sins and accept Him into our lives. Once we do this we belong to Christ, we became children of Abraham and heirs of the promise God made to Abraham.

God promised Abraham in Genesis 17:8 that the whole land of Canaan, He will give as an everlasting possession (a possession for eternity) to Abraham and his descendants after him. We know that the earth will be destroyed one day; then why did God say it will be an everlasting possession?

This verse and all the promises God made to Abraham refer to both physical and spiritual blessings. The promises of the physical earthly possession of Canaan which is the present day Israel would continue until and after Christ’s return.

In Revelation 21, John sees a new heaven and a new earth after the old earth and the old heaven have passed away. He also sees the new holy city of Jerusalem coming down from heaven. In verse 12 we read the city has 12 gates on which are the 12 names of the 12 tribes of Israel. So we see the new holy city which will be for eternity is named Jerusalem.

The spiritual part of the promise which God makes to Abraham is that those who believe in Jesus and ask for forgiveness of their sins will receive salvation and be children of the family of Abraham by faith in Jesus. They will live in the Promised Land, the new Jerusalem—for eternity.

**Did Abraham understand this Covenant as a physical or a spiritual blessing?
To find the answer, read Hebrews 11:8-10; 13-16.**

Abraham by faith knew that the promise of the everlasting covenant was spiritual; the city that would be build by God. He understood that the physical land was temporary and conditional, but that it pictured the far greater work that God would one day do. He looked for a better country—a heavenly one.



APPLICATION

The physical promises regarding the land of Israel and being part of the nation of Israel apply only to the Jewish people. The spiritual promises apply to all who by faith in Jesus receive the promises God made to Abraham.

What are the spiritual blessings that we receive as a result of our faith in Jesus;

- Redemption from the curse of sin which is death.
- Restoration in our relationship with God.
- We become sons, daughters of the great, big family of God.
- Victory over our enemy the devil.

This is not all but there are many more blessings. Turn to your workbook and read the numerous spiritual blessings we have received as a result of our faith in Jesus. It is not enough to merely read and know about the blessings, but like Abraham we need to believe, speak and live a life of obedience and unquestioning faith to see these blessings become a reality in our lives.

Eternal Life

1 John 2:24-25: “See that what you have heard from the beginning remains in you. If it does, you also will remain in the Son and in the Father. And this is what He promised us—even eternal life.”

Child of God

John 1:12-13: “Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God—children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God.”

Access to God

Ephesians 3:12: “In him and through faith in him we may approach God with freedom and confidence.”

God's love

1 John 3:1: “How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are! The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know him.”

Chosen by God

Ephesians 1:4: “For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight.”

Created to do good works

Ephesians 2:10: “For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.”

His care when I feel weak

1 Peter 5:7: “Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you.”

God's strength to do all I need to do

Philippians 4:13: “I can do everything through him who gives me strength.”

Peace with God. Peace is based on Christ and not my emotions

Romans 5:1: “Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.”

God will not leave or forsake me

Hebrews 13:5: “Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have, because God has said, “Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you.”

Eternal inheritance—Heaven

John 14:2-3: “In my Father’s house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am.”

Being an overcomer

1 John 5:4, 5: “for everyone born of God overcomes the world. This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith. Who is it that overcomes the world? Only he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God.”

God works in me to be like Him

Philippians 1:6: “being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.”

Living hope

1 Peter 1:3-5: “Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade—kept in heaven for you.”

God’s help

Isaiah 41:10: “So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.”

Made complete in Christ

Colossians 2:10: “And you have been given fullness in Christ, who is the head over every power and authority:”

Nothing can separate me from God’s love

Romans 8:38-39: “For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

Say

Write down five blessings you would like to appropriate in your life. Believe in it and speak them into your life today and this week.



FOLLOW UP

(To be filled up before the next class.)

What difference did it make in your life this week in believing and speaking the spiritual blessings you received as a result of your faith in Jesus?



CLOSE WITH PRAYER



Old Testament



Israelite's Wilderness Experience



LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- Even though we sin, God is faithful in keeping His promises.
- Children will learn the difference between choosing temporary earthly things that pass away and spiritual things that are eternal or that lasts forever.
- Children will learn the importance and consequences of choosing things that are eternal over things that are temporary.



SCRIPTURE PORTION

Exodus chapter 14 and 16; Exodus 19:1-2,20; 32:1-6; Numbers 13:1-2; 17-21; 26-33; Numbers 14



RECAP

- What did we learn about last week?
- Recite the Memory Verse given last week.



MEMORY VERSE

1 John 2:15-17: “Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For everything in the world—the cravings of sinful man, the lust of his eyes, and the boasting of what he has does—comes not from the Father but from the world. The world and its desires pass away, but whoever does the will of God lives forever.”

Materials Needed:

- Sheets of paper
- Brown tape
- Ruler
- Marker

Laptop (to play video)



INTRODUCTION

After Abraham's death God reconfirmed the same promise to Abraham's son, Isaac and to Isaac's son, Jacob whose name God later changed to Israel. Israel means “Overcomer with God.” God gave him this name because one day Jacob wrestled all night with God and did not let go until God promised to bless him.

Jacob had twelve sons. Joseph was the favorite son of Jacob. His brothers who were jealous of Joseph sold him into slavery. Joseph was taken to Egypt where he went through many ups and downs in his life. But God was with him through every situation because Joseph obeyed and feared God. Eventually God raised Joseph to a position that was second only to Pharaoh. After a time of great famine in the land of Canaan; Jacob and his eleven sons along with their families (70 in all) were forced to go to Egypt. There the pharaoh was kind to them because they were the relatives of Joseph. They lived and prospered in the land of Egypt. We read in Exodus chapter 1 that this family of 70 grew and became so exceedingly numerous that the land of Egypt was filled with them.

For four hundred years after Joseph's death, the Israelites still lived among the Egyptians. They prospered and grew in numbers until another Pharaoh began to see them as a security risk and made them all slaves. (Exodus 1:8-11). The Israelites cried out to God in their suffering and pain. God heard their cry and saw the sufferings of his people—Israel. God was gracious and intervened by raising—Moses to deliver His people out of Egypt and take them to the promise land—Canaan. Since the Pharaoh was stubborn and hard hearted he did not let go of the Israelites. To punish the Pharaoh God sent ten plagues that destroyed most of Egypt. The last and most awful punishment happened when the angel of death passed over all the land of Egypt and killed every firstborn male of the Egyptians both human and of animals. Finally Pharaoh had to let the Israelites go.

Ask

What are the promises God made to Abraham that you see being fulfilled in this incident?

Your descendants will numerous as the stars in the sky and sand on the seashore. God said He will bless those who bless His descendants and curse those who curse them.

(The children may not know this answer to the next point so tell them:)

Say

God fulfilled another promise He made to Abraham. Read Genesis 15:13 and tell me what promise we see fulfilled. *(Let the children read and wait for them to answer).*

God told Abraham that for four hundred years his descendants would be strangers in a country not their own and that they would be enslaved and mistreated. God said He would punish the nation that treated them as slaves and afterwards they would come out with great possessions.

Last week, we learnt that the promises God made with Abraham were both physical and spiritual. The verse in Hebrews states that though Abraham understood that the promise of a physical land was temporary and conditional he looked forward for a better country—a heavenly one which was eternal.

Compared to Abraham who looked forward to receive eternal blessings his descendants the Israelites were more interested in temporary rather than the eternal blessings.



ATTENTION GETTER

Activity

What is the meaning of temporary and eternal?

Presentation

Ask the children to make a list of various activities that each of them did during the week. These can be small things (took out the trash for mom, read a book, listened to music or FM), or bigger things (went out for dinner with family, attended a birthday party, had their relatives over for dinner or went shopping). Ask them to think of lots of things—not just “impressive” things, and write them all down.

(Give them 3 or 4 minutes to do the activity; when they are done, quickly go through each item on the list and decide if the activity was temporary or eternal. After that have the children tape a line from one end of the room to the other. If there are more children in your class have them put the tape in the length of the room. Then have each student mark one centimetre anywhere on the line.)

Say

This tape represents eternity. One centimeter represents your life. Like one tiny centimeter on this long strip of tape, so is your life in comparison to eternity. It is short and brief! But your life is full of worth, for what you live for now determines how you will spend eternity. And eternity goes a lot farther than we can ever fathom in our minds! This strip of tape across the room does not even come close to showing us how long ‘forever’ is. Forever is forever! It is never-ending, everlasting ... it is eternity!

Ask

What is all around us every day that we do not see?

Oxygen, wind, cells, molecules, gravity, etc. Just as we believe these things to be real, though we do not see them, so we have to believe that heaven is real and we will live there and experience it one day and forevermore.

Read Aloud

Revelation 21:1-4, 9-11, 22-27 (The children can take turns reading one verse each).

Say

This is true! This is real! And it is your future if you are a believer! Keep reminding yourself that, all you do and all your suffering here on earth is only temporary. You have an eternity in glory—Heaven to look forward to if you have trusted in Christ for your salvation.

As I said that unlike Abraham who looked for eternal blessings we see that his descendants—the Israelites were more interested in the temporary than the eternal. Let's look at a few instances.

Instructions to the Teacher

You can divide the children into groups of two each and give them the instances mentioned below. When everyone has finished reading, each group can very briefly narrate the incident and mention the temporary choices rather than the eternal choices that the Israelites made. The notes given below is for you to help in summarising what the group has said or to give the necessary important information that the children may have overlooked.

Ask

Group I to read – Exodus 14

Group II to read – Exodus 16

Group III to read – Exodus 19:1-2,20; 32:1-6

Group IV to read – Numbers 13:1-2; 17-21; 26-33

Group V to read – Numbers 14

**TEACHING CONTENT****Israelite's First Temporary Choice: They Chose Death Rather than Seeing the Power and Glory of God****Ask**

Group I to present a summary of their group discussion.

Explain

God delivered the Israelites from Egypt where they were ill-treated as slaves and they began their journey to the Promised Land—Canaan.

As the Israelites journeyed through the desert God asked them to camp by the Red Sea. God told Moses "... I will harden Pharaoh's heart, and he will pursue them. But I will gain glory for myself through Pharaoh and all his army, and the Egyptians will know that I am the Lord" (Exodus 14:4).

Just as God said, Pharaoh and his officials pursued the Israelites to bring them back to Egypt. When the Israelites saw the Red Sea in front of them, and the Egyptian army coming closer from behind, they were very afraid and began to grumble. They told Moses

Read Aloud

Exodus 14:11: "... Was it because there were no graves in Egypt that you brought us to the desert to die? ... Didn't we say to you in Egypt, 'Leave us alone; let us serve the Egyptians?' It would have been better for us to serve the Egyptians than to die in the desert!"

Can you believe that?? The people wanted to go back to Egypt and back to slavery and cruel death! That was the place where they had cried out in misery, pain and hopelessness. After God had miraculously rescued them from slavery, they wanted to go back to it.

They wanted a temporary relief and a quick solution to the danger they were in rather than trusting the God who had already shown them His power through the mighty miracles He did. They had seen in Egypt the eternal power, the glory of God and love He had for His people. They should have just trusted Him.

Although God was sad they grumbled and chose to go back to slavery in Egypt, God was merciful to them. He told Moses to raise his staff and stretch out his hand over the waters of the Red Sea. When Moses did this, the water split into two! The waves piled up on either side like two mighty walls of water and all the people walked on dry ground (over the bottom of the sea) to the other side.

When all the Israelites had got safely to the other side, God told Moses to stretch out his hand over the sea again. When Moses did so the walls of water immediately fell, thundering back into their former position. As the Israelites watched Pharaoh's army being buried under the Red Sea, they knew their God was very powerful. And they feared God and put their trust in Him and in Moses, the man God had sent to deliver them.

The Israelite's Second Temporary Choice: Satisfaction of their Thirst and Hunger Rather than Trusting in God's Providence

Ask

Group II to present a summary of their group discussion.

Explain

When the Israelites came to the Desert of Sin, they did not have enough food to eat. So once again the Israelites grumbled against God and Moses.

Read Aloud

Exodus 16:3: "... If only we had died by the Lord's hand in Egypt! There we sat around pots of meat and ate all the food we wanted, but you have brought us out into this desert to starve this entire assembly to death."

Ask

Do you think:

The Israelites did not have food to eat?

Were they in a situation in which they were living through weeks and weeks of famine?

Were they in a situation in which they were seeing their family and friends die of malnutrition?

Did they have to kill all their livestock for food?

Explain

No! That's not what we read in the Bible. The Bible says they complained because they did not have enough food ("... There we sat around pots of meat and ate all the food we wanted.") The supplies they carried with them from Egypt began to run out, and they had to be sustained in the wilderness.

It would seem that starvation was more anticipated than experienced. In other words, they did not live through weeks and weeks of famine, nor did they see their family and friends die of malnutrition, or even have to kill all their livestock for food. Instead they started to feel hungry and anticipated starvation.

Israel selectively remembered a few things of the past and thought of their time in Egypt as a good time. They twisted the past to support their complaining. They lost sight of God's future for them—their own land—a land flowing with milk and honey.

The people complained and said they wanted to go back to Egypt! Given an option do you think they would really want to be slaves back in Egypt again? No way! They just wanted life to get easier. In the pressure of the moment, they were only thinking of the quickest way of escape from a tough situation.

In spite of their grumbling God was willing to show His eternal glory and providence. God personally appeared in a cloud and spoke to Moses:

Read Aloud

Exodus 16:12: "I have heard the grumbling of the Israelites. Tell them, 'At twilight (evening) you will eat meat, and in the morning you will be filled with bread. Then you will know that I am the Lord your God.'"

This was a remarkable promise. Bread doesn't normally rain from heaven. Yet God promised that He would provide for Israel in this unexpected way. That evening, thousands of quail (a kind of bird) came and settled on the ground. The Israelites had all the meat they wanted. In the morning a layer of dew lay around the camp. When the dew was gone, thin flakes like frost appeared on the desert floor. These later melted away when the sun grew hot. When the Israelites first saw it, they did not know what it was. Moses told them that it was the bread God had given them to eat. The people of Israel called the bread from heaven 'manna.' It was white like coriander seed and tasted like wafers made with honey.

God provided the Israelites with this miraculous bread the whole time they lived in the desert.

Israelite's Third Temporary Choice: They Wanted a Temporary Leader Rather than the Eternal God who Delivered, Lead, Guided and Provided for them.

Ask

Group III to present their group discussion.

Explain

About two months after they left Egypt, they reached Mt. Sinai. They camped there for about one year. And it was here that God gave them detailed instructions about

how to live and how to worship Him. God descended on Mount Sinai and spoke to the people and gave them the Ten Commandments audibly in an awesome display of His mighty power that it left the people trembling.

Moses went up the mountain and met with God for forty days to receive the written law and other instructions for Israel's worship of God. When the people saw that Moses delayed coming down from the mountain, they grew tired of waiting for him. They told Aaron that they did not know what had happened to their leader Moses who brought them out of Egypt. So they asked Aaron to make them gods that would go before them. Aaron took the golden ornaments they gave and made a calf out of the gold. He said, "This is your god, O Israel that brought you out of the land of Egypt!"

One gets the impression, from these verses, that the people had decided among themselves that Moses had abandoned them, had been killed, or that his behavior did not serve their needs or desires. During his absence, the people decided to worship another god. Whose presence will be visible and assuring, in the form of a golden image.

We may think that the Israelites wanted a visible representation of Yahweh, the one true God. This is not true, Israel actually rejected both God and His appointed leader, Moses, and chose to serve a different god altogether.

Why do I say this? When Moses came down the mountain he saw the people acting wild. He stood at the entrance of the camp and said "whoever is for the Lord, come to me." Only the Levites rallied to him. So we see that the majority of the nation failed to identify themselves with God and Moses. If Israel refused to stand on God's side, then they had already rejected Him, choosing their golden god instead.

In spite of the fact that God had revealed Himself directly to the whole nation of Israel, they had never developed a personal relationship with God. Their knowledge of God and their experience of Him was limited to the person of Moses. When Moses disappeared, their connection with God was broken off.

Moses' disappearance was more an excuse than a reason for the making of the idol. The people had lived in Egypt for almost four centuries. All these people had been born and reared in Egypt. They had been saturated with the idolatry of Egypt, of which the worship of calves had been an important part. In spite of God revealing

Himself to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, they felt more at home with the Egyptian idolatry than with Yahweh the one true and living God.

The people wanted temporary security, stability and protection rather than trusting in an eternal unseen God. God, who delivered, guided, lead and provided for them.

Israelite's Fourth Temporary Choice: They Based their Decision on what They Saw Rather than Trusting in a BIG God who Promised to Fulfill the BIG Promises He Made to them.

Ask

Group IV and Group V to present their group discussion.

Explain

The Israelites traveled through different places in the desert and finally they camped on the borders of Canaan—the Promised Land. After roaming around in the desert for almost 40 years, they were probably very excited to enter the land that God Himself had promised them.

God asked Moses to send one man from each tribe of Israel to explore the land of Canaan. The 12 men spied the land for 40 days. On their return 10 of the spies said that the land was good but they were sure they could not attack the Canaanites because they are all great in size and stronger than the Israelites. The ten men spread fear among the Israelites with their negative report. All the people were frightened, and began to cry loudly. And as usual they complained to Moses and Aaron saying, "If only we had died in Egypt! Or in this wilderness! Why is the Lord bringing us to this land only to let us fall by the sword? Our wives and children will be taken as plunder. Wouldn't it be better for us to go back to Egypt?" And they said to each other, "We should choose a leader and go back to Egypt."

However, two of the ten spies—Caleb and Joshua encouraged the people saying, "The land we passed through and explored is exceedingly good. If the Lord is pleased with us, He will lead us into that land ... and will give it to us. Only do not rebel against the Lord. And do not be afraid of the people of the land, because we will devour them. Their protection is gone, but the Lord is with us. Do not be afraid of them" (Numbers 14:8-9).

But the people refused to listen to Caleb and Joshua; they were so angry with them that they even tried to kill them.

The Lord said to Moses, “How long will these people refuse to believe in me?” God decided to wipe them all out with a dreadful plague. Moses pleaded with God on behalf of his people. He asked God to forgive the sins of the people just as He had done from the time He brought them out of Egypt. God heard Moses and forgave them. But God punished them for their rebellion and unbelief in God. All those who were 20 years and above would not enter the Promised Land. They would wander in the hot desert for 40 years until all of them died. After 40 years only the families of Joshua, Caleb and all children below 20 years entered the Promised Land.

The Lord struck down the ten men who had brought fear with their negative reports, with a plague and they died.

The Israelites cried bitterly when they heard of the punishment. The next morning they urged Moses to let them go and fight against the Canaanites. Moses warned them not to because the Lord was not with them. If they tried on their own, they would surely be defeated and killed by the enemy. However the people did not listen to Moses. They attacked the Canaanites and many were killed and defeated by them.

What a sad end for the people who disobeyed, grumbled all the way and did not trust in an eternal Almighty God. They thought of a temporary solution to their problems than trusting in the eternal promises God made with them:

- To be their God
- To give them the land of Canaan—a land flowing with milk and honey as their inheritance
- To give them the land of Canaan as an everlasting possession
- And take them to the Promise Land

What a wonderful reward for those who trusted and believed God; after 40 years they were to enter the land of promise—Canaan.



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Note: *All discussion questions must be answered by the children, and NOT by the teacher. The guidelines given here are only meant to assist the teacher during the discussion.*

Why was Moses' attitude different to that of the Israelites? To find the answer, read Hebrews 12:24-26.

Hebrews 12:24-26 says, Moses chose not to enjoy the temporary pleasures of sin for a short time. He did so because he regarded His relationship with Christ of greater value than treasures of the world because he looked forward for his reward.

What does Jesus teach us regarding choosing things that are eternal? To find the answer, read Matthew 6:19-21.

Jesus asks us not to store up things on earth because it will be destroyed or stolen. He asks us to store up things in heaven which cannot be destroyed or stolen.

What are some of the temporary treasures people seek after?

Maybe it is money and wealth; power and the desire to be recognised as a leader. Maybe it is popularity and acceptance through nice (designer) clothes, a home, a latest mobile, high end car, gadgets etc. It could be a certain kind of misbehavior that we are unwilling to let go. It could also be our career that we treasure; a hobby; a person; a place or thing.

Why is Jesus asking us not to lay up treasures on earth? To find the answer, read 1 Corinthians 3:12-15.

The treasures on earth will only pass away, perish and be destroyed. As 1 Corinthians 3:12-15 says at the end of our life we will all stand before the judgment seat of Christ and give an account for our lives here on the earth. Those who seek to build up wealth and riches on earth will suffer loss, whereas those who strive to lay up treasures in heaven will receive a reward. The reward is that they can enter eternity—Heaven, fully pardoned and set free from the bondage of sin because they have believed that Jesus died, was buried and rose again.

How do we lay up treasures in heaven? To find the answer, read Matthew 19:16-22.

- ❖ Obey what God’s Word says.
- ❖ Love your neighbor as yourself which means caring for the needs of people around us by sharing with them—being a cheerful giver. Treating and loving them as we would want to be treated and loved.
- ❖ To follow God—means to love God with all our heart, soul, mind and strength. We do this when:
 - We do not love or value someone or something too much i.e. more than God.
 - We do not devote or sacrifice most of our time, health, energy to things e.g., studies, TV, video games, listening to music, mobile phones.
 - We don’t find fulfillment and identity in them.

Following God also means:

- Honoring Him by respecting our parents.
- Guarding our minds against unclean thoughts by reading and watching things that are clean and good.
- Sharing the good news of the gospel with those around us.

Look up the verses below to see what the Bible teaches us about loving and desiring things of the world that are temporary?

1 John 2:15-17 – We are asked not to love the world or anything in the world. We cannot love both the world and God. We will either love the world or God. The world and its desires and attractions will pass away, but the man who does the will of God lives forever.

Colossians 3:2 – Asks us to set our mind on the things that have eternal value and significance than that of the earth that is temporary.

How should we use the temporary treasures we have? To find the answer read 1 Corinthians 10:31 and Luke 16:9.

1 Corinthians 10:31 says that the temporary treasures we have, should be used to glorify God. Temporary things won’t matter when this life is over, but what we have put into the lives of people around us will matter. Your life is eternal, while the

things of the world are not (houses, money, power, jobs, sports teams, etc.) So we learn to see temporary things of this world as tools we should use to win people for Jesus. What Jesus meant was that we should use all the material blessings God gives us to bring people to Christ. They will then be friends for eternity. It's the best financial investment you'll ever make.

If we don't learn to use the physical, material blessings as tools to build God's Kingdom we are only likely to be distracted by them. We naturally seek them out for our own pleasure and see them as the goal themselves.

Read the following list. Circle 'thumbs up' for choices that represent eternal values and 'down' for choices that are not:

- Saying a prayer—thanking God before you eat your meals. 
- Copying in a test or exam. 
- Reading the Bible every day. 
- Joining a few friends and making fun of other children in your class. 
- Making friends with someone who is lonely in your class. 
- Grumbling and complaining about the food your mother makes. 
- Doing your chores (cleaning your room, studying etc.) cheerfully. 
- You don't attend church because on Sunday morning you like to watch TV or prefer not to wake up early. 
- Constantly demanding that your parents get you what your friends have. 
- Using part of your pocket money to help the poor. Deciding not to buy one more shoe or clothes so you can give that money to an orphanage or to a mission organization. 
- Instead of buying new clothes on your Birthday you use that money to buy Bibles to give your friends as your Birthday gift for them. 
- To avoid getting punished you choose to lie to your parents and teachers. 
- Listening to gospel music rather than listening to music with lyrics that are morally degrading or words that are filthy. 

- Watch movies and TV programs that build your spirit more than watching things that are morally degrading. 👍👎
- Using your talent to build God's Kingdom. 👍👎
- Use bad language because it is common in your school and it's cool. 👍👎



APPLICATION

God chose to make and fulfill all His promises for the Israelites; not only the temporary ones of wanting them to have a land and wanting them to have all the material blessings. He chose them because through them He wanted all the nations around them to know that He alone is the true and living God. He wanted the Israelites to represent God to the others by being Holy as He is holy. Holiness is being separated from sin and being set apart fully to the Lord, for His purposes and glory. In this way they were to attract the other nations to the God of Israel.

We saw that the Israelites chose things that were of temporary value rather than choosing things of eternal significance. The consequence of their choice was pain and death.

Do we sin against God when we desire to have earthly things? No! There are some basic things we value and want to use—food, clothing and shelter. There are other things we value and want to possess—a means of transportation; various methods of communication; all kinds of things from necessary things to nice things. It's not wrong for us to think about, plan or save for the future. In Matthew 6:19-21 I don't believe Jesus is telling us to ignore the needs of tomorrow. In fact, to fulfill our responsibilities to ourselves, our families, our needy brethren and to support the work of God—it is necessary for us to study, get into a good profession, to work, to have income and to be a possessor of material or earthly things. Nowhere in the Bible does God tell us that it is sinful to desire an income, to have money and possess earthly things. Nowhere in the Bible will you find a rich man being punished merely because of his wealth nor will you find a poor man highly praised simply because of his poverty.

The whole problem begins when we have this fascination with earthly treasure over heavenly treasure!!

If earthly treasure is our priority; if money, possessions, status and earthly treasures get most of our attention, time and energy—Jesus says, we've got a big problem! Money is not the problem, our misuse of it is. Money is not the problem, our love of it is. The treasures of the earth do not last; they have no permanence; no durability ... and we cannot take them with us. They never fully satisfy, never meet our real needs; there is always something missing. Therefore it makes no sense to devote your whole heart and life to something that will soon be gone and that can never satisfy.

Let's watch a video that will help you understand this.

Video Presentation

Video: Be Broken '13: Instant Gratification vs. Eternal Satisfaction.

Duration: 4 minutes and 22 seconds

Has this ever happened to you? You get something you have been craving for and the moment you get it, there is a sense of disappointment! Or you get something and after you get over the initial excitement or even before you have had it for very long, your joy in it has begun to dull. After a while you have lost all interest in it; isn't this why we have garages and store rooms full of discarded stuff? That which occupies our interest and attention this year may bore us next year. Our earthly interests are constantly fluctuating, and this is another problem when we invest all our time and energy in this world.

What's more valuable; what's more important and what lasts longer! Heavenly things are so much more valuable than earthly treasure—we ought to want heavenly things and labor for heavenly things and treasure heavenly things far more than earthly things.

The better way to live life is to choose things that are of eternal significance, things that lie in the realm of the spiritual—like forgiveness, fellowship with God, the power of prayer, the development of character and moral excellence, the love of God and believers, the hope of heaven.

Things that are eternal bring us close to God, make us better people and prepare us for a happy eternity after death! Also use the earthly, temporary blessings to store treasures in heaven.

Ask God to help you choose and use things to yield eternal blessings.

Write down 5 temporary treasures—physical and material blessings you will use to gain eternal blessings.

E.g.:

TEMPORARY TREASURES	ETERNAL BLESSINGS
I have an iPod/mobile phone. I love listening to music.	Instead of listening to secular music I'll choose to listen to praise and worship that will edify my spirit.
For my birthday/Christmas I usually get new clothes and shoes.	Instead of buying a new dress or shoes for myself I'll use that money to buy an orphan/poor child a new pair of clothes or shoes.

Pray and ask God to help you to use the material blessings He has given you to build His Kingdom.



CLOSE WITH PRAYER



Old Testament



Joshua



LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- God requires us to obey all His laws and commands.
- Blessings and Success comes only by obeying God and His Word.
- Children will learn not to obey God out of fear but out of love for what He did on the Cross for them.



SCRIPTURE PORTION

Joshua chapter 3, 6, 7 and 8



RECAP

- What did we learn last week?
- Recite last week's Memory Verse



MEMORY VERSE

Joshua 1:8: "Do not let this Book of the Law depart from your mouth; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful."



INTRODUCTION

Last week, we saw how the Israelites journeyed from Egypt through the desert and finally camped on the borders of the Promised Land—Canaan. Their sin of rebellion, lack of trust and faith in God caused them to live in the desert for an extended 40 years.

Not only the Israelites but even Moses was disqualified from entering the land of Canaan because he sinned against God. Before his death Moses, through a series of sermons restates the Ten Commandments and other laws given in Exodus and Leviticus to the new generation of Israelites. He also gives them God’s instructions on how to live a blessed life in the Promised Land; the specific blessings for obedience and the curses for disobedience. At God’s instruction, Moses transfers his leadership role to Joshua.

In our lesson today, we will study the book of Joshua. The Book of Joshua describes the conquest, the allotment of land to each tribe and settlement of the Israelites in the Promise Land—Canaan. Thus we see the fulfillment of the Covenant that God made to Abraham.

The book of Joshua does not contain a single word about the Israelites rebelling against their new leader Joshua or grumbling against God. Joshua and the Israelites obeyed whatever God had commanded them. Their obedience brought them victory, and helped them to possess and settle in the Promised Land.

Let’s look at a how the Israelites trusted and obeyed God which helped them possess the land of Canaan.

Note to the Facilitator

You can divide the children into groups of two each and give them the instances mentioned below. When everyone has finished reading, each group can very briefly narrate the incident to the class. The notes given below are for you to help in summarizing what the group said or to give the necessary important information that the children may have overlooked.

Ask

Group I to read – Joshua chapter 3:1-8; 14-17

Group II to read – Joshua 6

Joshua

Group III to read – Joshua 7

Group IV to read – Joshua 8:1-29

Group V to read – Joshua 8:30-35



TEACHING CONTENT

I. Crossing the River Jordan

Ask

Group I to present their group discussion.

Explain

God told Joshua to get all the people of Israel ready to cross the River Jordan into the land He was going to give them. Joshua secretly sent two spies to spy the land of Jericho. The two spies returned from Jericho and reported that the Lord has surely given them the whole land because all the people were melting in fear of the Israelites.

The Israelites camped along the banks of river Jordan which was flooded. God told Joshua to ask the people to consecrate themselves in view of the wonders He would do among them the next day. The people were commanded to maintain a certain distance and follow behind the priests who would carry the Ark of the Covenant. The priests carrying the Ark are to stand in the river.

The next day as soon as the feet of the priests carrying the Ark of the Covenant touched the water, God stopped its flow. The priests carrying the Ark walked on dry ground and stood in the middle of the river while the entire nation of Israel crossed the river on dry land.

What is the Ark of the Covenant?

(While explaining the Ark of the Covenant please show the Power Point Presentation containing the pictures on The Ark of the Covenant.)

The Ark was a gold-covered box (as shown in the picture below) kept within the Holy of Holies, shielded from the eye of the common man. This was a one piece furniture comprising two parts: the Ark of the Covenant and the atonement cover (or “mercy seat”) on top of it. The ark was a chest made of acacia wood, overlaid with pure

gold inside and out. On the lid were two angels facing each other. Inside the Ark of the Covenant were the tablets of the Ten Commandments Moses received from God, a jar of manna (the bread God miraculously sent from heaven during the desert wanderings) and Aaron's staff (the symbol of the high priest's authority).

Ask

Did God stop the waters before the priests stepped into the raging river?

Explain

No! God waited for the priests to show their trust and obedience in Him by stepping into the swiftly flowing flooded river. The Bible says as soon as their feet touched the water, God stopped its flow. Joshua and the people obeyed God just as He had commanded them. Although the river was flooded their obedience helped them to cross the river on dry ground.

II. Battle of Jericho

Ask

Group II to present a summary of their group discussion.

Explain

The Israelites safely crossed the river Jordan but it was not going to be easy to enter Jericho because Jericho was a fortress with huge thick walls around it. God promised Joshua that He would give him the land of Jericho and gave him very unusual battle plans. For six days, seven priests carrying trumpets of rams' horns were to blow their trumpets and march in front of the priests carrying the ark. The priests along with the people were to march around Jericho once for six days. On the seventh day they had to march around Jericho seven times. The seventh time the priests were to sound a long blast on the trumpet and all the people had to give a loud shout; when they did so the walls of the city collapsed. When the Israelites entered Jericho God asked Joshua to kill every living thing except for Rahab and her family. He told Joshua to put all the silver, gold, articles of bronze and iron into His treasury because it belonged to Him.

Though the battle plans were so unusual, yet the Israelites did exactly as God asked them to and God gave them the victory. However, one man Achan broke the command that God had given—He stole silver, gold and a beautiful robe and hid it away.

III. Battle of Ai

Ask

Group III and Group IV to present a summary of their group discussion.

Explain

After taking Jericho, Joshua was getting ready to wage war on the next city, called Ai. When the Israelites attacked Ai the men of Ai chased them out and killed the Israelite men. Ai was a very small city compared to Jericho but the Israelites were defeated because there was sin in the camp—Achan had disobeyed God and God would not continue blessing the nation as long as there was sin among them. This does not mean that Achan was the only sinner and the rest of the nation was sinless, but Achan's sin was direct disobedience and rebellion to the command God gave him.

God gave Joshua specific instructions to find out the man who had stolen the things. Joshua told the people to consecrate themselves and early the next morning, Joshua asked each of the twelve tribes to present themselves tribe by tribe. God chose Achan, the man who had stolen and lied. Achan finally admitted his sin. Joshua and the Israelites took Achan, his wife, children, the things he had stolen along with all he had to the valley of Achor. The Israelites stoned all of them and burned them.

Then the Lord's anger was turned away from the Israelites. God promised to deliver the city of Ai to the Israelites. God told Joshua not to be afraid or discouraged to take the whole army along with him to attack Ai. God asked him to destroy the entire city like they had done to the city of Jericho and but this time they could take the things and livestock for themselves.

Joshua and the Israelites obeyed God's instructions and they burnt the city of Ai and made it permanent heap of rubble and it is a desolate place to this day.

IV. Joshua Obeys what Moses and God Had Commanded Him

Ask

Group V to present a summary of their group discussion.

Explain

Joshua fulfills the commands that God gave Moses in Deuteronomy 27:1-8 and what God commanded him in Joshua 1:7, 8.

In Deuteronomy 27:1-8 Moses tells the people that when they enter the Promised Land they are to go on Mount Ebal where they are to set up some large stones and coat them with plaster and write on them all the words of the Law. They are to build an altar of stones and offer to the Lord burnt offerings and fellowship offerings, eat them and rejoice in the presence of the Lord. Joshua and the people did just as God had commanded them through Moses.

Joshua had half the people stand in front of Mount Gerizim and half in front of Mount Ebal. The Priests carrying the Ark of the Covenant stood in the valley between both the mountains. When Joshua and the Levites read the blessings of the Lord one by one (see Deuteronomy 28:1-14), the tribes at Mount Gerizim responded with a loud united 'Amen!' which in the Hebrew means 'So be it!' When they read the curses (see Deuteronomy 27:14-26), the tribes at Mount Ebal would respond with their 'Amen' after each curse was read.

Through this object lesson God was teaching the Israelites that if they would obey His law then it would be like they were living on Mount Gerizim that was covered with trees and fruitful, representative of the blessings of keeping the Covenant. If they disobeyed then it would be like they were living on Mount Ebal which was stony and barren, representative of the curse of violating the Covenant.

V. Israelites Totally Destroyed Everyone Who Lived in the Other Canaanite Cities

God helped the Israelites under the leadership of Joshua to conquer the other cities of Canaan as well. Joshua 12:9-24 records thirty-one Kings that Joshua defeated with God's help. The Israelites were able to conquer most of Canaan because they obeyed the commands of the Lord by killing the King, people and live stock of the cities they attacked.

When Joshua was very old God promised Joshua that He Himself will drive out the remaining Canaanites from their land. God asked Joshua to allot the land to the tribes of Israel just as He commanded. Each tribe of Israel happily settled in the land allotted to them.

Joshua

When Joshua knew he would soon die, he called all Israel to assemble together (Joshua 23:1-24:28). He urged the people to keep God's Law. He reminded them that God had given them the land He had promised them and every promise that God had made has been fulfilled and not one has failed. He tells them that just as all God's promises have come to pass similarly if they fail to obey and keep the Covenant of the Lord then He will bring on them all the evil He had threatened until He has destroyed them from the good land He has given them.

Joshua challenged the people to choose for themselves that very day who they will serve—whether the gods of the Egyptians and Canaanites or God Almighty who had delivered them. Joshua makes a powerful declaration that as for him and his household they will serve the Lord.

All the people said that they will obey and serve God.



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Note: *All discussion questions must be answered by the children, and NOT by the teacher. The guidelines given here are only meant to assist the teacher during the discussion.*

Why did God ask the Israelites to utterly destroy (all the men, women, children and animals) all the people living in the cities of Canaan?

The following passages will help you find the answer:

Genesis 15:16: "In the fourth generation your descendants will come back here, for the sin of the Amorites has not yet reached its full measure."

Deuteronomy 9:5: "It is not because of your righteousness or your integrity that you are going in to take possession of their land; but on account of the wickedness of these nations, the Lord your God will drive them out before you, to accomplish what he swore to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob."

Deuteronomy 20:16-18: "However, in the cities of the nations the Lord your God is giving you as an inheritance, do not leave alive anything that breathes. Completely destroy them—the Hittites, Amorites, Canaanites, Perizzites, Hivites and Jebusites—as the Lord your God has commanded you. Otherwise, they will teach you to follow all the detestable things they do in worshipping their gods, and you will sin against the Lord your God."

The Bible makes it clear that the Canaanites were not ‘innocent.’ Their long history of sin caused them to lose their right to live in the land of Canaan. In Genesis 15:16 God told Abraham that his descendants would not occupy the land until the sin of its inhabitants reached its full measure.

God knew that the ungodly nations would not repent. God also knew that the children of Israel would become polluted by their sins, idolatry and He knew the evil spirits would transfer to His people.

History tells us Jericho was one of the most unbelievably wicked cities, filled with people who would feed their children to gods, throw them into rivers and murder them in sacrifices. Canaanite gods, delighted in human sacrifice. Archaeologists have found great numbers of jars containing the tiny bones of children sacrificed to Baal. Families seeking good luck in a new home practiced ‘foundation sacrifice.’ They would kill one of their children and seal the body in the mortar of the wall.

The Bible records that God had patience with immoral nations for a time, but when they did not repent judgment would surely follow. For Sodom and Gomorrah it took the form of fire and brimstone. For Canaan it came through Joshua's conquering armies. Later, God punished His own chosen people—Israelites for their sins by allowing them to be conquered by the Assyrians and Babylonians and taken as captives to their land.

Why did God command priests to carry the Ark of the Covenant ahead of the people when they were crossing the river Jordan and marching around the walls of Jericho?

The Ark was a physical symbol representing God's presence, His promise and His great power to the Israelites.

It was a reminder that:

- God's presence was with them and that God was going before them as their source of victory.
- Their battle was not physical but spiritual.
- As the people of Israel set out to cross the Jordan, invade, and possess the land promised them, they must do it not in their own strength, but in God's strength.

What was God's purpose in asking the Levites to read the whole list of curses and blessings as the people faced Mount Ebal and Mount Gerizim?

Firstly, it was to renew the Covenant he made with His people on Mount Sinai.

Secondly, at the very beginning of their settling in the Land of Promise the people of Israel were reminded that they must choose between obedience which would lead to God's blessing of permanently living and possessing the land of Canaan and being part of all the blessings God promised Abraham; and their disobedience would lead to curses.

Why did God ask the people to prepare the altar and to sacrifice on Mount Ebal (Mount of curses)?

God did not want the people to sin and warned them of what would occur when they sinned. God also knew that His people were not going to be perfect and so by making sacrifices on the altar he provided a way out for them to return back to Him.

What is the relationship between God's promises and His commands to Joshua? To find the answer, read Joshua 1:7-8.

The promises God made to Joshua will come to pass only when he obeys God's commands. If Joshua obeys God's commands then he would be successful and prosperous.

Why did God ask Joshua to meditate on His Word and ask Moses to repeat the laws, give instructions on how to live a blessed life in the Promised Land and the specific blessings of obedience and the curses of disobedience? To find the answer, read Deuteronomy 30:19-20.

God wanted them to be reminded about His love for them, His Laws, the importances of keeping and obeying them. He wanted the Israelites to love God, obey, and hold fast to Him.

Moses wanted the Israelite's relationship with God to be marked by faithfulness, loyalty, love, and devotion.



APPLICATION

We see just one command repeated again and again in the book of Joshua that is—to obey God and keep His commands. When the people obeyed God’s command the promises followed them.

The quality of our lives also depends on whether we obey God’s commands or not. If we obey, blessings will “overtake” us; if we do not, disaster will “overtake” us

In the book of Joshua, we also see God constantly reminding the people of His Love, His presence, provision and His Covenant. God knew that His people would forget His commands so He constantly makes them do various things to remind them of it.

One way we are reminded about God’s commands and laws is by reading His Word and meditating on it. Remember, how blessed you are in life does not depend on which school or college you studied in India or abroad, how intelligent you are, how much you earn but on how much you meditate on God’s Word and how carefully you are to obey it.

God knew that the Israelites are not perfect and they will sin by breaking the law so He made a provision for them to make a sacrifice by which their sins can be forgiven. We are privileged people because we don’t have to make any sacrifice because Jesus made the full sufficient sacrifice for our sins and took upon Himself our curse thus setting us free from every curse. So we can obey God not out of fear but out of love for what He did for us and for how much He loved us. Our obedience to Him should not be just for us to receive His blessing or to be prosperous but our obedience should be out of love for Him. That’s what the Bible reminds us as well.

Jesus says in John 14:15: If you love me, you will obey what I command.

1 John 5:3: This is love for God: to obey his commands. And his commands are not burdensome.

Let’s watch two videos that explains this.

Video Presentation

Video 1: Obedience

Duration: 1 minutes 48 seconds

Joshua

Video 2: Christian Hosoi: Obedience

Duration: 3 minutes 30 seconds

Ask

What do we learn from these two videos on love and obedience? *(Wait for the children to respond).*

Explain

Love equals obedience. If we love God we will obey His commandments and do what He wants us to do and live the way He wants us to live.

When we accept Jesus into our lives His love fills our hearts. We can only love God when we focus, meditate and think of His love for us. Just like we know our parents love us but we constantly need to be reminded and remind ourselves that they love us.

When they shout or punish you for doing something wrong or when they don't agree or allow you to watch or do something or go somewhere you get upset. You retaliate by disobeying them, back answering or not studying, sulking not talking to them etc. You do this because you are angry. But when you see them show their love and affection for you in different ways, even after you have misbehaved, you are assured of their love towards you and your angry attitude towards them changes.

Similarly God's love for us never changes. We need to keep reminding ourselves of His love for us. This we can do by thinking of all that He has done for us and by meditating on His Word. Just as God reminded the Israelites' of His love for them in various ways.

Once we do this (as we watched in the video) we will not find it difficult or painful to obey God.

Say

Write down areas in your life where you'll obey God.

Note to the Facilitator

Before the children leave, ask them to take a look at the Take Home Activity in their student workbook. Encourage them to read the passages given from Judges Chapters 13-16.

Say

Every day this week, read the following Scripture passages which talk about the incidents in the life of Samson. We will discuss these passages next week.

Monday : Judges 13:1-25

Tuesday : Judges 14:1-9

Wednesday : Judges 14:10-20

Thursday : Judges 15:10-20

Friday : Judges 16:1-22

Saturday : Judges 16:23-31



FOLLOW UP

(To be filled up before the next class.)

Write down the areas in your life where you made a deliberate choice to obey God this past week.



CLOSE WITH PRAYER



Old Testament



Judges of Israel



LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- Children will learn that the choices they make have consequences.
- Children will learn that if they want Jesus to be a part of their lives, they need to make choices to show God they love Him.
- Children will learn that if they want others to know that Jesus is a part of their lives, they need to deliberately choose to act and live in a way that honours Him every day.



SCRIPTURE PORTION

Judges chapters 13 - 16



RECAP

- What did we learn last week?
- Recite the memory verse for last week.



MEMORY VERSE

1 Peter 2:9: “But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.”

Note to the Facilitator

Last week, as part of their take home activity the children were asked to read Judges Chapters 13-16. If most of them have read the portion you can do a quiz. Summarise the events in Samson’s life by just mentioning the important points and learning given.

After you discuss the life of Samson do discussion questions 2, 3 and 4.



INTRODUCTION

Last week, we saw how God helped the Israelites to conquer the cities in Canaan under Joshua’s leadership. Before Joshua died, he instructed the Israelites that God Himself would drive out the remaining Canaanites from Canaan, after which the Israelites could take possession of their land. For God to fulfill His promise the Israelites should love God, obey all His laws and not worship, serve or bow down to the gods of the Canaanites.

It did not take long for the Israelites to forget God’s goodness, and worship the false gods of the Canaanites. Just as God had warned them, He stopped fighting for them, and they were conquered by other nations. After the people had been enslaved for several years, they cried out to God. In His mercy and goodness, God sent them a deliverer, also called a judge. The judge rescued them from their enemies, and the people worshipped and followed God. Sadly, as soon as the judge died, the Israelites again fell into the temptation of worshipping false gods. This went on and on and on.

The judges ruled Israel from the death of Joshua till the appointment of Saul—the first king of Israel. The judges were not kings; they were leaders who led the people in battle and made decisions that helped bring peace and justice to the people.

Some of the judges were men and women of good character, great faith and moral courage who honoured God in the choices they made. There were also many weak judges who failed to honour God in their choices and relationships.



ATTENTION GETTER

Each of us can be a part of many different relationships or groups. We make choices that help us belong to these groups. Let's talk about four different groups or relationships that you may belong to.

To start off, let's talk about ...

The people that we love

(Get all the children to respond the below questions.)

Ask

- Who are the people that you love?
- How do they know that you love them?
(You may get answers like 'We give them hugs, tell them we love them, share things with them, respect and obey them' etc.).
- If you didn't do these things would they know that you love them?
No, we need to make a choice to show others that we love them by the words we say and the things we do.

The teams we belong to

You might belong to a sporting team or perhaps even a few other teams.

(Ask the children to name the teams they belong to. Eg: cricket, basketball, football teams, music, choir, dance team, prefect or leader in school etc. You might not play a sport but you might be a sports team supporter and belong to group of sports fans.)

Ask

- How do people know you are a part of that team?
Wear a uniform, go to practice, wear a badge, talk about them etc.
- If you don't do or wear these things, how would people know that you belong to that team?
They won't, you need to make a choice to show that you belong to a team and do things that show others you are a part of this group.

Schools we go to

What about the different schools you go to? There are so many different schools.

Ask

- How do we know which school you go to?
Uniform, logo, you could physically go to the school, school bag etc.
- If you didn't wear a uniform or attend school during the school hours do you think that people would know which school you went to?
They wouldn't, these are the things that show that you belong to the school and have chosen to go to that particular school.

Say

We have shared some of the things we do and what we wear that allows people to see and understand the communities or groups that we belong to, whether that is a school, sports team or a relationship we have. There is one more relationship we are going to look at.

Our relationship with Jesus

You might have made a choice to follow Jesus. This means that you are on His team and have a relationship with Him.

Ask

- How do we show people that Jesus is a special part of our life?
- What are the things we do or say that would make people think that Jesus is not a part of our life?

Say

If we want Jesus to be a part of our lives, we need to make a choice to show Him we love Him.

If we want others to know that Jesus is a part of our lives, we need to deliberately choose to act and live in a way that honours Him every day.

In our lesson today, we will look at the lives of two judges—Samson and Samuel. The choices Samson made, failed to show:

- He belonged to the team - judge and Nazirite

- His love for his people and
- His love and relationship with God

Unlike Samson, Samuel's choices showed his love for his people and faithfulness to God. Above all, he was faithful in fulfilling his role as a judge and prophet. He showed his love for God by choosing to live a life of integrity and honesty.



TEACHING CONTENT

Samson

I. He Belonged to the Nazirite Team

The Israelites sinned against God by worshipping idols, so this time, God allowed the Philistines to rule over the Israelites for 40 years.

During this time, an angel of the Lord appeared to Manoah's wife who was barren and told her that she'd have a son. The angel told her that her son:

- ❖ Would be a Nazirite set apart to God from the day he was born.
- ❖ Must not use a razor on his head.
- ❖ Would save Israel from the power of the Philistines.

A Nazirite was a person who dedicated his life for the full-time service of God. They had to follow three rules:

- (1) They could not eat grapes or raisins; or drink grape juice or wine.
- (2) They were not allowed to cut their hair at all. Men could not cut their beards either.
- (3) They had to stay away from dead bodies and graves—even those of their family members.

Even as a very young boy, the Spirit of God was at work in Samson's life. Though Samson knew he was a Nazirite, we will see how he broke the Nazirite vow and how he chose to gratify his own sensual desires and pleasures rather than live a life set apart for God.

II. He Did Not Love God's People and Chose to Disobey God's Command

When Samson grew up, he loved a Philistine woman and wanted his parents to get her as his wife. His parents discouraged him from doing so. Instead, they asked him to marry an Israelite woman. But Samson insisted that the Philistine woman was the right one for him.

God used this relationship to confront the Philistines who were ruling over His people.

Learning

Samson insisted that he would marry a woman from the enemy nation. This clearly shows his failure to love God's own people. Their friendship was not important to him. He did not really care about them. If he did, he would not want to hurt them with his marriage to a non-Israelite.

God clearly told His people not to marry people from other nations. Samson refused to obey God in this matter. Since God's commands and Word had no place in Samson's life, he chose not to follow it. Similarly, when God's Word has no place in our lives we will never follow what it says.

III. He Chose to Break His Nazirite Vow

A. Ate Honey From the Lion's Skeleton

On their way to meet the Philistine woman, Samson who was some distance away from his parents, was suddenly attacked by a roaring young lion. The Spirit of the Lord came on Samson with power and he tore the lion apart with his bare hands.

When Samson met the Philistine young woman he liked her very much. After some time, he returned to her town to marry her. On the way, he looked at the dead body of the lion he had killed earlier. Bees had made a beehive in the lion's skeleton. The hive was full of honey. Samson stuck his hand inside and got some of the honey. He ate it and also gave some to his parents to eat. He did not tell them where he got it from.

Ask

Which Nazirite vow did Samson break? *(Let the children respond).*

Samson had to stay away from dead bodies! His curiosity caused him to disobey God's command.

B. Drank Wine at His Wedding Feast

Before his wedding, Samson joined a feast of mishteh, a “drinking bout.”

Ask

Which Nazirite vow did Samson break? *(Let the children respond).*

He was not allowed to drink wine.

C. He Allowed a Philistine Woman to Cut His Hair

Samson not only chose to break God’s command by wanting to marry a Philistine woman. One day he went to Gaza—a Philistine city, and spent the night with a prostitute. When the people of Gaza knew that Samson was there they surrounded the place and decided to kill him in the morning.

Samson lay there until the middle of the night. Then he got up and took hold of the doors of the city gate, together with the two posts, and tore them loose. He lifted them to his shoulders and carried them to the top of the hill that faces Hebron.

Later, Samson fell in love with another Philistine woman—Delilah. Though she was not his wife he lived with her. The rulers of the Philistines told Delilah to get the secret of Samson’s strength so they could overpower him. They promised to give her 28 pounds of silver if she did so.

So Delilah asked Samson to tell her the secret of his great strength. Samson lied to Delilah three times.

The first time, he said if he were tied up with seven leather straps that were not completely dry, he would lose his strength.

The second time, he said that if he were tied up with ropes that had never been used, he would lose his strength.

The third time, he said if she were to weave the braids of his hair into the cloth that was on her weaving loom, he would become weak.

All three times when Samson was asleep Delilah did just as Samson had said. Then Delilah would shout out, “Samson! The Philistines are attacking you!” Each time, Samson woke up and snapped free of his bonds very easily.

After failing in all three attempts, Delilah continued to pester Samson saying if he truly loved her he would tell her the secret of his strength. Day after day she nagged

him until he was so sick and tired of it that he finally told her that he was a Nazirite set apart to God since birth and if his head were shaved, his strength would leave him, and he would become as weak as any other man.

Delilah sent word to the Philistine rulers to come back one more time and lulled Samson to sleep. She then called for a man to come and cut off the braids of Samson's hair. His strength left him. Then, one final time, Delilah shouted to Samson that the Philistines were attacking him. As Samson woke up, he thought he would break free as he always had before. Listen to what the Bible says:

Read Aloud

Judges 16:20: "... But he didn't know that the Lord had left him."

The Philistines grabbed him and poked his eyes out. They took him to Gaza, put chains on him, and put him in prison. Then Samson, once the strongest warrior in the land, spent his days grinding grain in prison.

Ask

Which Nazirite vow did Samson break? *(Let the children respond).*

Not to use a razor on his head.

Learning

Samson broke all three Nazirite vows which clearly showed that he did not value God's gift and anointing. He was a Nazirite in his outward appearance, but his heart was set apart to follow his self-ridden pleasures and desires. His heart was self-centered rather than being God-centered. Hence, he chose what he saw, desired and which pleased him over what God desired or purposed for Him.

Samson did not learn from his previous mistake—the Philistine bride, his first wife breaking his trust. He again chooses to give in to his lustful desire of staying with Philistine women. It is this very sin that brought his downfall.

IV. His Choices Brought Dishonour to His God

When the Philistines captured Samson, the Philistines assembled to offer a great sacrifice to Dagon their god and to celebrate for helping them deliver their enemy, Samson, into their hands. Of course, this was not true. The Philistines were only able to capture Samson because the one true God left Samson when he treated the

gifts God gave him so carelessly. During the celebration they brought Samson to entertain them. When people saw Samson they praised their god.

Samson asked the servant who was holding his hand to take him near the great pillars that held up the temple so he could lean on them. The Bible tells us that the temple was packed full of people. There were 3,000 Philistine men and women on the roof of the temple in addition to all the Philistine leaders.

Samson asked the servant to put him where he could feel the pillars that support the temple. Samson prayed and asked God to strengthen him just once more, so he could take revenge on the Philistines for his two eyes. God heard him and gave him supernatural strength.

Samson pushed the pillars with all his might, and the temple came crashing down. Samson and all the Philistines in the temple were killed.

Learning

God had set apart Samson for a specific purpose—to rescue His people from the Philistines. Samson completely failed to fulfill God's plan. His anointing—supernatural strength should have brought honour to a holy God. Instead, his self-ridden, pleasure-filled life brought dishonour to the God of Israel.

V. He Chose to Fight the Philistines for His Own Personal Revenge

God raised Samson as a judge and gave him supernatural strength to put an end to the Philistines who were ruling the Israelites for 40 years. If you read Judges 13-16 you will notice that Samson misused his strength and fought the Philistines to take revenge for the own personal hurt and pain they had caused him.

Even before he pushed the pillars in the temple he prayed for strength to get revenge for his own eyes. He didn't ask for strength so he could give God glory, or even to set his fellow Israelites free from the Philistines. Even in his final hour, Samson was thinking only of himself.

Learning

For Samson, using his strength to fulfill God's plan for Israel was far from his mind, since he was more interested in serving himself than serving God. The only way Samson would fight against the Philistines, was when he was personally hurt or wronged and this is precisely what God allowed to happen.

Hence, unlike the other judges, Samson was not able to free the Israelites from the rule of the Philistines. Hence, the Philistines continued to rule Israel during the time of Samson.

After the story of Samson, the book of Judges continues to tell of more failures of the Israelites. We learn of more idol worship. The priests did not perform the duties that God had given them to do. Instead they chose to sin. The Israelite tribes were going to war with other Israelite tribes. The people in the book of Judges had fallen a long way from the book of Joshua when the Israelites worked together and obeyed God.

There is a phrase that is repeated several times in the book of Judges (Judges 17:6, 18:1, 19:1, 21:25). Let's turn to Judges 21:25 and read the ending statement of the book of Judges.

Read Aloud

Judges 21:25: "In those days Israel had no king; everyone did as he saw fit."

Samuel

It was during this time that Samuel the last judge of Israel was born. Just like Samson's mother, Samuel's mother Hannah had no children; she prayed and cried out to God to give her a son. She promised God that if He would answer her, she would dedicate him (give him up) to serve God in the Tabernacle from his childhood.

When God granted her request she fulfilled her vow to God. She left Samuel in the Tabernacle with Eli the priest, so he could train him to serve God in the Tabernacle.

Eli the priest was an old man and nearly blind. His two sons who helped him in priestly duties failed to follow the law of sacrifice given by God. When a person brought an animal for sacrifice, Eli's sons would take good portions of the meat for themselves and burn the remains as a sacrifice to God. They would sell the good portions of the meat in the market to make money. Eli tried hard to change his sons, but they did not listen. The people were very unhappy with the behavior of Eli's sons.

In this context, God spoke to the young boy Samuel. The Lord revealed to Samuel that he was going to destroy Eli and his family. In his first encounter with God, Samuel not only knew God but also received his call to be a prophet.

Not only was Samuel a prophet and the last judge of Israel, but he was also Israel's mediator or intercessor, teacher and scribe. In every team (office) that he belonged to, he honoured God with his choices. His choices were according to what God had commanded.

I. Samuel as a Judge

Unlike the other judges, Samuel taught the people, not by leading them into battle and killing their enemies, but by teaching them God's Words and commands. Every word Samuel spoke God heard and never let any of his words fall to the ground.

Read Aloud

1 Samuel 7:15-17: "Samuel continued as judge over Israel all the days of his life. From year to year, he went on a circuit from Bethel to Gilgal to Mizpah, judging Israel in all those places. But he always went back to Ramah, where his home was, and there he also judged Israel. And he built an altar there to the Lord."

Samuel as a judge was really able to reach the hearts of the people and get them to recognise their sins before the Lord.

II. Samuel as Israel's Intercessor

Samuel asked all the people to get rid of all their idols and worship God. He asked all the Israelites to assemble at Mizpah so he could intercede for them.

When the Philistines heard that the Israelites had assembled at Mizpah, they came to attack them. The Israelites were afraid and requested Samuel not to stop crying out to the Lord for them, so that He may rescue them from the hand of the Philistines. Samuel took a suckling lamb and sacrificed it as a whole burnt offering to the Lord and cried out to the Lord on Israel's behalf. The Lord heard his prayer and answered by sending loud thunder that threw the Philistines into such a panic that they began running away from the Israelites. The Israelites pursued the Philistines and slaughtered them. Throughout Samuel's lifetime, the Philistines did not invade the Israelite territory again because the hand of the Lord was against the Philistines.

In 1 Samuel chapter 12 when Saul was confirmed as King over Israel, Samuel gives a farewell speech to the Israelites; he ends his speech by saying:

Read Aloud

1 Samuel 12:23: “As for me, far be it from me that I should sin against the Lord by failing to pray for you. And I will teach you the way that is good and right.”

Till the very end of his life Samuel, prayed for the Israelites and taught them what is good and right.

III. Samuel as a Prophet

Samuel is remembered more as a prophet than as judge. He listened to and obeyed the voice of God alone, providing a godly example for the nation of Israel to follow.

He qualified more as a prophet than a judge. A true prophet calls men to follow God and to obey Him. Furthermore, a true prophet is one whom God will cause His words to come true.

Let’s look at one instance in the book of 1 Samuel to see if Samuel qualified as a true prophet.

When Samuel was old he appointed his two sons as judge over Israel but they were not like Samuel; they were greedy, taking bribes and perverting justice. So all the Israelites came to Samuel and requested that Samuel appoint for them a king to govern them like all the other nations. Though Samuel and God were unhappy with the request, God chose a king for the Israelites. When Samuel confirmed Saul as king of Israel, he told the king and the people:

Read Aloud

1 Samuel 12:13-15: “Now here is the king you have chosen, the one you asked for; see, the Lord has set a king over you. If you fear the Lord and serve and obey him and do not rebel against his commands, and if both you and the king who reigns over you follow the Lord your God—good! But if you do not obey the Lord, and if you rebel against his commands, his hand will be against you, as it was against your fathers.”

As proof that the people would know what a great sin they had done by asking for a king and the need for them to repent; Samuel declared that he would call on the Lord to send thunder and rain. It was a time of wheat harvest in Palestine and it does not rain during this time. Samuel prayed; the Lord sent thunder and rain; and the people feared the Lord and Samuel.

Samuel wanted to be remembered for his life of integrity and for his call to faithfulness as a prophet of God. Samuel was so confident of having lived an upright and honest life that he was willing to stand before the people and say something as powerful as this in his farewell speech.

Read Aloud

1 Samuel 12:2: “Now you have a king as your leader. As for me, I am old and gray, and my sons are here with you. I have been your leader from my youth until this day. Here I stand. Testify against me in the presence of the Lord and his anointed. Whose ox have I taken? Whose donkey have I taken? Whom have I cheated? Whom have I oppressed? From whose hand have I accepted a bribe to make me shut my eyes? If I have done any of these, I will make it right.”

The people replied that he had not cheated or oppressed any of them.

In his farewell speech Samuel didn’t want to talk about all his accomplishments, he wanted to talk about his life, his behavior, his reputation and his integrity.

That is the greatest legacy we could have—it’s not fame or fortune, but a godly life that directs people to God. Samson’s life on the other hand was one of fame and power. He chose to fulfill his sensual desires rather than obey God and His will. Hence, he was such a disappointment to his parents and his people. His life was really a tragic one. We cannot hold Samson as an example of a godly hero that we should try to be like.



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Note: *All discussion questions must be answered by the children, and NOT by the teacher. The guidelines given here are only meant to assist the teacher during the discussion.*

1. How were Samuel’s choices different from that of Samson?

SAMSON	SAMUEL
Samson disobeyed God by failing to keep his Nazrite vows.	Samuel obeyed God by doing and saying what God asked him to.

Samson lived to satisfy his own selfish desires.	Samuel lived to serve God and His people—the Israelites. By teaching them and reminding them to obey God’s commands and worship Him alone.
Samson was lost in his love for unsuitable women.	Samuel was in love of God. He was constantly teaching and reminding the Israelites of God’s love, faithfulness and all He had done for them.
Samson depended on his strength and power and single handedly defeated the Philistines.	Samuel used prayer and sacrifices to increase his countrymen’s confidence in God.
The Philistines constantly harassed the Israelites in Samson’s days.	God gave the Israelites victory over the Philistines during Samuel’s days.
Samson strength was his body, even when the Spirit of the Lord came upon him.	Samuel strength was as the prophet Zechariah said—not by might nor by power but by God’s Spirit.
Samson choice of marrying and having a relationship with other Philistine women clearly shows his failure to love Israelite women.	Samuel loved and cared for the Israelites. Year after year, he travelled from place to place teaching the people, encouraging them to obey God and worship Him alone.
Samson was more of an earthly-minded leader. Like our politicians in today’s world.	Samuel was a true spiritual leader.
Samson brought dishonor to his God. When he was captured, his enemies said ‘our god has delivered our enemy into our hands.’	Samuel’s life and ministry brought honour to God.
Samson’s life was characterised by lust, disobedience, greed, anger, revenge etc.	We see in the life of Samuel there is no real record of Samuel sinning, though we know from scripture that he wasn’t sinless like Christ, but his life does show us that even when the world around is dedicated to sin, it is possible for us to live a near Christ-like life.

2. Why did Samson make those bad choices?

1. He was pleasure-ridden, self-willed and rebellious:

He wanted to marry a Philistine woman when God had commanded His people not to intermarry with people of other nations. His attitude was, “I see a woman who pleases me and makes me happy.” So he told his parents to get her for him. He acted out of pleasure rather than obeying what God had commanded for his good.

2. Samson chose to give in to his lust instead of listening to the wise counsel of his parents:

Samson's parents advised him to choose an Israelite girl as his wife, but Samson wanted what pleased him rather than doing what was right and following God's plan and will for his life.

3. Samson was self-centered rather than God-centered:

Samson's life was all about what "I want," or "I think," or "I feel," or "I need," or "I desire." It was never about what God wanted or what God commanded him to do. Hence, Samson clearly violated the law of God as a Nazirite.

4. Samson gave in to peer pressure:

His bride pressurised him to give her the answer to the riddle and he gave in to that pressure. Instead of listening to God, he gave in to Delilah's pressure and allowed his hair to be cut. As a result, he lost his strength, his eyesight and he found himself in a Philistine dungeon. Eventually, brought upon himself a sad and painful death.

5. He never obeyed God's command nor did he even once consult God on what to do. He lived life on his own terms and will, rather than according to God's will and plan.

3. Samson's downfall came because he did not choose his companions wisely and gave in to their pressure. Is choosing the right kinds of friends important?

The Bible tells us, "Bad Company corrupts good character." The Bible also instructs us to choose our friends wisely. Sometimes, choosing the wrong friends can lead us into bad situations, as with Samson. Just as wrong friends can influence us to do wrong, friends who love Jesus can encourage us to do what is right. Although these kinds of friends may be hard to find, we can ask God to help us find such friends. In Psalms 1:1 God promises blessings to those who choose their friends wisely.

4. What is peer pressure?

Today, many young people give in to peer pressure when it comes to things like smoking, drinking alcohol, drugs, sexual relations before marriage, using bad language etc. If we ask young people why are you using tobacco? They would

say, “Well, my friends were smoking, so I thought it would be nice to try it.” Or, “My parents did it, or someone in my family did it, or someone told me it would be ‘cool’ if I did it—and now I’m hooked.” Maybe some children use drugs because someone told them that it would make them feel so good or because there was a crowd of people around and they felt pressured to do so—and, like Samson, they gave in to peer pressure. Maybe drinking alcohol is “the cool thing to do” in school. Maybe those who do not drink alcohol aren’t so cool. So, they feel pressured to drink. Perhaps many young children feel pressured to have sexual relations before marriage or feel pressured to curse or use bad language.

Well, here is the good news, and something which you can be sure of. If you have to be “pressured” to do something, it cannot be good for you. If someone has to pressurise you or make you do something, it is very likely that person is causing you to violate what you know is right. Even if you are not sure about something, did you know that doing it is still a sin?

5. What were the consequences of Samson and Samuel’s choices?

Samson lost his blessing—supernatural strength, his eyes, his freedom, his testimony, his anointing—the Spirit of the Lord left him.

His whole life was filled with revenge, rebellion, pride and anger. This led him to die a painful death along with the rest of the Philistines. Samson’s choices brought his own downfall, destruction and glory to the devil.

Samuel was remembered for his life of integrity, godliness, obedience to God’s word and laws and faithfulness to the call of God. His life led the people of Israel to know, love, worship and obey God and His commands. Samuel earned the love and respect of his people. His life was a blessing and brought glory to God.

6. Does God require only a few people like Samson and Samuel to be set apart to serve Him? To find the answer, read Exodus 19:6; Deuteronomy 7:6 and 1 Peter 2:9.

Before God chose Samson and Samuel to be set apart to serve Him, He chose the Israelites to be a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. Israel was a nation that pointed others to the one and only, true and living God. Israel was to be a nation of priests, prophets and missionaries to the world.

Today, we the children of God are called to be a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, people set apart in this world to declare His praises. We are to be His priests, prophets and missionaries.

7. After learning about Samuel, when you think of him you would probably think of him as a prophet—who was obedient, honest and faithful to God all his life. When others think of you, what is the FIRST thought that will cross their mind?

Will they think of you as a person who was:

- Loving
- Caring
- Friendly and honest
- A person who did the right thing even though everyone around you did the wrong thing
- Godly
- Proud
- Selfish
- Angry
- Rude
- Always speaking bad words
- A big bully
- Someone who did not study but was always playing the fool in class and school
- Bunked class
- Copied during the class test or exam
- Always fighting with others



APPLICATION

From Samson's and Samuel's lives we learn that:

- We are responsible for the choices we make.
- All our choices have consequences.
- Every choice that we make will either cause us to be blessed or cursed.
- These consequences will be for our betterment or will work to destroy us.

- When we rebel against God and choose our own way, we are choosing a path of destruction.

The choices that we make are so important. Our choices should be based on what the Word of God says and not upon what we feel or what makes us feel good. Instead of being self-centered and saying, "I want," or "I think," or "I feel," or "I need," we need to ask, "What does God want? What would the Lord have me do? What does the Bible say about this situation?" God's Word tells us what is right and what we ought to do.

Just like God chose the Israelites and Samson and Samuel to be His priests, similarly God chose us to be His prophets, priests and missionaries in this world. Not only does God choose us, but His Word also guides us to live in a way that honours Him.

Are you living a life of faithfulness to God? Are you living a life that gives God glory and honor? Or like Samson, have you made some bad, worldly, lust-driven choices that will cost you your soul if you do not change your ways? Who is leading you in this life? Are ungodly friends and peer pressure leading you to make bad choices? Or like Samuel, are you following the choices that God wants you to follow? Are you chasing after the world and all that it supposedly has to offer? Or are you giving God the glory and honor He deserves by following His will?

How can you make choices that honour God. Watch this video.

Video Presentation

Video: Do You Really Desire God ?!?!? Paul Washer & TVC

Duration: 4 minutes 43 seconds

Say

We see from this video that we will make choices that honour God:

- When we have a passion and desire for God.
- When we continue to grow in hatred for sin and grow in love for righteousness.
- When we want God and desire Him more than anything else in this world.
- When you see God esteemed and above all things and you desire Him above all things.

Would you like to make a decision today to show Jesus you love Him by choosing to honour Him with the choices you make? Do you want others to know that Jesus is a part of your life by choosing to act and live in a way that honours Him every day? If so, let's pray and commit ourselves to God.

Write down areas in your life where you will honour God with the choices you make.



FOLLOW UP

(To be filled up before the next class.)

In your actions and lifestyle this week how were you able to show others that Jesus is a part of your life?



CLOSE WITH PRAYER



Old Testament



King Saul



LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- Partial obedience is sin in God's sight.
- Partial obedience will cause us to lose our joy and blessings that God has for us.
- Children will learn the importance of honouring God and following God's commands in front of their friends.



SCRIPTURE PORTION

1 Samuel chapter 9, 10, 13:1-14, chapter 15 and 28



RECAP

- What did we learn last week?
- Recite the memory verse for last week.



MEMORY VERSE

1 Samuel 15:22: “Does the Lord delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as much as in obeying the voice of the Lord? To obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed is better than the fat of rams.”



ATTENTION GETTER

Object Lesson: Total Obedience

Materials Needed:

- Dirty coins
- Two small bowls
- Salt
- Vinegar
- Cotton swabs
- Copy of these paragraphs to serve as your instructions

Presentation

Begin by telling your children that you need to clean some coins and you have read that you can use vinegar to clean them. Put some coins in the bowl. Dip a cotton swab in vinegar and try to clean the coins. (You might see a slight cleaning effect but nothing significant.)

Pretend that you are disappointed in the results. Then say, “I guess I should have read the instructions more carefully.” Consult your instructions and then say, “Now I understand! I was supposed to mix salt into the vinegar.” Now have your children help you stir 1 tsp. of salt into $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of vinegar. Have them stir until the salt is dissolved. When the salt is completely dissolved, allow your children to put the coins into the mixture. You may need to stir the solution a bit, but the results will be startlingly different—your efforts will produce some clean and shiny coins.

Give each of your children a shiny coin to remind them how brightly their righteousness shines when they obey God.

Ask

(Wait for the children to respond.)

1. What did I do wrong the first time?

I did not follow the exact instructions and directions given.

2. What happened when I followed the exact instructions?

3. Where do we find God's instructions?

Explain

When God gives us instructions He expects us to obey them not partially but completely. If we do it our own way, even if we are close to His instructions, doing what seems right to us without complete obedience, we will fail. (*Connect it to the object lesson you just did*). If we do it EXACTLY His way we will have victory! With God there is no such thing as partial obedience. God expects total obedience from us.



INTRODUCTION

In our lesson last week, we saw how the Israelites sinned against God when they asked for a king. God granted their request by choosing Saul as the first king of Israel. In just two years of reign as king, God was grieved that He made Saul king over Israel.

In our lesson today, we will look at the life of the first king of Israel—Saul. We will see how his partial obedience to God's commands cost him not only to lose his kingship, but also his descendants lost the privilege to be the future kings of Israel.

Before we look at why King Saul lost his kingship we will look at why God chose him as King.



TEACHING CONTENT

I. His Strengths

A. Saul Was an Impressive Young Man

Ask

Read 1 Samuel 9:2 and 1 Samuel 10:24 and tell me what does it say about Saul.

Say

Saul was an impressive young man without equal among the Israelites—a head taller than any of the others. When Samuel introduced Saul as the new King of Israel he said, that there was no one like him among the people.

B. Obedient and Humble

Saul was from a prominent and wealthy family. Saul's father is described as a rich and influential man in 1 Samuel 9:1. Once, some of their donkeys were lost, so his father asked Saul to look for them. Think about that for a moment. Saul's father who was a wealthy man, asked his son to do this very menial task. Yet, Saul was **obedient** and **humble** enough to go looking for the lost donkeys.

Ask

There is another instance where we see Saul's humility. Read 1 Samuel 9:21 and tell me how he was humble.

Say

When Samuel first informed Saul of God's plan to appoint him as king over Israel; he told Samuel that his clan and tribe were the least of those in Israel. In other words, Saul was saying that he was not important enough to be king over Israel. Saul was humble enough to see that he was not fit to be King of Israel.

When Saul was anointed as King of Israel, the children of Belial said, "How shall this man save us?" They despised him and brought him no presents. Saul was silent and held his peace.

Thus, we see that Saul was obedient, humble, diligent and respectful. There was no one like him among all the people. All these were good enough qualities for him to be king.

II. God Changes Saul's Heart Before He Made Him King of Israel

Before he was publicly declared as king, God prepares him for the task ahead by changing his heart and thus changing him into a different person. So he is better qualified to be King of Israel.

Samuel told Saul to go to Gibeah and as he approached the town he would meet a company of prophets who would be prophesying. The Spirit of God would come

upon Saul in power and he was changed into a different person and he prophesied as well (1 Samuel 10:5-6).

Just as Saul turned to leave, God changed Saul's heart.

Not only did God choose and anoint Saul as king, but He also changed his heart and made him into a different person. It was God who chose Saul and equipped him to be King of Israel. Then why was God grieved that He had made Saul king over Israel?

III. His Weaknesses

A. King Saul was Disobedient

1. Partial Obedience Is Doing Things to Please People Rather than Obeying God's Commands

On two occasions King Saul had partially disobeyed the instructions God had given him through the prophet Samuel. His partial disobedience cost Saul to lose His anointing and God rejecting him as king over Israel.

First occasion

Saul and his son Jonathan had gone to fight the Philistines. The soldiers of the Philistines were as numerous as the sand on the seashore. When the army of Israel saw their situation was critical they went and hid themselves in caves and among rocks and pits. King Saul was in Gilgal and the army along with him was quaking with fear. As Samuel had instructed Saul, he waited for Samuel seven days, but when Samuel did not arrive and Saul's men began to scatter, Saul offered up the burnt offerings. When Samuel arrived he rebukes Saul.

Read Aloud

1 Samuel 13:13-14: "'You acted foolishly,' Samuel said. 'You have not kept the command the Lord your God gave you; if you had, he would have established your kingdom over Israel for all time. But now your kingdom will not endure; the Lord has sought out a man after his own heart and appointed him leader of his people, because you have not kept the Lord's command.'"

Explain

King Saul was terrified all the soldiers would leave and they would get massacred. He also thought he'd get the Lord's favor if he completed the ritual of the burnt offering, as if the ritual was more important than obedience.

Saul's disobedience and foolish act, led to God taking his kingdom away from him and giving it to another man. The other man was David whom God calls as "a man after his own heart."

2. Partial Obedience Is Doing What We Desire Rather than What God Commands Us**Second occasion**

God through Samuel, told Saul that He was going to punish the Amalekites for what they did to Israel when they waylaid them as they came up from Egypt. Saul was asked to go and attack the Amalekites and to kill all the people (women and children) and cattle. God commanded him to totally destroy everything.

Saul and his army completely destroyed all the people, but spared Agag their king, and the best of the sheep and cattle, the fat calves and lambs—everything that was good. So we see that he partially obeyed God and yet he also did what he desired and wanted.

His partial obedience grieved God. God told Samuel that He was grieved that He had made Saul king.

3. Partial Obedience Causes Us to Think that Our Actions Are Right

Samuel was troubled and cried out to God all night. The next morning when Samuel goes to meet Saul, he told Samuel that he had carried out the Lord's instructions. Samuel confronted him saying that God had asked him to completely destroy the wicked Amalekites. Then why had he not put to death King Agag and why did he take the plunder and do evil in the eyes of the Lord?

Let's read King Saul's reply in 1 Samuel 15:20.

Read Aloud

1 Samuel 15:20: “But I did obey the Lord,’ Saul said, ‘I went on the mission the Lord assigned me. I completely destroyed the Amalekites and brought back Agag their king. The soldiers took sheep and cattle from the plunder, the best of what was devoted to God in order to sacrifice them to the Lord your God at Gilgal.”

First, Saul doesn’t even see what he did as wrong. He said he completely destroyed the Amalekites.

Second, he shifts the blame onto the soldiers. As in the former case, so in this instance as well, Saul attempts to justify his actions. Then he reaffirms that he totally destroyed the rest. How could he have “totally destroyed” some, but not all? He is admitting that he didn’t completely carry out the task, while at the same time saying he did carry it out.

Third, Saul again says he did obey the Lord and refuses to repent. He is still not willing to admit that he had done anything wrong.

Partial obedience gives us the feeling that we are obedient so that is why it is more dangerous than total disobedience. Through the life of Saul we see that God is clear that He does not want half-hearted obedience.

4. Partial Obedience Results in Losing Our Blessing and Privilege

Samuel replied:

Read Aloud

1 Samuel 15:20, 28: “Does the Lord delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as much as in obeying the voice of the LORD? To obey is better than sacrifice ... You have rejected the word of the Lord, and the Lord has rejected you as king over Israel! Samuel said to him, ‘The LORD has torn the kingdom of Israel from you today and has given it to one of your neighbors—to one better than you.’”

Saul’s partial obedience caused God to reject him as king and give the kingship to someone better than him—David.

5. Partial Obedience Causes Us to Give Excuses for Our Behaviour

Saul was not repentant right away because he immediately began to blame the people instead of seeing the wrong he did. Kingship is just like dictatorship where

whatever the king says happens. The people would have never acted without the King's approval. So we see Saul was just making excuses for his disobedience.

Then Saul said to Samuel, "I have sinned. I violated the LORD's command and your instructions. I was afraid of the people and so I gave in to them" (1 Samuel 15:24).

B. King Saul Was Filled with Pride

When God told Samuel that He was grieved that He made Saul king; Samuel goes to meet Saul. Samuel was told that Saul had gone to Carmel to set up a monument in his honour.

Instead of worshiping and thanking God by offering sacrifices to God for the victory He gave him, Saul goes to set up a monument in his honour. "Self-made monuments" are an indication of our pride.

After Samuel convicts Saul of his sin he leaves. Saul told Samuel:

"I have sinned. But please honor me before the elders of my people and before Israel; come back with me, so that I may worship the LORD your God."

Saul was more interested in being honoured and respected before the people rather than honouring God and truly repenting for what he had done.

C. King Saul's Life Was Filled with Envy, Jealousy, Hatred, Anger and Murderous Intentions.

We read in 1 Samuel 16:14 that, not only had God rejected Saul as king over Israel but the Spirit of the Lord left Saul and an evil spirit from the Lord tormented him. From this time on we see a different Saul. We see a Saul who was envious, jealous, filled with hatred, anger and murderous intentions.

Saul became envious of David's successes. When David returned after he slaughtered Goliath, the women came out of all the cities of Israel, singing and dancing, to meet King Saul. They sang "Saul has slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands" (1 Samuel 18:6-7). Upon hearing this, Saul was very angry and from that time on Saul was jealous of David.

Saul's jealousy at the sight of David's military success and popularity with the people, resulted in Saul trying to murder David. His jealousy drove him to madness and a thirst for revenge and murder.

Instead of building Israel, King Saul wasted most of his time chasing David to kill him. In just two chapters (1 Samuel 18 and 19), Saul tries to kill David at least 12 times.

In chapter 20, Saul not only continues to try to put David to death, he throws his spear at his own son Jonathan for defending David (1 Samuel 20:33). In chapter 22, Saul kills Ahimelech the priest as well as 85 other priests. He also put to death Nob, the town of priests, killing all women, children and animals in that town.

If Saul had worked as hard at killing Israel's enemies (like the Philistines) as he did to his faithful servants (like David and Ahimelech), he would have been a great military leader and king. In his twisted state of mind, Saul's best allies were considered his enemies, and his enemies become his allies (in putting David to death). Saul becomes a very suspicious and fearful man. He fears his most faithful servant, David, who will not put his king to death even when he had two perfect opportunities to do so. David respected God's anointed king and so refuses to harm Saul.

D. King Saul Consults the Spirit of Samuel

On one occasion, the Philistines planned a major invasion of Israel. Saul was very worried. Saul wanted advice and help from the Lord, but the Lord did not answer him through dreams or through prophets. Deeply distressed, Saul asked his attendants to find him a spirit medium— absolutely against the Lord's law.

Saul disguised himself and set out for the town of Endor, where the medium lived. He told the medium to bring up Prophet Samuel, who was long dead. The spirit of Samuel told Saul that since he had disobeyed God, the Lord had rejected Saul as king. Saul and his sons would die in the coming battle, and David would become king.

It happened just as the spirit of Samuel had said, all of Saul's sons died in the battle and Saul committed suicide by falling on his own sword.

Saul partially obeyed as fitted his needs and desires. He did what he thought was best and pleasing rather than what God commanded Him to do. Saul wanted to please people and be honoured in their sight rather than honouring and obeying God.

Samuel described Saul's sin as disobedience, rebellion and arrogance against God. God wanted a king who would honour, love, serve, worship and obey Him with all his

heart. A king who would follow Him truly, consistently and be a godly example to the rest of the nation.



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Note: *All discussion questions must be answered by the children, and NOT by the teacher. The guidelines given here are only meant to assist the teacher during the discussion.*

We read in 1 Samuel 13:7-13 King Saul offered a sacrifice to the Lord because Samuel, the anointed priest of Israel was delayed in meeting Saul. Why did God punish Saul for this?

Offering sacrifices to God was strictly the work of the priests. It was unlawful for a king to offer sacrifice. Saul thought he had done a good thing, but in the sight of the Lord it was a sin. Saul thought it was good because the kings of the other nations considered themselves as divine and so they thought they could do anything.

Kingship in Israel was supposed to be different from kingship in the surrounding nations. Israel's king was not to be considered divine. Only God was their King. In the law of Moses, God carefully distinguished the priesthood from the kingship.

In this situation we would think what Saul did was probably did the right thing. Or maybe Saul did not know it was sin to make a sacrifice to God. Do you think God's punishment was very severe? To find the answer read Deuteronomy 17:14-20, 1 Samuel 10:8 and 1 Samuel 10:24-25.

In Deuteronomy 17:18-20, we read that when the king ascends to his throne, he is to write a copy of the law for himself—he is to do this in the presence of the Levitical priests. The king has great authority, but when it comes to the law, he is not only subject to it, but he is also to listen to the Levitical priests as to its meaning.

The Old Testament Book of the Law is the king's textbook, and the Levitical priests are his teachers or tutors. This Law is to be his constant guide, the basis for his

rule. He is to read and re-read it all the days of his life. This not only gives the king the wisdom to rule, and the principles on which his kingdom is established (the constitution of the kingdom), but it also keeps the king from becoming puffed up with pride and elevating himself above others (verse 20). This constant reading of the Law is to keep the king from disobeying the Law, even in some small way. Devotion to the Law will prolong the king's days, for both him and his descendants (verse 20).

Saul did not heed this instruction to kings set down in Deuteronomy and which was also reiterated and clarified by Samuel. In the passage we read in 1 Samuel 10:24-25, we see that when Saul was anointed as king, Samuel told the people the ordinances of the kingdom, and wrote them in the book and placed it before the Lord.

In addition to these general instructions to Saul as Israel's king, there are the very specific instructions that Samuel gives in 1 Samuel 10:8. After all this Saul has no excuse; his sacrifice is a willful act of disobedience, for which he loses his kingdom.

When Saul disobeys God the second time he finally admits his sin and asks for forgiveness. Why wasn't that good enough?

Look up the following verses from the incident in 1 Samuel 15 which will help you decide why his forgiveness wasn't good enough.

1 Samuel 15:13

Saul greets the prophet with a blessing and a lie he says, "The Lord bless you! I have carried out the Lord's instructions." He tried to cover evil with good.

1 Samuel 15:15

When confronted for the first time, Saul blames his soldiers and tries to make his disobedience appear religious. Saul expected God to be like man, content with "almost" obedience and with being "bribed" with plunder. After all, Saul "almost" did everything the Lord asked of Him. For God, partial obedience is disobedience.

1 Samuel 15:20-21

When confronted for the second time, Saul lies again, mixing his lies with the truth. "But I did obey the Lord. I went on the mission the Lord assigned me. I completely destroyed the Amalekites and brought back Agag their king." Saul continues to

refuse to repent and acknowledge his guilt. His own words condemn him, as he mixes a lie “completely destroyed the Amalekites” with a true statement “brought back Agag their king.”

1 Samuel 15:24

Even when admitting his guilt, Saul continues to blame others. He says he violated God’s command and Samuel’s instructions because he was afraid of the people and so he gave in to them.

A truly repentant heart will take the blame and not blame others for their sin.

1 Samuel 15:30

Even after being told exactly what his sin was, Saul makes no attempt to correct it. He could have immediately killed Agag, king of the Amalekites and all the animals. He cared more about his honour and image before the people. He asks Samuel to honor him before the elders and the people of Israel by coming along with him to worship the Lord. He went to do the religious sacrifices with Samuel (completely disregarding the prophet’s rebuke about how obedience is better than sacrifice). Samuel has to step in on Saul’s behalf and do the Lord’s work for him; Samuel put Agag to death.

What were the reasons that led to Saul’s disobedience?

Read 1 Samuel 15:11

He turned away from the Lord:

He trusted in His own wisdom, understanding, circumstances and in people. He never read the rule book of the Kings which contained the commands that God had given for the kings of Israel. He disobeyed the words and commands of God and the prophet Samuel.

Read 1 Samuel 15:17

His heart which God transformed was filled with pride:

Though Saul felt so small in his own eyes to be king of Israel, yet the Lord anointed him king over Israel. But now his pride became his downfall and because of his pride he was not able to see his sin and weaknesses.

Read 1 Samuel 15:24

He was afraid of the people:

Saul feared the people and so he gave into them. The people were leading him instead of him leading the people. He was a people pleaser rather than a God pleaser.

What are the consequences of Saul's and our partial disobedience to God? To find this answer read Deuteronomy 30:16-18 and watch this video.

Video Presentation

Video: OBEDIENCE short movie

In this video, we watched how obedience would have saved the life of the baby. If Saul had obeyed, his obedience would have saved him and his sons, the throne and their life. God had warned the Israelites that if they obeyed all the laws then they would see increase and blessing in their lives; if not they would be destroyed and not live long.



APPLICATION

In the first stage of King Saul's life, we see he lived an obedient and humble life. Hence, he had wealth, power, fame, family and above all, he had God's anointing.

The second stage of his life was filled with disobedience and pride. He was given ample time to learn his lesson and repent, but instead he chose rebellion, and chose to please people and be honoured in front of them, rather than honour and obey God. This led to him losing his anointing and the Spirit of the Lord left him. He lost his joy, and experienced void and emptiness. His life was filled with envy, jealousy, hatred, anger and murderous intentions. In time, it cost him his sanity and his life, and cost his sons the throne.

Often, we too are like Saul, wanting to be accepted, recognised by our friends and people around us. So we act in ways that please them and is cool. Most often the words, actions and lifestyle that are cool and accepted by our friends are not what is acceptable in God's sight and is not what honours him. *(Give a few examples to illustrate this point).*

We often find ourselves following the ways of the world and the wrong actions of our friends rather than choosing to honour God.

It is sometimes difficult to fulfill the things of God, but we have to. If not, we are practicing self-serving, selective obedience. We cannot pick and choose the areas in which we will and will not obey God. God asks for full obedience from each one of us in every area of our lives. Partial obedience or disobedience will cause us to lose our joy, peace and the blessing He has in store for us.

- Do you act and make your decisions based on what the Bible says or prayer?
- Are you living in total obedience or partial obedience to God's Word and way?
- Like King Saul are you only obeying God according to what fits your needs and desires?
- Are you doing what seems best and pleasing to you rather than what God commands you to do?
- When you're with your friends and other people are your actions and lifestyle according to what pleases them or what honours God and what He has commanded you to do?
- Do you let peer pressure guide your moral standards?
- Do you justify your actions with pride when confronted with the truth and your sin?

Today, do you want to commit yourself to obey God in every area of your life? Do you want to make a decision to honour God and keep His commands and laws rather than pleasing your friends and people around you?

Write down areas where you will live in total obedience to God.

Write down areas where you will honour God and keep His commands and laws rather than pleasing your friends and people around you?



CLOSE WITH PRAYER



Old Testament



King Solomon



LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- Children will learn to put God first in their lives.
- Children will learn to give priority, importance and preference to God rather than to their selfish desires.
- Children will learn not to allow anything to take the place of God in their lives.



SCRIPTURE PORTION

1 Kings 3:15; 3:29-34; 10:14-29; 11:1-13



RECAP

- What did we learn last week?
- Recite the memory verse for last week.



MEMORY VERSE

Proverbs 3:5-7: "Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge him and he will make your paths straight. Do not be wise in your own eyes; fear the Lord and shun evil."

Materials Required:

- On a chart paper write 'GOD' in the center—write it big across the chart paper.
- Take a few A4 sheets and cut them into good sizeable squares. Make sure that each child receives at least 5 squares.
- A photo frame with the picture of a friend.
- Assorted pictures of a TV, computer/laptop, mobile, ipod, football star, cricket bat, latest sports/movie stars, all stuck separately on pieces of hard cardboard, so that they can stand vertical.
- Pile of books
- A photo of Jesus or a Bible

Note to the Facilitator

You can ask the children to read the scripture portions given under the heading Read Aloud.



ATTENTION GETTER

Material

On a chart paper write GOD in the center—write it big across the chart paper. Take a few A4 sheets and cut them into good sizeable squares. Make sure that each child receives at least 5 squares.

Preparation

Give each child five square pieces of paper. On each piece ask them to draw/write things that they love dearly, spend lots of time on, or consider really important to them. Children will probably draw or mention sports, money, heroes, electronics, pop singers, clothes, etc.

Let them hold on to the five pieces.



INTRODUCTION

In our lesson last week, we saw that God granted the request of Israelites by choosing Saul as their king. In just two years of his reign as king, God was grieved that He made Saul king over Israel. Not only was God grieved over Saul's life but most of the kings of Israel failed to obey God and His commands. They sinned against God by worshipping idols and leading the people to worship other gods.

In our lesson today, we'll look at the life of one such King of Israel—Solomon. After the death of King Saul, David was king for forty years. After he died, his son Solomon inherited a powerful empire.

Ask

(Wait for the children to respond.)

What was King Solomon known for?

Wisdom, wives and riches.

Like in Saul's case did God also reject Solomon as King?

Yes! As we take a look at his life you'll know why God rejected him as king.

Was Solomon fit to be a King? Let's see what were his strengths.



TEACHING CONTENT

I. Strengths

A. Solomon Loved God

Read 1 King 3:3 to find out how Solomon showed his love for the Lord.

Read Aloud

1 King 3:3 "Solomon showed his love for the Lord by walking according to the statutes of his father David ..."

Explain

Solomon showed his **love for God** by obeying the laws his father David had commanded him. He also went to Gibeon where the Tabernacle was and offered a thousand burnt offerings on that altar.

At Gibeon, God appeared to him in a dream. (*Ask the children to quietly read for themselves 1 Samuel 3:5-15. After they finish, ask them the questions given below and wait for them to answer.*)

B. Solomon Desired to Govern God's People with Wisdom

Ask

What did God ask Solomon?

God asked Solomon to ask Him for whatever he wished

What did Solomon ask God for?

Wisdom

Why did Solomon ask God for wisdom?

So he could govern God's people with wisdom and distinguish right from wrong

How did God answer Solomon's request?

He gave Solomon both what he had asked for—wisdom and a discerning heart, and what did not ask for—both riches and honour.

What promise did God make to Solomon?

Long life.

What was the condition?

That Solomon would walk in God's ways and obey His commands as his father David did.

C. Solomon Was Obedient

David wanted to build a temple for God where the Ark of the Covenant could be placed. He already began preparations for the building, but God had told David that He did not want him, but his son to build the temple. Before his death, David gave Solomon instructions to build the temple. Solomon builds the temple just as his father had instructed him.

Solomon oversaw the construction of the temple to the very end. He spared no expense in building the temple. He used the very best wood imported from another

country and gave the very best of what he had from the palace treasury to build the temple. He used an immense amount of gold and so much bronze that it was too much to reasonably weigh.

At the inauguration of the temple, he sacrificed 22,000 oxen and 120,000 sheep. That is a lot of animals! He asked the priests to bring the Ark of the Covenant and they placed it in the Most Holy Place in the temple.

D. Solomon Was Prayerful

At the dedication of the temple, Solomon prays. He set a good example for Israel in prayer to God.

In His prayer:

- He showed great respect and praise for God (v 23, 27).
- He claimed the promises of God (v 25-26).
- He showed humility (v 27-28).
- He brought a number of petitions before the Lord for the sake of the whole country (31-54).

Notice that these are focused on others, not mostly on him. They are also focused on spiritual issues of sin and forgiveness and restoration and deliverance. His prayer also had some requests for needs such as famine and pestilence.

E. Solomon Shared His Wisdom with Others

Solomon took the time to write out the book of Proverbs, some of which he learned from his father and he wrote them for his sons, Proverbs 4:1-4. He was concerned for his sons' future and wanted them to listen to and follow wise instruction. Much of this instruction was rightly focused on God and how to be righteous in God's eyes.

We see that Solomon loved God, desired wisdom to rule God's people and wisdom to discern between right and wrong. He obeyed his father's instructions by building the temple. He used the best material to build the temple and asked the priests to place the Ark of the Covenant in the temple. God was so pleased with Solomon that he blessed him with riches and honour. God also kept reminding Solomon to obey His commandments and laws.

In spite of all this, let's see why God punished Solomon by dividing the Kingdom of Israel and giving it to one lower than him.

II. Weaknesses

When Solomon had finished building the temple of the Lord and the royal palace, and had achieved all he had desired to do, the Lord appeared to him a second time, as He had appeared to him at Gibeon.

Read for yourselves 1 Kings 9:3-9 to see what God told Solomon.

God asked Solomon to do all He had commanded and obey and keep all His decrees and laws. Then Solomon's sons would rule over Israel forever. But if Solomon or his sons turned away from Him and did not observe the commands and decrees He had given them and served other gods and worshipped them, then God would cut off Israel from the land He had given them and would reject the temple He had consecrated for His Name. Israel would be ridiculed among all the people. The people would know that God had brought disaster on the Israelites because they had forsaken the Lord their God, who brought their fathers out of Egypt, and had embraced other gods, worshiping and serving them.

Say

Even though God reminded Solomon to obey all the commandments, yet Solomon broke the commands that God laid down for the kings. Read for yourself Deuteronomy 17:16-19 and list out the commands God gave the kings to follow.

Ask

In the passage you read, what are the commands God gave the kings to follow?

Say

- The king must not acquire a great number of horses for himself or make the people return to Egypt to get more of them.
- He must not take many wives or his heart would be led astray.
- He must not accumulate large amounts of silver and gold.
- When he takes the throne of his kingdom, he is to write for himself on a scroll a copy of this law, taken from that of the priests, who are Levites. It is to be with

him, and he is to read it all the days of his life so that he may learn to revere the Lord his God and carefully follow all the words of this law and these decrees.

Let's see how Solomon fails to obey them and the consequences of his disobedience.

A. Solomon Acquired a Great Number of Horses

Three times in the account of Solomon's life we are told that he had acquired a large number of horses and chariots (1 Kings 4:26; 9:19; 10:26, 28-29). We read in 1 Kings 10:28 that Solomon imported his horses from Egypt. He had cities built to keep his horses and store his chariots.

B. Solomon Married Many Pagan Women and Worshipped Idols

(Ask the children to quietly read for themselves 1 Kings 11:1-8.)

How many wives did Solomon have?

He had 700 wives and 300 concubines.

What kind of women did he marry?

They were from nations about which the Lord had told the Israelites, they must not marry.

Why did King Solomon have so many wives?

He had a weakness for women.

He did it to make friends with the other nations around him; they were political marriages to strengthen his foreign alliances.

Why did God ask the Israelites not to marry women from other nations?

God knew that they would turn the hearts of the Israelites to worship their gods. Just as God had said, Solomon's wives turned his heart towards other gods and his heart was not fully devoted to God. He began worshipping idols and built high places for all the gods that his wives worshipped so they could offer sacrifices to them.

Solomon did not have to marry foreign women to make friends with the nations around him. In 1 Kings 5:4 Solomon says that God had given him rest on every side, and he faced no adversary or disaster. He could have trusted God to grant him peace with other nations as well. Instead, he trusted in his own wisdom and understanding.

C. Solomon Desired to Grow in Worldly Wisdom Rather than in the Wisdom of God.

1 Kings 4:29-34 says God gave Solomon wisdom and very great insight, and a breadth of understanding as measureless as the sand on the seashore. Solomon's wisdom was greater than the wisdom of all the men of the East, and greater than all the wisdom of Egypt. He spoke three thousand proverbs and his songs numbered a thousand and five. He described plant life, from the cedars of Lebanon to the hyssop that grows out of walls. He also taught about animals and birds, reptiles and fish. Men of all nations came to listen to Solomon's wisdom, sent by all the kings of the world, who had heard of his wisdom.

Solomon did good in devoting his time to pursuing the knowledge of God's creation. It probably made him discover how awesome his Creator was, and helped him worship God even better.

Why did someone so wise write in the book of Ecclesiastes— "Meaningless! Meaningless!" says the Teacher. "Utterly meaningless! Everything is meaningless."

We do not see Solomon's wisdom focused on the revealed Word of God—the Law of Moses. Solomon doesn't seem to have spent as much time reading God's law as he spent it on other matters.

When he began to backslide he forgot the "beginning of wisdom."

According to the Bible, worldly wisdom is a wisdom which spurns the things of God. It could be wisdom that denies God's existence or mocks His value system or which chooses to accomplish much in life without God's help and without acknowledging/bowing to Him.

- Eg. Jeremiah 8:7-9: "Even the stork in the sky knows her appointed seasons; and the dove, the swift and the thrush observe the time of their migration. But my people do not know the requirements of the LORD. How can you say, 'We are wise, for we have the law of the LORD,' when actually the lying pen of the scribes has handled it falsely. The wise will be put to shame; they will be dismayed and trapped. Since they have rejected the word of the LORD, what kind of wisdom do they have?"
- Eg. Romans 1:21-23: "For even though they knew God, they neither glorified Him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish

hearts were darkened. Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools ...”

It’s okay to pursue the knowledge of computer software, science, engineering, etc. Like Solomon, if we don’t spend time reading God’s Word, and if His Word and commandments have no place of importance in our lives; if we don’t obey and walk in God’s ways and we don’t acknowledge the help and place of God in our lives then all the knowledge and degrees that we earn will bring no joy, meaning and purpose in our lives.

D. Solomon Exploited the Israelites

Solomon did not ask for wisdom to show off his profound knowledge of creation’s deepest mysteries. He wanted wisdom for just one thing—to govern God’s people well, to be a good shepherd (1 Kings 3:8-12). When God saw his loving shepherd heart, He was so impressed that He gave him wisdom beyond the mere ability to govern well. He gave him wisdom ranging over myriad topics.

A man like this, who longed for nothing but to serve God’s people, got greedy when wealth increased. 1 King 12:4 describes the harsh labour and the heavy taxes that he had imposed on the people. The shepherd became a greedy, blind predator.

E. Solomon had Accumulated Great Amount of Wealth

Read 1 Kings 10:14-22 to see the wealth that King Solomon had accumulated. (*Let the children read the passage*).

King Solomon had not only accumulated so much wealth, but those who came to visit Solomon to marvel at his wisdom came with gifts, which further enhanced his wealth (10:23-25).

Why did God specifically tell the kings of Israel not to acquire great number of horses, have many wives and accumulate great amount of wealth?

Explain

God wanted Israel’s kings and the people to depend on His strength and His help to fight their battles.

He wanted them to love him more than anyone or anything.

He wanted them to trust in His providence than in the riches of the world.

God did not want any person, object, task, duty or pleasure to come before Him in our priorities, in our plans and in our affection. God knew that the acquiring and accumulation of these things would lead the kings to desire more power, fame and riches. This would lead to pride and loving and depending on those things rather than depending on God. These things would eventually become an 'idol' or 'god' in their lives; which would take the place of God. These very things slowly turned Solomon's heart away from God.

Do we worship idols like Solomon worshipped other "gods" or "idols"? (*Let the children respond*).

Yes. Sometimes, we worship other "gods" and idols. Let me show you how.

(Let the children share the pictures they drew, with the rest of the group. After they finish sharing, place the chart paper with "God" written on it, on the table.

As you talk about each picture, lay it on top of the "God" wording on the chart, until the word is completely covered. Point out to children that sometimes we become so focused on these other things, giving greater importance to them, that it becomes easy to forget God. These things take the place of God and become idols in our lives.

You could practically illustrate the point you're trying to make. You could place different objects one behind the other, in a single straight line—including the framed photo of a friend, pictures of the TV, computer/laptop, mobile, iPod, football or cricket bat, latest sports/movie stars, etc. Finally, behind all of these, place a photo of Jesus or the Bible.

Have the children stand in front of these pictures; lead them through the images one by one. Finally, you can demonstrate how Jesus could get hidden behind other things if we give them first place in our lives.)

Ask

What are some of the things that the world, and even believers, love more than Jesus?

Friends, food, pleasure, possessions, internet, facebook, money, power, prestige, popularity, fame, our bodies, comfort, freedom, fashion, beauty, games, sports, movie stars, music, TV, movies, and even studies and homework.

When do these things become 'gods' or 'idols'?

When they occupy a place of priority, preference and importance in our lives.

No one sets out with the intention of making these things 'gods' or worshipping them. We "worship" other gods when we:

- Love and value someone or something too much.
- Devote or sacrifice our time, health, energy to them (e.g., studies, TV, video games, listening to music, mobile phones).
- Find fulfillment and identity in them (e.g., clothes, exam marks, our school, etc).

When we give someone or something more priority, importance or preference, the devil causes us to love and desire these things other than God. The devil loves to be worshiped as God and he loves and desires to take God's place in our lives. It was for this very reason that he was thrown out of heaven.

The devil slowly leads us into desiring other things. Once we start valuing them too much, giving them greater priority than God, they turn into another 'god' in our lives. We become their slaves, and they ultimately control our time, thoughts and energies (*reiterate the example of King Solomon*). These others "gods" become stumbling blocks in our lives, preventing us from loving the One True God with all our hearts.

When these things take the place of God, we end up giving place to the devil in our lives. In a way, we become worshippers of the devil and his dark nature fills us. The end result is punishment, pain, separation from God, and death. Letting God hold the central place in our lives keeps other things from turning into 'gods'.

What was Solomon's punishment?

Read Aloud

1 Kings 11:9-13: "The Lord became angry with Solomon because his heart had turned away from the Lord, the God of Israel, who had appeared to him twice. Although he had forbidden Solomon to follow other gods, Solomon did not keep the Lord's command. So the Lord said to Solomon, 'Since this is your attitude and you have not kept my covenant and my decrees, which I commanded you, I will most certainly tear the kingdom away from you and give it to one of your subordinates.'"

Say

God said he would divide His Kingdom and give it to his subordinate. However, for David's sake, God said He would not do it during Solomon's lifetime. Instead, He said He would tear it out of the hand of Solomon's son.

God did bring about certain consequences during Solomon's lifetime. God raised up enemies against Solomon. When Solomon was obedient, he and the Israelites were living in peace and safety. When Solomon's heart turned away from God, it became a punishment instead of God's blessing.

**DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

Note: *All discussion questions must be answered by the children, and NOT by the teacher. The guidelines given here are only meant to assist the teacher during the discussion.*

Make a list of things in your life, or that you notice in other people's lives, that often become 'gods'.

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Did you think of putting 'ourselves' as one of the things we worship? It probably ranks as the number one 'god' we place before the One who is God in Truth! Other things may be our possessions, social status, jobs, cars, money, hobbies, homes, friends, family, self reliance, philosophy, education, intellect, food, pleasures, etc.

How do we make gods of these relationships or things in our lives?

When they take priority, preference and importance in our lives.

Also when we:

- Love and value someone or something too much.
- Devote or sacrifice our time, health, energy to them.
- Find fulfillment and identity in them.

Why do we make gods of these things?

We all have in us a desire to love, value, worship, find fulfillment and identity in someone or something. There is a compulsion in all of us to worship ... whether it be a thing, another person or even ourselves. We choose to give our love, devotion and our lives to the object of our worship. It can be the true and living God or things which becomes 'gods'.

Why is it harmful to worship these things in place of God?

The devil causes us to love and desire things more than God. We become their slaves, and they ultimately control our time, thoughts and energies. These others "gods" become stumbling blocks in our lives, preventing us from loving the One True God with all our hearts.

When these things take the place of God, we end up giving place to the devil in our lives. In a way, we become worshippers of the devil and his dark nature fills us.

The end result is punishment, pain, emptiness, separation from God, and death.

Will the things of this world give us life, meaning and purpose? Watch this video.

Video Presentation

Video: Void

Duration: 5 minutes and 4 seconds.

We saw in this video that money, our mobile phones, the games we play, our achievements, our gadgets, exercise that we do to keep our body and heart fit, our love relationships, favourite pastime – entertainment, alcohol, weapons we have for our safety, gold or our close relationships cannot revive our hearts or give us life. It's only God in our hearts and His Word that will give us life, meaning and purpose in our lives.

According to Jesus, which is the first and most important commandment? To find the answer read Mark 12:29-30.

The Lord our God is one; and love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, all your mind, and all your strength.

What would it mean to love the things of the world? To find the answer read 1 John 2:15-16.

If we love the things of the world (other gods) it means that we don't love God, and His love is not in us. Loving and desiring the things of the world is not from God but from the devil.

What would it mean if we were to choose friendship with the things of this world? To find the answer read James 4:4.

Friendship with the world (other gods) is hatred and enmity towards God.

Why can't we love both the things of the world and God at the same time? To find the answer read Matthew 6:24?

Jesus said we cannot serve two masters (God and money), because if we love one, we'll hate the other. If we're devoted to one, we'd despise the other. So we can't please both God and the world at the same time.

How do we keep God first in our lives?

Reading God's Word – God had commanded the kings of Israel to write for themselves on a scroll, a copy of the law. It was to be with him, and **he was to read it all the days of his life**, so he may learn to revere the LORD his God and carefully follow all the words of this law and these decrees. In the same way, the Bible helps us know what is right and wrong. The Bible helps us live a life pleasing to God and keeps us in the path beneficial to us. We are to read it all the days of our life and carefully follow and obey it.

Prayer – we cannot love God with all our being if we do not speak with Him.

Commit – to give God our time, talents, the things we have, our emotions, will, desires, thoughts and intellect.

This means in everything we do, say, think, watch and choose; we ask God to help us do what He would want us to.

Allow God's presence to become second nature in your everyday activities, by putting God first.



APPLICATION

King Solomon's sins speak loudly to us in our materialistic culture. When we worship possessions and fame over God, we are headed for a fall. When Christians marry an unbeliever, they can also expect trouble. God is our first love. We should let nothing come before him.

As long as Solomon obeyed and honoured God, we see him blessed and very prosperous. The moment he chose to let the things that God blessed him with and his desires take God's place in his life, we see God punishing him.

Based on what we have learnt today, it's very clear that we cannot please both God and the things of the world at the same time. God wants us to love Him with all our heart, soul, mind and strength. This does not mean that He does not want us to enjoy with our friends, listen to music, watch TV, read books, study, excel in sports and other activities etc. All He wants is for us to keep Him at the center of our lives. This means we involve Him in everything we do.

You can begin by committing your day, time and talents to God. Ask God to help, guide and give you the wisdom to choose, do, say, read, watch things that would honor Him. If you do this, God will help you balance it all. He'll surely help you get everything done that needs to be done that day.

Secondly, throughout the day, keep talking to God:

Eg. When choosing friends, ask God to help you choose right.

When you sit down to study, ask God to help you understand and remember what you're studying.

If you love reading, ask God to help you choose a book that would increase your knowledge.

If you are going shopping, ask God to give you the wisdom to choose the best item according to your budget.

This way, you can involve God in your life, and show Him that he is the most important thing to you.

Are there things in your life that have become gods or idols that have taken the place of God in your life? If so write them down. (Talents, TV, music, story books, sports, friends, video games, internet, facebook, mobile, studies etc.)

Would you like to make a commitment to love God and keep Him first in your life? If so, let's pray.

Lead the children in a prayer of commitment.

This week keep God at the center of your life by involving Him in everything you think, say and do.



CLOSE WITH PRAYER



Old Testament



The Period of Exile and Restoration of Israelites



LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Children will learn the meaning of living a godly life.

Children will learn how to live a godly life.



RECAP

- What did we learn last week?
- Recite the Memory Verse for last week.



MEMORY VERSE

1 Timothy 4:8 : "For physical training is of some value, but godliness has value for all things, holding promise for both the present life and the life to come."

Materials Required:

Laptop

Note to the Facilitator

Ask the children to read the scripture portions given under the heading 'Read aloud.'

After every sub point let the children answer the question given in their workbook and then continue with the lesson.



ATTENTION GETTER

Video Presentation

Video: Magnets and Godliness



INTRODUCTION

Ask

What is Godliness or what is a godly life? (*Wait for the children to answer*).

Say

- ❖ Godliness is a commitment, reverence and devotion to God.
- ❖ God has a plan for our lives and if we follow God's plan then everything works in the way it is supposed to. A godly life is one which is devoted to and willing to do things God's way. If we want to live a godly life we need to obey God and do what He wants us to do rather than what we want.
- ❖ We can do this only when we get rid of self and align ourselves to God's plan.

Let's look at a few examples of those kind of people that the video refers to as weak, good and strong magnets. This will help us understand what godliness or living a godly life means.



TEACHING CONTENT

Weak Magnets—Ungodly People Who Lived According to their Choices and not According to God's Choice.

First Example: Rehoboam and Jeroboam

Say

Last week we looked at the life of King Solomon.

Ask

What was the punishment God gave Solomon? (*Wait for the children to answer*).

Say

God told him that He will tear the kingdom away from Solomon and give it to one of his servants.

Let's watch this video to see what transpired after Solomon's death.

Video Presentation

Video: Rehoboam

Duration: 4 minutes 42 seconds

Say

After Solomon's death, his son Rehoboam became king. Instead of listening to the godly advice of lightening the heavy tax burden and labour load which Solomon had forced on the people, Rehoboam decided to listen to the younger officers and increase the taxes. So ten tribes revolted and chose their military leader Jeroboam as King. These ten tribes settled to the north of Israel. The two southern tribes of Judah and Benjamin choose Rehoboam as their King. As God had said Israel was divided into the northern kingdom called "Israel" with Samaria as the capital and Southern Kingdom called "Judah" with Jerusalem as the capital.

Jeroboam did not want Israel to go to Jerusalem to worship and offer sacrifice to God in the temple. He thought if the people went to Jerusalem they may commit themselves to Rehoboam and may decide to kill him. So he did an ungodly thing—he instituted the worship of two golden calves and told the people that these were the gods that brought them out of Egypt. He built shrines for the two golden calves and appointed priests and instituted festivals for these idols.

Discussion Question

(Let the children discuss the answers to the questions below and you can summarize the answer given below. Then let them write down the answer in their workbooks.)

Were Rehoboam and Jeroboam examples of godliness and were they godly leaders? (*Wait for the children to answer*).

Say

A godly life is one which is devoted to and willing to do things God's way and not what we want. Rehoboam did not inquire what God wanted him to do and did not follow the godly advice of the older officers.

A godly life as we saw in the first video is one where we rid ourselves of self and align ourselves to God's plan. Jeroboam was so worried that he would lose his kingship if the people went to worship in Jerusalem that he made idols and told the people that the idols were the gods that brought them out of Egypt. He forgot that it was God who chose him and made him King of Israel. If he had worshipped, obeyed and trusted God, God would surely have sustained him as King. Instead he chose to depend on his own wisdom than to trust in God.

Second Example: Kings who Ruled the Northern and Southern Kingdom

There were nineteen kings who ruled the northern kingdom of Israel and all of them were ungodly. In the southern kingdom of Israel, twelve off the twenty kings were ungodly. They worshipped idols and forsook the commandments of the Lord and thus lead all the people of Israel to do the same.

Only 8 kings of the southern kingdom were godly. They sought God and faithfully worshipped Him. They destroyed the idols and the altars of sacrifice to these idols. They repaired the altar of sacrifice and the temple Solomon built. The priest reinstated the sacrifice and worship in the temple. The kings had the priests read the law to the people and the people made a covenant that they will obey God and keep his commandments. They also got the people to celebrate the Passover festival.

Discussion Question

(Let the children to discuss the answer to the question given below and you can summarize with the answer given below. Then let them write down the answer in their workbooks.)

Why were most of the Kings who ruled Israel termed as 'ungodly'?

Say

They were termed as ungodly because they were not committed and devoted to God. They did not revere God or show reverence to Him by worshipping Him.

Again and again over the years God sent prophets to the kings to warn them to follow His ways and get rid of the idols. The Kings and people refused to listen to God and made fun of the prophets. God had also promised Israel that if they disobeyed, they would be conquered by a foreign nation and led into exile. After generations of patiently waiting for His people to repent, God did what He promised to His people.

Watch this video to see what happened to the northern and southern kingdom of Israel.

Video Presentation

Video: Babylon Captivity

Duration: 4:45

Ask

What happened to the northern and southern kingdom of Israel? (*Wait for the children to answer*).

Say

In 722 BC the Assyrians destroyed the northern kingdom of Israel and led the Israelites as prisoners to the land of Assyria which is modern day Iraq. These were known as the 10 lost Tribes of Israel, because no one knows what happened to them.

In 586 BC, after 134 years the Babylonians invaded the southern kingdom of Judah.

Ask

Was this the end of the nation of Israel?

No!

What did God promise Abraham? (*Wait for the children to answer*).

Say

God promised to give the land of Canaan to Abraham and his offspring as an everlasting possession.

Here we see that the land of Israel was ruined and lying desolate because of the disobedience and rebellion of the people of Israel. The people were taken as captives to a foreign land. The ten tribes of northern Israel were lost, they never returned to their home land.

Ask

What happened to the people living in Judah?

Say

In spite of their ungodly ways (disobedience and unfaithfulness to God), God through the prophet Jeremiah not only warned the people of Judah of the Babylonian invasion but also promised to bring them back to Israel after 70 years of captivity.

Let's read the promise God gave Israel through the prophet Jeremiah.

Read aloud

Jeremiah 25:8, 9, 11-12: "Therefore the LORD Almighty says this: 'Because you have not listened to my words, I will summon all the peoples of the north and my servant Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon,' declares the LORD, 'and I will bring them against this land and its inhabitants and against all the surrounding nations. I will completely destroy them and make them an object of horror and scorn, and an everlasting ruin. This whole country will become a desolate wasteland, and these nations will serve the king of Babylon seventy years. But when the seventy years are fulfilled, I will punish the king of Babylon and his nation, the land of the Babylonians, for their guilt,' declares the LORD, 'and will make it desolate forever.'"

Jeremiah 29:10: This is what the Lord says: "When seventy years are completed for Babylon, I will come to you and fulfill my gracious promise to bring you back to this place."

Over a hundred years before Jeremiah, the prophet Isaiah spoke of Judah's return from Babylon to the land of Canaan. The amazing thing about Isaiah's prophecy is that he even names "Cyrus" as the "servant" God would employ to bring about the return of His people to the land of Canaan.

In the first year of King Cyrus of Persia, in order to fulfill the Lord's message spoken through Isaiah and Jeremiah, the Lord stirred the mind of King Cyrus of Persia. He sent out a proclamation throughout his entire kingdom.

Let's read what he said.

Read Aloud

Ezra 1:2-4: "The Lord, the God of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth and he has appointed me to build a temple for him in Jerusalem, which is in Judah. Anyone from his people among you—may his God be with him, and let him go up to Jerusalem in Judah and may build the temple of the Lord God of Israel, the God who is in Jerusalem. And the people of any place where survivors may now be living are to provide him with silver, and gold, with goods and livestock, and with freewill offerings for the temple of God in Jerusalem."

Cyrus also commanded that the vessels which Nebuchadnezzar took from the temple in Jerusalem to Babylon, be returned.

Examples of Good Magnets—People who Set Out to Fulfill God's Plan but Who Finally Pursued their own Desires.

God stirred the spirit of a few to return to Jerusalem. The first set of Jews left Persia with much enthusiasm and zeal. When the people arrived they assembled in Jerusalem, constructed an altar and offered sacrifices to God.

In the second year of the exiles' return, they began rebuilding the temple. They began by the laying the foundation for the temple.

The work of rebuilding the temple stopped after two years and for fourteen years the work was neglected. The Jews had begun rebuilding the temple with great enthusiasm and zeal then why did they stop the work? The book of Haggai chapter 1 gives us a clue:

- The work was hard.
- They didn't have a lot of money or manpower.
- They suffered crop failures and drought.
- They were discouraged because they faced a certain amount of opposition from the people of the land.

- They became self-indulgent and self-absorbed and turned their attention and their efforts towards building their own magnificent homes.
- The people made their excuse sound spiritual. They couldn't speak against the idea of building the temple, so they spoke against its timing. They said "It isn't God's timing to rebuild the temple. If it's so hard, evidently, God doesn't want us to do it - at least no time soon."

When the Jews found that completing the temple would not be as quick and easy as they had supposed and that the temple would not be as glorious as they had hoped, or remembered, they turned their attention and energies to building their own homes. It appeared safer and easier to put off work in Jerusalem, and it was really what they preferred anyway.

Discussion Question

(Let the children discuss the answer to the question given below and you can summarize the answer given below. Then let them write down the answer in their workbooks.)

Can we call the people who returned back to Jerusalem to build the temple as godly or ungodly? Why?

Say

They were ungodly people. Though they began pursuing God's plan they ultimately began pursuing their own desires and plans. They were self centered rather than being God centered. Their personal wants, comforts and desires were more important than God's will and plan for their lives. They depended on their own strength, wisdom and resources to build the temple rather than depending on God. If only they had depended on God then everything would have worked the way it was supposed to. God would have enabled them to complete what he had begun.

Examples of Strong Magnets—Godly People Who Were Committed and Faithful to Fulfill God's Plan

Haggai, Zechariah and Zerubbabel

Prophet Haggai rebuked the people for their decision and action. After which Zerubbabel along with the other prophets began rebuilding the temple. The non

Jews of the land were greatly disturbed to see that the temple construction had resumed. They wrote to King Darius. When King Darius learned that King Cyrus had given permission to the Jews to rebuild the temple, he permitted the Jews to continue building the temple, and told them that all expenses would be paid for out of the taxes he collected from the Persians! He prohibited the peoples of the land from interfering.

As a result, the temple was soon completed. There was a great celebration as the temple was joyfully dedicated, and they observed the Passover.

Ezra

Nearly 60 years passed and the second wave of returning exiles, were preparing to journey to Jerusalem. King Artaxerxes appointed Ezra to lead the exiles back to Jerusalem. Ezra 7:10 says that Ezra was a man who had devoted himself to the study and observance of the Law of the Lord, and to teaching its decrees and laws in Israel and to govern and teach them.

Ezra was asked to take along with him silver and gold that the king and his advisers had freely given and the freewill offerings of the people and priests for the temple. With this money they bought bulls, rams and male lambs and together with their grain offerings and drink offerings they sacrificed them on the altar of the temple in Jerusalem.

When the people assembled by the canal of Ahava in preparation to travel to Jerusalem, Ezra proclaimed a fast.

Why did he proclaim a fast?

Ezra had spoken to the king concerning the sovereignty of his God. Having done so, Ezra could hardly ask the king for an armed escort to protect them and the wealth they were transporting from thieves on the way. So he proclaimed a fast, so that they might humble themselves before God and ask Him to protect them as they traveled to Jerusalem. God answered their prayer.

When Ezra arrived in Jerusalem he heard some very distressing news from the leaders. The people of Israel, the priests, and the Levites had married non-Israelites thus disobeying God. The Levites, who were the priests, the leaders were at the forefront of all of this disobedience. Ezra was stunned when he heard this report. He

immediately began to mourn, tore his garments and pulled some of the hair from his head and prayed to God. His prayer is the prayer of a godly leader in response to the sin of his people.

In his prayer we see that he identifies himself with the people, and with their sins. In his prayer he does not say, “They have sinned,” but rather, “We have sinned.” He does not speak of ‘their’ iniquity, but of ‘our’ iniquity. He acknowledges that God has been gracious in dealing with their sins, for their judgment could have been much more severe. He casts himself and his people on his God, Who is gracious and compassionate.

While Ezra was praying and confessing, before the temple of God, a very large crowd of Israelites—men, women, and children alike—gathered around him. The people wept loudly. Then Shecaniah told Ezra, that they had been unfaithful to God by marrying foreign women. He suggested they make a covenant with God to send away all these women and their offspring, in keeping with the counsel of the lord and of those who have regard for the commandments of our God. Encouraged by the words of Shecaniah, Ezra took action. He sent word throughout Judah, summoning all the exiles to appear in Jerusalem within three days. Ezra rebuked the people for their sins and demanded that they separate themselves from the people of the land by putting away their foreign wives. The people acknowledged that Ezra was right and all of them agreed to do as they had decided.

Nehemiah

Thirteen years after Ezra had returned to Jerusalem, Nehemiah arrived in Jerusalem. Nehemiah was the cupbearer to the King. He inquired about condition of the city and the people from his brother and a few men who had just returned from Jerusalem. They told Nehemiah that the people were in great distress and reproach, and the walls of Jerusalem were broken down and its gates burned with fire.

When Nehemiah heard that the walls of Jerusalem were still broken down 80 years after the completion of the rebuilding of the temple, he wept, fasted and prayed for four months pleading God to do something about the terrible conditions. It is through this time with God that Nehemiah is able to determine God’s will for him. So, Nehemiah decided to go to Jerusalem to build the walls.

The King granted him permission to oversee the rebuilding project. When he reached Jerusalem He delegated parts of the wall-building project to a wide variety of people. When the people began the building work the leaders of the non Jewish people attempted to hinder the building of the wall by ridiculing them. When their mocking words did not stop the Jews from rebuilding the wall, they all plotted together to fight against the Jews and cause confusion among them.

Do you think Nehemiah give up his dream and desire of rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem in the face of this threat ?

No!

He prayed to God. There were four occasions Nehemiah prayed to God when the Jews were being mocked and received threats of being killed. He also set guards as a protection against them day and night. Half the men worked while the other half were equipped with spears, shields, bows and armour ready to fight if they were attacked. Those who carried materials did their work with one hand and held the weapon in the other hand. Nehemiah encouraged his people not to lose heart because of their opponents: "Do not be afraid of them. Remember the Lord, who is great and awesome ..." (Nehemiah 4:14). He encouraged the Jews saying, "Our God will fight for us!" (Nehemiah 4:20). Nehemiah also prayed that God would strengthen their hands to complete the task and God helped them. They rebuilt the walls of Jerusalem in 52 days.

When their enemies heard about this they were afraid and lost their self-confidence, because they realized that this work had been done with the help of God.

Nehemiah's wall-building project was threatened, not just from the outside, but also from the inside. Certain wealthy Jewish nobles and officials were taking advantage of the difficult times to make money. They were loaning money to fellow Jews, expecting interest to be paid on these loans, even though this was prohibited in the Jewish Law. When the debtors couldn't repay the loans, they lost their land and were even forced to sell their children into slavery. Nehemiah responded by telling the wealthy that what they were doing was not right and that they had to walk in the fear of God. He asked them to stop charging interest on loans and give back whatever they had taken from their debtors.

In contrast to the selfishness of those who had been taking advantage of their fellow Jews, Nehemiah did not use his leadership position to earn or make more money. “Because of the fear of God,” he even refused to tax the people to pay for his personal expenses, unlike the other officers. Instead, he generously invited many to eat at his table, he paid for these expense from his personal savings without taxing the people.

Ezra and Nehemiah; Restoration of the Covenant Life of the People

Once the walls were rebuilt, God used Nehemiah and Ezra to lead the people into a spiritual renewal. The people asked Ezra to read from the Law of Moses. Ezra read the Law from morning to midday. The whole time people stood while Ezra read from the Law. The people wept upon hearing God’s commands.

On the twenty-fourth day of the same month the Israelites gathered together, fasting and wearing sackcloth and having dust on their heads. A quarter of the day was spent in reading the Book of the Law and the other quarter was spent in confession and worshipping the Lord their God. The people made a covenant to follow the Law of God given through Moses and to obey carefully all the commands, regulations and decrees of God.

After 12 years as governor, Nehemiah had returned to Persia. We do not know how long he was there, but during his absence, the people in Jerusalem went back to their old ways and broke the covenant and promises they made to God.

When Nehemiah came back to Jerusalem he learned that the people had failed to keep the covenant and promises they made to God. He took action and helped the people to obey God and keep His commands.



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Note: All discussion questions must be answered by the children, and NOT by the teacher. The guidelines given here are only meant to assist the teacher during the discussion.

Are Ezra and Nehemiah examples of godly men? Why?

They lived a life committed and devoted to God.

They were willing to obey and follow God's plan for their lives.

They kept God's commands and decrees and taught and led the people to do the same.

They waited on God to lead, guide, provide and help them rather than trusting in their own strength and wisdom.

In the video the person defined Godliness as devotion to God. What does devotion to God mean?

Devotion to God is not just our private Bible reading and prayer time which we sometimes call "devotions." Although this practice is very important for a person to live a godly life, this alone is not what devotion means.

Devotion signifies a life given, or devoted, to God. A godly man is one who lives no longer to his own will, or the ways of the world, but lives to do the will of God. He considers God in everything, he serves God in everything and he makes all the parts of his common life parts of godliness, by doing everything to please God.

Devotion is a personal attitude toward God that results in actions that are pleasing to God. This attitude is composed of three essential elements:

Fear of God

Love of God

Desire for God

Note that all three elements focus upon God. Godliness focuses upon God. From this Godward attitude arises actions that are godly. Ezra and Nehemiah, feared and loved God. As a result their desires were godly. Hence, their lives and everything they did was pleasing to God. On the other hand, the Kings of Israel neither feared nor loved God. Hence, their desires were what they wanted rather than what God desired for him.

So fear and love for God is the foundation of true devotion to God while the desire for God is the highest expression of that devotion.

How is fear of God related to Godliness?

Fear of the Lord does not mean to live in terror of God or of fear of His punishment. To fear God means to respect, honour and reverence God for who He is. To fear God

means to honour God for His majesty, holiness, awesomeness, glory and power.

When we have an attitude of respect and reverence for who God is we will obey His Word and live to honour Him in everything we do and say.

When we realize that this great holy, all powerful and mighty God calls me his child, that he has a plan for me, cares for me it will cause us to honour Him in everything we do and say.

Godly people live in such a way as to please God. Ungodly people don't really consider or care what God thinks about their way of life.

What does love of God have to do with Godliness? To find the answer read 1 John 4:9-10

God loved us so much that He sent His son to die on the cross to:

Save us from the punishment of sin—the punishment of everlasting destruction and of being shut out from the presence of the Lord.

Reconcile us to a holy God from whom we were separated because of our sin.

A godly person always lives with this realization that God loves him so much that He took his punishment and bore his sins in His own body. And the more he sees God's love, the more his heart reaches out in adoring devotion to the One who loves him so much. This causes Him to love and honour God in his life, thought and actions.

Did God require only the Israelites to live a godly life? To find the answer, read Exodus 19:6; Deuteronomy 7:6 and 1 Peter 2:9.

God chose the Israelites to be a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. Israel was a nation that pointed others to the one and only true and living God. Israel was chosen to be a nation of priests, prophets, and missionaries to the world.

Today, we the children of God are called to be a chosen people, a royal priesthood a holy nation to people in this world and to declare His praises. As His children, God wants us to be His salt and light, to resemble him by living a godly life.

Take a look at your life and access the areas given below and likewise tick the category you belong.

AREA	WEAK MAGNET	GOOD MAGNET	STRONG MAGNET
Fear of God			

Love of God			
Desire for God			



APPLICATION

The godly lives that Ezra and Nehemiah lived not only led to fulfilling God's plans and purposes for the nation of Israel; but it also led the people of Israel into restoring their relationship with God by obeying and keeping His commandments. Thus Ezra and Nehemiah fulfilled the purpose for which God called them, unlike the ungodly kings of Israel whose lives brought shame, pain and punishment to the nation of Israel. Similarly, God has chosen and set you apart to be His prophets, priests and missionaries to the world. Living a godly life by aligning your will, desires, and plans in accordance to a holy fear and love for God, you will not only fulfill the purpose for which God has chosen you but you can lead others to Him.

Like Ezra and Nehemiah are you willing to align your life to God?

They were able to align their life because:

They did what God purposed and planned for their life and did not follow their own dreams and passions. Are you willing to do the same?

They read God's Word and obeyed it; are you willing to do the same?

They did not trust in the wisdom of their friends or the King but waited on God to lead and guide them. Are you willing to do the same?

They did not trust in their strength or wisdom, they trusted and depended on God? Are you willing to do the same?

They committed everything to God in fasting and prayer. Are you willing to ask God through prayer and fasting before you make any decision small or big in your life?

When they saw something wrong they were burdened about it and prayed and corrected the people as God lead them. Are you willing to do that, when you see your friends, classmates indulge in wrong behavior and attitudes?

The areas that you have written 'Yes' to, write down the steps you are going to take to do so.

If you answered a 'Yes' to one or more can we pray and make a covenant with God. Remember a covenant is not just a promise it's binding-you have to keep it.

(Lead the children in a prayer of commitment.)



FOLLOW UP

Ways I was able to keep the covenant I made with God.



CLOSE WITH PRAYER

