



GOD'S GOOD WORLD

God created all things good.

JESUS CONNECTION



John said about Jesus, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. All things were created through Him, and apart from Him not one thing was created that has been created." (John 1:1–3). Jesus is the very Word of God. He created all things, and all creation holds together in Him (Colossians 1:17).



LIFEWISE QUALITY

GRATITUDE – To appreciate what someone has done or given to me.

BIBLE REVIEW

MSSL 1 The Bible is Trustworthy | 1–2 Min

In our first lesson, we learned that the Bible claims to be inspired, perfect and true.

- ♦ What does it mean that the Bible is "inspired?" (*God inspired, or guided, men on what to write down through the influence of the Holy Spirit.*)
- ♦ What evidence is there that the Bible is perfect and true? (*God is perfect, therefore His Word must be perfect; None of the prophecies predicted in the Bible have been proven false; archeology and history verify many statements in the Bible.*)

Today, we will read and discuss God's account of how the world began in the book of Genesis.

SESSION STARTERS

Something New | 10 Min

- ♦ Provide a variety of supplies (paper/pencils, art supplies, musical instruments, etc.) and challenge students to create something new: a picture, poem, song or other project. As they work, explain that human beings have been given the ability to make or build amazing things (from art to jet planes) out of pre-existing materials. Only God can truly *create*, or bring forth something out of nothing, which is exactly what happens in today's story.
- ♦ Invite volunteers to briefly share what they made and why they made it. Ask the students how they would explain the difference between making and creating.

Caused or Created | 5–10 Min

- ♦ Has everyone heard of the chemical compound carbon dioxide (CO₂)? Let's take a minute and brainstorm all of the ways CO₂ is produced. (*Humans and animals produce it, baking bread (yeast), vinegar and baking soda, pop, forest fires, etc.*)
- ♦ Carbon dioxide (CO₂) is a naturally occurring substance on earth. Our bodies release CO₂ into the air and we can cause CO₂ to form through simple tasks (i.e., combining yeast, sugar and warm water or vinegar and baking soda). But we cannot technically create carbon dioxide.
- ♦ On the other hand, when God created and filled the heavens and the earth, He did it in a very different way. He had no need for slow and complex processes. The Bible tells us that God created everything through His powerful Word. God simply spoke, and it was created—including carbon dioxide! We can learn more about Creation by reading Genesis chapter 1.

BIBLE LESSON: GOD'S GOOD WORLD | 10–20 Min

Genesis 1:1–2

To begin, let's ask an important question: **Where did the universe and everything in it come from? It's a big question that every world religion and worldview has to answer.** Some claim that an impersonal spiritual force or some natural process, such as evolution, brought the world and everything in it into being.

But in **Genesis 1:1**, the Bible says that **"In the beginning, God created."** These five words stand out from all the other creation stories in one major way. **According to the Bible, God personally and intentionally created everything ("the heavens and the earth") out of nothing, from the Latin *ex nihilo*! God didn't need raw materials to create like we do. He isn't a master Shaper or chief Designer of an already-existing universe—in every way, He is the Creator.** No other religion makes this claim.

So the Bible's account begins with **who created everything (Gen. 1:1–2)** and continues with **what He created (Gen. 1:3–25).**

Genesis 1:3–26

What did God make? On Day 1, He spoke light into existence and separated it from darkness, creating day and night. On Day 2, He created the sky. On Day 3, He formed seas and dry land and covered the earth with plant life. On Day 4, He created the sun, moon and stars to provide light and mark days and seasons. On Day 5, He filled the sky with birds and the water with sea life. And on Day 6, He made animals to fill the earth and mankind to be masters over it.

Genesis 1:3–26 (cont.)

So why is Genesis 1 important? First, it demonstrates God's power. He simply spoke, and everything appeared. Can you do that? Of course not! **The amount of power and energy necessary for God to do what the Bible claims He did in creation is beyond our understanding.** Our minds simply cannot grasp the magnitude and power of a God who could simply say, "Let there be ..." and suddenly, everything is.

Consider the stars. Astronomers estimate there are about 100 million stars in our galaxy and about 10,000 galaxies in the observable universe. Multiply these numbers, and you get a 1 followed by 24 zeros (1,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000). Yet God spoke each of these stars into existence with a single word, and He knows the name of each star (Is. 40:26).

Second, the God revealed in Genesis 1 is both sovereign and good. **Sovereign** means that God alone controls all aspects of creation—from the smallest particle to the millions of living creatures on our planet. Because He is the Creator and controls all things big and small, He is the rightful ruler. (Point out the word “reign” inside of “sovereign.”) It is right for us to submit to Him, not just the things that are beyond our control, but in every area.

But God is also good. How many times can you find the phrase “God saw that it was good” in Genesis 1? Creation’s goodness is an overflow of God’s goodness, which is an important truth about the nature of the created universe and our role within it. Part of what makes God’s creation good is that each piece perfectly fulfilled the purpose He designed it to do.

Big Ideas

- ◆ What you believe about creation does matter. Did it come from an impersonal force or from a personal being? Those are two very different starting points that have significant impact on many other beliefs, and both require faith.
 - ◇ In Genesis, a personal God forms the universe and all that exists out of nothing. Rather than the universe existing because of natural causes that began a chain reaction, we learn that God began it all.
 - ◇ This truth is repeated in John 1:3, which tells us that all things were created by him, and Colossians 1:17, which affirms that all things in the universe are held together through Jesus.
- ◆ When God created everything, He began with a formless void and shaped it with His Word. He is all-powerful and creative and works with purpose. In the same way, our lives are formless and void until God’s Word comes in to bring life, peace, beauty and order. This is the promise of the gospel: when we trust in Jesus and allow God to change us, we are transformed deeply and eternally.
- ◆ Genesis 1 reveals a God who is good and sovereign. In the first chapter of the Bible, we learn that we don’t get to create a god that we want to see; God requires us to see Him as He is and submit to Him. Seeing who God is should humble us before Him, but it should also comfort our hearts and give us peace to go through life trusting that His wisdom, creative power and goodness will work all things for our ultimate good (Romans 8:28–29).

Discussion Questions

- ◆ How does knowing God as the Creator impact the way we see Him and our reasons for listening to Him and obeying or disobeying Him?
- ◆ God created all things from nothing because He is all-powerful. In what areas of life could this truth help you trust Him more?
- ◆ Genesis 1:1 says, “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.” What other explanations do people give for how the universe came to exist? What difference does it make if a Creator God made everything?

REINFORCEMENT ACTIVITIES

Suggested Video | 5–10 Min

BibleProject Video: *Creation*; Full video: 7:12.

Suggested Visual Aid | 5 Min.

Poster 18: *God Created Everything*.

It Was Good | 5–10 Min

Write the word *good* on a white board or poster board. To explore why God would call each part of His creation good, ask students to brainstorm what it means for something to be good. Write their ideas on the board as they talk. If needed, use the following prompts:

- ♦ Was what God created bad or sinful in any way? No. When God created, there was no sin in it. It was whole.
- ♦ Is it beautiful and pleasant to the eyes? Yes. Think of the Grand Canyon or a sunset—creation is beautiful.
- ♦ Is it usable? Yes. Everything God made performed its intended purpose and design well.
- ♦ Was there any part of creation that God could have improved upon? No. When God created the world and everything in it, He created it perfectly. That's why He rested on the seventh day. He was completely finished with His work.



JESUS CONNECTION



John said about Jesus, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. All things were created through Him, and apart from Him not one thing was created that has been created.” (John 1:1–3). Jesus is the very Word of God. He created all things, and all creation holds together in Him (Colossians 1:17).



LIFEWISE QUALITY | 3–5 Min

GRATITUDE – To appreciate what someone has done or given to me.

Living LifeWise

Because God is the good and sovereign Creator, we can show gratitude to Him for all He has made.

LWQ Script

Throughout Genesis 1, God called His creation “good.” Everything He made fulfilled its purpose, brought Him praise and provided enjoyment to His people. But because of sin, human beings began to worship

themselves and the world instead of God. Left to ourselves, we will always make the created world and its interactions more important than God. He invites us to a very different response: gratitude.

Gratitude is saying thanks to God for all that He created, the gifts He has given and His character qualities—He is good, all-powerful and loving, for example. Choosing gratitude helps us keep our view of the world in proper order (God first, people second, created things third). Even more, a thankful heart will prevent us from mistreating or taking for granted the things and people around us. Gratitude must be chosen and practiced, but it is possible. God wants us to be grateful for all He has done for us instead of taking it for granted, and His Spirit will help us respond to all that He's made with a heart of gratitude.

Head, Heart, Hands Reinforcement | In-class or take-home

- ◆ **Head Questions**
 - ◇ Why is it so significant that God created everything “good,” or perfectly?
 - ◇ What are some realities about the world God made that we can be thankful for?
- ◆ **Heart Questions**
 - ◇ In Genesis 1:1–26, God reveals Himself as a God of order, purpose and design. How might those qualities help us respond to stress or anxiety about our circumstances or about the world?
 - ◇ How we treat something shows what we really think about it. How do we treat something we are grateful for? How do we treat something we take for granted?
- ◆ **Hands Challenge**
 - ◇ Choose one specific thing you will do today to preserve God’s creation as a way to show gratitude for what He has made. Record what you will do and how it demonstrates gratitude. (*Examples: Thank God for your friends and family, compliment a friend on a unique gift God gave them, pick up litter, use a reusable water bottle, etc.*)

EXTENDED LESSON RESOURCES

Bible Commentary for the Teacher

God revealed Himself in a mighty way from the beginning. Under inspiration from the Holy Spirit, important key truths were revealed in Chapter 1.

- ◆ **Capitalize on key biblical truths (Genesis 1:1).** The first seven words of Genesis chapter one establish some important key truths upon which the entire Bible is based:
 - ◇ **God is eternal.** God existed before there was a universe and will exist after the universe perishes (Heb. 1:10–12).
 - ◇ **God is the main character in the Bible.** He is the subject of the first verb in the Bible. He is the subject of more verbs and performs a wider variety of activities than any other being in the Bible.
 - ◇ **God is a Trinity.** The Hebrew word for God is plural, but the verb form of which God is the subject is singular. He is three divine Persons in one divine essence.
 - ◇ **God created everything uniquely.** God has done what no human being could ever do. In its active form, the Hebrew verb *bara'*, meaning “to create,” never has a human subject. In other words, *bara'* indicates a work that is uniquely God’s.
 - ◇ **God created everything from nothing.** He didn’t modify pre-existing matter to create the heavens and the earth but called matter into being out of nothing (Ps. 33:6,9; Heb. 11:3).

- ❖ **God is self-sufficient.** God is not dependent on the universe, but the universe is dependent on God (Heb. 1:3).
- ◆ **Stick to the main point (Genesis 1:2).** Remember to stick to the main point as you study the creation account in Genesis.
 - ❖ The passage WAS written—under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit—to show us that God created the heavens and earth through His powerful Word.
 - ❖ The passage was NOT written to answer many other questions we force upon the text.
- ◆ **Define how God has revealed Himself (Genesis 1:3–26).**
 - ❖ **General revelation.** Creation's purpose and design is to declare God's glory and proclaim the work of His hands and reveal things about God that are invisible to us. Creation displays God's eternal power and divine nature (Ps. 19:1; Rom. 1:20) in a way we can understand it.
 - ❖ **Specific revelation.** God revealed His thoughts, character and intentions by sending and speaking to us through his Son, Jesus Christ (Heb. 1:1–2).

In Defense

Read other ancient creation accounts, and you won't find anything like the Bible's. In other accounts, the universe comes from something. One of the gods gives birth to the physical universe, or the world results as an accidental product of some cosmic battle. In one myth, the human race arises from the blood of one of the slain gods. In another, we are created from the remains of a dead sea monster. Most of the time, the human race appears to be an accident formed by larger divine forces that did not care about our creation or our destiny. Yet, in Genesis, everything started with one God who alone created everything out of nothing. He created with intentionality and ease. He took counsel from no one, not even the angels, whom He also created. It all came from Him, and He made it out of nothing.

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GOD'S GOOD WORLD

God created all things good.

JESUS CONNECTION



John said about Jesus, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. All things were created through him, and apart from him not one thing was created that has been created." (John 1:1-3). Jesus is the very Word of God. He created all things, and all creation holds together in Him (Colossians 1:17).



LIFEWISE QUALITY

GRATITUDE – To appreciate what someone has done or given to me.



HEAD

Why is it so significant that God created everything "good," or perfectly?

What are some realities about the world God made that we can be thankful for?



HEART

In Genesis 1:1–15, God reveals Himself as a God of order, purpose and design. How might those qualities help us respond to stress or anxiety about our circumstances or about the world?

How we treat something shows what we really think about it. How do we treat something we are grateful for? How do we treat something we take for granted?



HANDS

We want to demonstrate our gratitude in how we treat our world. Choose one specific thing you will do today to preserve God's creation as a way to show gratitude for what He has made. Record what you will do and how it demonstrates gratitude. *Examples:* Pick up litter, don't use a plastic water bottle, walk or ride your bike for transportation, reuse plastic bags, compliment a friend on a unique gift God gave them, etc.



GOD'S GOOD PEOPLE

God created people uniquely in His image.



JESUS CONNECTION

We constantly fail to reflect God's image in all that we do, but Jesus is the perfect image of the invisible God. He rules wisely over the world and upholds all things by His power. He is the only One who perfectly relates to God and others. And because of Jesus' good work on our behalf—His perfect life, death and resurrection—He alone can restore our broken relationships with both.



LIFEWISE QUALITY

RESPECT – Acting considerately toward people based on their God-given value and worth.

BIBLE REVIEW

MSL 1 God's Good World | 1–2 Min

In the previous session, we traced the days of creation, learning that God created everything good through His Son.

- ◆ According to Genesis 1, how was the world created? (*God created everything in the world from nothing, through his powerful Word.*)
- ◆ What are some things the account of creation in Genesis reveals about God? (*God is creative, all-powerful, intelligent, intentional, personal, good and sovereign.*)

Today, we will pick up on day six of creation week and learn about God's greatest creation.

SESSION STARTERS

Get the Picture? | 5–10 Min

- ◆ Provide each student with a paper and marker or colored pencil. Give them 2–3 minutes to draw a picture of anything they want without talking about their picture.
- ◆ When time is up, have everyone pass their drawings to the left. Invite volunteers to guess what is going on in the picture they received. Then, allow the owner to briefly explain what the picture is supposed to show.
- ◆ Explain that the drawings reflect the people who made them because the art reveals something about the artist—given the chance to draw anything, they chose to draw this. Likewise, humankind reflects God in His creative and compassionate ways. God's creation of humanity in the garden

was intended to be a reflection of His goodness and character. Even though sin has distorted that image of God in humanity, we are still called to reflect and glorify God in all we do by showing people around us how good and satisfying He is.

Pairs Charade | 5–10 Min

- ♦ Before class, write out things that come in pairs or often go together on separate index cards. [Examples: peanut butter and jelly, bacon and eggs, pen and paper, knife and fork, eyes, wings, Tom and Jerry, Mario and Luigi, Batman and Robin, etc.]
- ♦ Challenge the class to play “pairs charades.” Students should pair up, pick an index card and act out their pair for the class to guess. Play as time allows.
- ♦ End by explaining that many great things in our world need a partner. How difficult would it be for one hand to clap, one lip to whistle, or to have a good sandwich with only one piece of bread (not folded in half)? Each of these things works best in a paired relationship. Similarly, God created human beings to function best through a relationship with Him and with one another.

BIBLE LESSON: GOD’S GOOD PEOPLE | 10–20 Min

Genesis 1:26–31

Our story picks up where we left off on the sixth day of creation, moving toward the climactic scene when God made one final creation, unique and set apart from everything else; God created humans. **The Bible defines what it means to be human by saying that God created people in His own image or likeness. In other words, God created people to be like Him. We have immeasurable value as human beings—no matter our age, developmental abilities or talents—simply because we bear God’s image.**

What comes to mind when you hear the phrase “created in God’s image”? Did any of you think of a mirror? Just as a mirror is a reflection of our own image, we are a reflection of who God is. **God is a Spirit and He has created each of us with a spirit. God is an intelligent being who thinks, feels and makes choices.** God also created people as “male and female” (Gen. 1:27). God designed two separate, distinct genders to complement one another in relationship. Both males and females are an equal reflection of who God is.

Bearing God’s image is more than just being like God. **God has also given us a very special role by placing us as caretakers over creation.** We are to watch over and use the resources that God has given us carefully. God also wants us to reflect His love and value for everything He has made in the way we think, speak and act. **He has designed us to reflect who He is to the world so that the world can know God.**

Genesis 2:16–18, 21–25

Being created in God’s image sets us apart from the rest of creation in yet another way: **Human beings alone have the capacity to enjoy a personal relationship with God. God did not create people because He was lonely and needed us.** God has eternally enjoyed a perfect relationship of love, fellowship and unity within the Trinity: God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. **Instead, God created us because He wants a relationship with us.** Only people—not dogs, eagles or whales—were created with the ability to have such a relationship with God. **This shows that God has given humans the highest value in all creation.**

God not only offers us the gift of a personal relationship with Him through faith in Jesus; He has also given us the gift of relationship with one another. The God who exists in community— Father, Son and

Holy Spirit—**created human beings to live in community** as well. In Genesis 2:18, God looked at Adam and said, “It is not good for man to be alone.” God then gave Adam the gift of an indispensable helper in his wife, Eve.

Big Ideas

- ◆ **What you believe about how people were created matters.** Human beings were not created by chance, but by God’s loving, intelligent and intimate design. God formed Adam from the dust of the ground and breathed life into him. Likewise, he fashioned Eve from Adam’s rib. Psalm 139:13 says of God, “For it was you who created my inward parts; you knit me together in my mother’s womb. I will praise you because I have been remarkably and wondrously made.”
- ◆ **All people have equal value.** A person does not have more or less value because of their race, physical appearance, intelligence, abilities, personality or beliefs. God has given every single human being immeasurable value as His image bearers that cannot be taken away.
- ◆ **We were created to love God and enjoy a relationship with Him forever.** The purpose of creating human life was not based on need, but God’s desire to give His love to others.

Discussion Questions

- ◆ What does it mean to be made in the image of God?
- ◆ What special role in creation did God give to human beings?
- ◆ In what ways do you see the world attempting to redefine what it means to be human?
- ◆ Why is it important to note that human beings have a special place within creation as God’s image bearers? What are the implications of this idea?
- ◆ How should the fact that all human beings are created in God’s image influence the way we feel about and treat friends, family members, strangers and even enemies?

REINFORCEMENT ACTIVITIES

Suggested Video | 5–10 Min

BibleProject Video: *Image of God*; Full video: 5:15.

Suggested Visual Aid | 5 Min.

Poster 18: *God Created Everything*.

Real Respect | 5–10 Min

Before class, write out words on three to five slips of paper each for two categories: *places* (football game, the school cafeteria, the grocery store, a park, your neighborhood) and *people* (annoying classmate, littering adult, confused elderly person, disrespectful bully, unskilled employee). Label two containers accordingly and place the slips of paper inside. Have a timer ready to go for discussion.

- ◆ Invite students to discuss some ways respect can be shown for God’s creation in everyday life. Invite a student to pull one paper slip out of each container and read them out loud to the class. Give students one to two minutes to discuss how someone could show respect for God’s creation in each situation. Use a timer to keep things moving.

- ◆ If we truly believe that “God created the heavens and the earth” and created humans to care for it, it will change the way we treat everything around us.

JESUS CONNECTION



We constantly fail to reflect God’s image in all that we do, but Jesus is the perfect image of the invisible God. He rules wisely over the world and upholds all things by His power. He is the only One who perfectly relates to God and others. And because of Jesus’ good work on our behalf—His perfect life, death and resurrection—He alone can restore our broken relationships with both.

LIFEWISE QUALITY | 3–5 Min

RESPECT – Acting considerately toward people based on their God-given value and worth.

Living LifeWise

Because every person is made in God’s image, we can treat people as valuable and show them respect.

LWQ Script

Some people say that being made in God’s image means that people are basically “little gods” who should be worshiped. But to bear God’s image, according to the Bible, means that God is relational, creative and purposeful, and He made us like Him in those ways. And our response to God’s image in people should not be to worship them, but to respect them.

Respect is about how we see (think of the words *spectacles* and *perspective*) His creation, and showing respect means we look deeper, give the benefit of the doubt and are careful to see what is true. It also means seeing *ourselves* as valuable because God says we are. Respect is the Bible’s solution to the hurt, unkindness and lack of compassion that permeates our interactions, in life and online. Jesus’ death on the cross shows how valuable we are to God. The Holy Spirit helps us see the world and others as He does—and to treat them with respect.

Head, Heart, Hands Reinforcement | In-class or take-home

- ◆ **Head Questions**
 - ◇ After creating the man and woman on the sixth day, what specific commands did God give to humans?
 - ◇ Every human being is made in God’s image and is, therefore, worthy of respect. What does it mean to treat someone with respect?
- ◆ **Heart Questions**
 - ◇ How should the fact that all humans were created in God’s image influence how we treat others? How we treat ourselves?

- ✧ We rarely struggle to show respect to people (friends, teachers, parents) we like or get along with. But Jesus told us, “Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be sons of your Father, who is in Heaven” (Matthew 5:44–45). Why would God require us to show the same respect to those we don’t like or don’t get along with?

◆ Hands Challenge

- ✧ Think of a friend, family member or someone in your life who you know has an opposite opinion or belief or who has been unkind to you. Give a concrete example of how you can show respect toward this person, since he or she is made in God’s image and valuable to Him. Ask God to give you the strength to do that.

EXTENDED LESSON RESOURCES

Bible Commentary for the Teacher

God created both work and rest as He brought order from chaos.

- ◆ **We reflect God by ruling and subduing (Genesis 1:26–31).** Through the story of the creation of man and woman, we begin to see what being created in God’s image entails—rightly relating to God and others:
 - ✧ **God brought order from chaos.** We are called to subdue the world in a way that brings harmony and accord.
 - ✧ **God is the ruler.** Bearing His image means we must rule wisely, acknowledging the good things He has given us, not worshiping the good things themselves.
 - ✧ **God affirmed the goodness of creation.** Whenever we revel in His creation, we are continuing God’s work by living out His creative plan for the world.
- ◆ **We reflect God by working and resting (Genesis 2:1–3, 15).**
 - ✧ **God created work.** God created work for man as part of His good world. Work is just as beautiful as the sunset and just as purposeful as the rain.
 - ✧ **Work as a reflection of God.** We have amazing potential; however, our sin causes that potential to drive us away from the One who placed it within us.
 - ✧ **Glorify God.** The gospel redeems our work today and gives us the hope that a day is coming when Christ will return and we will finally be able to glorify God perfectly in our work.
 - ✧ **Rest.** God did not rest in Genesis 2 because He needed it. He gave us an example of rest to show that, even though we are unlike any other creature in that we are the most “like” God, we are not God. In addition, the concept of rest or *sabbath* is a powerful and repeated command from God to His people throughout Scripture.

In Defense

The image of God challenges ideas that many people assume to be true. The belief that humans share a common ancestor with apes¹ leads many to conclude that humans are on an equal level with creation, and therefore animals or creation should be protected as much as (or even more than) humans. But the image of God separates humans from animals and creation in value and purpose. First, all of creation was made for the pleasure and use of humans. It does not bear the same intrinsic value, so killing animals or using

¹ Crain, Natasha. “4 Key Points Christian Kids Need to Understand About Evolution.” February 26, 2015. <https://crossexamined.org/4-key-points-christian-kids-need-to-understand-about-evolution/>.

Earth's resources is not morally problematic, as some claim it is. Second, God gave humans the moral and practical responsibility to represent God in the world, to steward all He made.² As His image bearers, God tasked only humans to care for and cultivate all of creation, and this role separates humans not only from the animals, but also from everything else in creation. Humans alone are called to submit to the sovereign Creator so that they can carry out His design and purpose in the world.

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² Minton, Evan. "The image of God, Mental Faculties, and the Sanctity of Life." February 27, 2018.
<https://crossexamined.org/image-god-mental-faculties-sanctity-life/>.



GOD'S GOOD PEOPLE

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LIFEWISE QUALITY

RESPECT – Acting considerately toward people based on their God-given value and worth.



HEAD

After creating the man and woman on the sixth day, what specific commands did God give to humans?

Every human being is made in God's image and is, therefore, worthy of respect. What does it mean to treat someone with respect?



HEART

How should the fact that all humans were created in God's image influence how we treat others?

We rarely struggle to show respect to people (friends, teachers, parents) we like or get along with. But Jesus told us, "Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be sons of your Father, who is in Heaven" (Matthew 5:44-45). Why would God require us to show the same respect to those we don't like or don't get along with?



HANDS

Think of a friend, family member or someone in your life who you know has an opposite opinion or belief or who has been unkind to you. Give a concrete example of how you can show respect toward this person, since he or she is made in God's image and valuable to Him. Ask God to give you strength to do that.



SIN AND GOD'S GOOD NEWS

Sin corrupts all of creation.



JESUS CONNECTION

Eve's promised offspring was Jesus. Jesus was a "second version" of Adam—a truer and better Adam (Rom. 5:14). Jesus did what Adam and Eve should have done—He withstood Satan's temptation. Adam and Eve disobeyed God, ate from a tree and died. Jesus obeyed God by willingly dying on a tree for us (Gal. 3:13) so that we could be released from the curse of sin and death.



LIFEWISE QUALITY

OBEDIENCE – Listening to and following through with instructions from those in authority.

BIBLE REVIEW

MSL 2 God's Good People | 1–2 Min

In the previous session, we learned how God uniquely designed people, His greatest creation.

- ♦ What does it mean to be created in God's image? (*We are created to be like God and reflect Him to the world.*)
- ♦ What has God created people with a need for? (*A personal relationship with God and other people.*)

Today, we will learn how God's perfect world became a world filled with sin, difficulties and pain.

SESSION STARTERS

Crime and Punishment | 5–10 Min

Ask your students to pretend that the United States Department of Justice has written to them, explaining that the current jail system is so overcrowded and expensive that they've decided to start from scratch. The students have been hired as consultants to determine the new punishments for crimes.

- ♦ Choose a few crimes (i.e., stealing, defacing property, selling drugs) and instruct students to come up with punishments for those specific crimes. Then, ask them to explain their ideas and why that punishment would be just and good.
- ♦ When we disobey laws, there is usually a punishment that fits the crime. For example, if I steal, I may face jail time and pay a fine. But there are also natural consequences that result from disobedience. If I am caught stealing, I now have an untrustworthy reputation. Some people may not want to be my friend anymore. I might also have trouble getting a job because of what I did.

- ♦ God created Adam and Eve and gave them a perfect home to live in. God only gave them one rule. They could eat from any tree in the Garden of Eden, but they were not to eat from the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil. God warned Adam that if they ate from this tree, the consequence would be death. Today, we will learn about the devastating results of Adam and Eve's choice to disobey God.

Ignore the Leader | 10 Min

- ♦ Place students in groups of two to four, and challenge each group to act out an impromptu skit. Give students one trusted authority figure (parent, teacher, coach, boss, etc.) and a way someone disobeys them. The authority figure then must respond appropriately.
- ♦ As students act out their skits, note ways to make connections to the lesson. Most likely, the skits will show two levels of hurt: the act of breaking the rule (like Adam and Eve directly disobeying God's command to not eat from the tree) and personal offense to the authority figure who trusted them (like the broken relationship with God that unfolded because of their sin).

BIBLE LESSON: SIN AND GOD'S GOOD NEWS | 10–20 Min

Genesis 3:1–7.

Until now, the man and the woman lived in perfect fellowship with God, with creation and with each other. But in today's story, often called "the fall of man," God's enemy appears and tempts Adam and Eve to sin against God. Sin is rebellion against God's law, and its presence changed everything about everything, not only for Adam and Eve, but for all of humanity.

Some think God is revealed as angry and unjust **in the story of Adam and Eve's fall from perfection**. But when we look closer, **we see something much different: the nature of sin, the costs of sin and the mercy of a good, loving, sovereign Creator, not just for Adam and Eve, but for each of us as well.**

Sin, by nature, always follows the same pattern.

1. Sin begins with unbelief. The serpent began his attack on Adam and Eve with the words, "Did God really say?" **His aim was not to start an argument with Eve, but to cause her to doubt the truth of God's Word.** Satan's questions can be read with a sneer behind it: "God said what? How absurd! Are you serious?" And rather than defending God's Word or protecting Eve from the lies of the enemy, Adam remained silent.

2. Sin prompts idolatry. Eve "saw that the tree was good for food" (3:6) and wanted to be wise like God (3:7). She foolishly believed that possessing these things would be better than trusting, loving and obeying God. Adam chose these things and his relationship with Eve above God. **Any time we choose a person or thing or desire over God, we put something else in His place, which is idolatry.** [Point out the word idol in idolatry for students, if this is a new word for many of them.]

3. Sin ends in disobedience. God promised Adam and Eve that if He were in charge, then they would have goodness, blessing and eternal life. **Instead of choosing to believe that God knew what was best for them and obeying His instructions, they rejected His authority.** They boldly declared, "We know what's best for us more than God" and disobeyed His warning not to eat from the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil.

Genesis 3:8–21.

Sin always requires a cost or consequence.

1. Sin led to relational conflict. The consequences of sin were more devastating than Adam and Eve could have imagined, and they began before God ever punished Adam and Eve. After eating the forbidden fruit, Adam and Eve immediately experienced shame, guilt and fear for the first time. They attempted to cover their shame with fig leaves and hid from God out of fear. When God sought them out and encouraged them to tell the truth, they refused to take responsibility for their sin; Adam blamed Eve, and Eve blamed the serpent.

2. Sin led to death. God told Adam that if he ate from the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil, he would die. It was the only rule God gave Adam in the garden (Gen. 2:16–17), and it was repeated in their punishment (Gen. 3:17–19). Obviously, they did not die physically that day, but their once-perfect bodies would now slowly get older and die. More importantly, **it was their spiritual death that occurred that day.**

3. Sin led to separation from God. Before eating the forbidden fruit, Adam and Eve saw God face to face and walked with Him in the Garden of Eden. There was nothing between them. Their relationship with God was loving, perfect and good. When they disobeyed God, their sin separated them from God. **God still loved them and provided for them, but the relationship was broken.**

Genesis 3:22–24.

God showed Adam and Eve mercy. God loved Adam and Eve. He wanted them to be with Him in a perfect place forever, but once Adam and Eve brought sin into the world, God knew this would be impossible without His help. **God promised them that one day He would raise up one of their descendants to deliver them from sin. Then, God sacrificed the first animals to cover Adam and Eve's nakedness with lasting clothes.** Lastly, He drove Adam and Eve out of the Garden, away from the Tree of Life, and barred the entrance with a flaming sword (Gen. 3:24). **Without the Tree of Life, Adam and Eve would eventually die, but their faith in God's promise to send a Deliverer to rescue them from sin would allow them to go to Heaven**—a perfect place where they could live with God—until the Deliverer made all things new.

Big Ideas

- ◆ **Our understanding of the nature of sin matters.** Sin resulted from unbelief, idolatry and disobedience to God's Word. This is still true today. Many of the things that we struggle with in life—sickness, pain, natural disasters, violence, evil, etc.—are the result of the effects of Adam and Eve's original sin on us and the world around us.
- ◆ **Sin always has consequences.** When we sin, there is a deceptive tendency to think that our sin is no big deal or affects only a small part of our lives. The truth is that the cost and consequences of sin are very real and reach much farther than we know. The consequences of sin are just as destructive now as they were in the beginning.
- ◆ **God gives sinners mercy because of His great love for us.** God gave Adam and Eve great mercy; He withheld the punishment they deserved. They deserved to die immediately for disobeying Him, but instead, He provided clothes for them and promised to send someone to make new everything that sin had broken. Ephesians 2:1–5 affirms that God's mercy springs from His great

love for us. No matter how great our sin, He chooses to offer us mercy by withholding our punishment.

Discussion Questions

- ◆ How does the Bible define sin?
- ◆ What pattern does sin follow? How have you seen this pattern in everyday life?
- ◆ What were some of the consequences of disobeying God that Adam and Eve didn't expect?
- ◆ What are some things God's Word says that you or others are tempted to doubt?
- ◆ What good things in your life are you tempted to see as more important than God?
- ◆ Like Adam and Eve, what are some ways we try to cover our sins, rationalize them or shift the blame to someone else?

REINFORCEMENT ACTIVITIES

Suggested Video | 5–10 Min

BibleProject Video: *Sin Involves More than You Might Think*; Full video: 5:12.

Suggested Visual Aid | 5 Min.

Poster 1: *Genesis*.

Painful Punishments | 5–10 Min

Place students into four groups. Assign each group one of the following: the serpent, Eve (women), Adam (men), and today's people. Give each group time to discuss the specific punishments God gave to each one. Give students several minutes to discuss their answers as a group, and to present their ideas to the class. Expound on and gently correct any ideas that are contrary to Genesis 3:14–21.

- ◆ **Serpent:** God changed the way the serpent moved. All serpents would now crawl on their bellies and have a hostile relationship with humans. Additionally, God promised that one day Eve's descendant would crush Satan.
- ◆ **Eve:** All women will have pain in childbirth and an imperfect relationship with her husband (not a changed role).
- ◆ **Adam:** Men will experience continual frustration and difficulty in their work.
- ◆ **All People:** People will struggle greatly with their sin nature, disease, sickness, physical death and a changing creation (difficult weather, natural disasters, deadly animals and plants, etc).

These punishments were extremely painful for Adam and Eve and all who would live after them. But we see that God's punishment was evidence of mercy because He chose not to destroy the world and the people He had made. Instead, He made a way for their sin to be covered so that they could return to Him.



JESUS CONNECTION



Eve's promised offspring was Jesus. Jesus was a "second version" of Adam—a truer and better Adam (Rom. 5:14). Jesus did what Adam and Eve should have done—He withstood Satan's temptation. Adam and Eve disobeyed God, ate from a tree and died. Jesus obeyed God by willingly dying on a tree for us (Gal. 3:13) so that we could be released from the curse of sin and death.



LIFEWISE QUALITY | 3–5 Min

OBEDIENCE – Listening to and following through with instructions from those in authority.

Living LifeWise

Jesus paid for our sins so we can obey Him and good authorities He puts in our lives.

LWQ Script

Most people will say that human beings are good, so it's okay to "follow our hearts" and do what seems right to us. We compare ourselves to the worst evils, the worst behavior, or the worst outcomes and decide we aren't so bad after all. But the Bible says the only true standard is God Himself, and He is perfect and pure and cannot even look on sin. When Adam and Eve disobeyed God, sin didn't just mess things up a little bit. It took root in every human heart, breaking our relationships with God and others and distorting His image in us.

But God did not leave us in that state. He sent Jesus to die for and pay the price for every sin. And when we trust in Jesus to save us from our sins, He gives us the Holy Spirit to enable us to live God's way instead of having to obey sin's orders. In His mercy, God enables us to obey Him and the good authorities He's given us so that we can experience the abundant life He has promised.

Head, Heart, Hands Reinforcement| In-class or take-home

◆ Head Questions

- ◆ What was Satan's aim as he launched into his conversation with Eve?
- ◆ How did this conversation move from doubt to rebellion against God, and what were the results?

◆ Heart Questions

- ◆ Name examples of movies, music, influencer posts or television shows where the slogan "follow your heart" or "trust in yourself" is communicated. Is this good or bad advice? Explain.
- ◆ Because of sin, no one obeys all the time. What things make it more likely for you to obey a teacher or parent? What makes it less likely? How might those same things apply to obeying God?

◆ Hands Challenge

- ◆ Things would have ended very differently if Eve obeyed God instead of falling for Satan's scheme. We may not be cursed when we sin, but choosing not to obey God will have consequences. Write some consequences you have experienced for disobeying.
- ◆ Though we will all be tempted to disobey God, some simple practices can help us resist temptation. We can ask God to help us obey Him, pray before we act, read the Bible and refuse to hang out with people who encourage us to make wrong choices. Choose one of these practices (or brainstorm one of your own) and commit to doing it this week. You can even tell your LifeWise teacher for accountability.

EXTENDED LESSON RESOURCES

Bible Commentary for the Teacher

The nature of sin is the same now as it has been from the very beginning:

- ◆ **Sin is both internal and external (Genesis 3:1–6).**
 - ◆ **We doubt God.** Satan tempts us to doubt that God is trustworthy and that His words are true. Where God's words are distorted, unbelief naturally follows.
 - ◆ **We glorify created things.** The apostle Paul explained how this scene mirrors the way we all glorify God's creation rather than the Creator (Rom. 1:18–25). The Hebrew word for **glory** means weight. Glorifying something means we make it the most important or central thing in our lives. The problem is that we take something pitifully small—like money, romance, respect, talents or comfort—and try to give it the weight only God has. The result is always destruction.
- ◆ **Sin leads to shame (Genesis 1:7).** Satan promised Adam and Eve that their rebellion would lead to freedom. Instead, it led to shame.
 - ◆ **Sin's unwanted exposure.** Previously, they had been naked and unashamed, clothed in the love and acceptance of God. Now, they were naked and exposed, so they did what all of us would instinctively do: They hid.
 - ◆ **Response to sin.** Adam and Eve's fearful desire to cover themselves is a response to sin. When we sense something is wrong, our first impulse is to hide our sin from God.
- ◆ **Sin distorts creation (Genesis 1:3–13).** In addition to the mentioned consequences of the fall, humanity's relationship with creation was also distorted. Creation fell with humanity; the world became cursed against men and women. Our lives are now characterized by difficulty, with "thorns and thistles" in everything we do.
- ◆ **The consequences of sin are far-reaching (Genesis 4:1–8).** *[If time permits, point students to the next chapter.]* Cain and Abel's story is filled with the far-reaching consequences of sin and what it has done to the human race. Cain and Abel are proof of the multiplying effects of sin.
 - ◆ **Sin through generations.** The relational conflict that began with Adam and Eve was passed on to the next generation. Cain and Abel should have inherited a legacy of worship from their parents; instead, Cain murdered his own brother out of jealousy.
 - ◆ **Sin is serious.** God takes sin seriously. While Cain heard God's counsel to flee sin's temptation, he didn't obey it. His rage gave way to sin, and when sin occupied his heart, it brought death.

In Defense

Since the KJV translates Genesis 3:5 as “ye shall be as gods,” both Mormons and New Age followers have interpreted this to mean that humans have the potential to become gods. In fact, the Book of Mormon says Adam needed to commit the first sin in order for humans to become gods in the next life. However, Scripture is clear when it says Satan lied in these verses, and even calls him “a liar and the father of lies” (John 8:44). Because of their rebellion, Adam and Eve only learned the difference between good and evil. Rather than earning them godhood, death spread to all people through their decisions (Rom. 5:12, 16).

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**SIN AND GOD'S GOOD NEWS**

Sin corrupts all of creation.

**JESUS CONNECTION**

Eve's promised offspring was Jesus. Jesus was a "second version" of Adam—a truer and better Adam (Rom. 5:14). Jesus did what Adam and Eve should have done—He withstood Satan's temptation. Adam and Eve disobeyed God, ate from a tree and died. Jesus obeyed God by willingly dying on a tree for us (Gal. 3:13) so that we could be released from the curse of sin and death.

**LIFEWISE QUALITY**

OBEDIENCE – Listening to and following through with instructions from those in authority.

**HEAD**

What was Satan's aim as he launched into his conversation with Eve?

How did this conversation move from doubt to rebellion against God, and what were the results?



HEART

Name examples of movies, music, influencer posts or television shows where the slogan “follow your heart” or “trust in yourself” is communicated. Is this good or bad advice? Explain.

Because of sin, no one obeys all the time. What things make it more likely for you to obey a teacher or parent? What makes it less likely? How might those same things apply to obeying God?



HANDS

Things would have ended very differently if Eve obeyed God instead of falling for Satan’s scheme. We may not be cursed when we sin, but choosing not to obey God will have consequences. Write some consequences you have experienced for disobeying.

Though we will all be tempted to disobey God, some simple practices can help us resist temptation. We can ask God to help us want to obey Him, pray before we act, read the Bible and refuse to hang out with people who encourage us to make wrong choices. Choose one of these practices (or brainstorm one of your own) and commit to doing it this week. You can even tell your LifeWise teacher for accountability.



SIN AND GOD'S GRACE

God judges sin and provides salvation to those who trust Him.



JESUS CONNECTION

Like Noah, Jesus would one day be the only righteous man found on the earth. Through His obedience, He would provide an ark of salvation to all who would receive it. But unlike Noah, Jesus would succeed all the way to the end in saying to God, "Not My will, but Yours, be done" (Luke 22:42).



LIFEWISE QUALITY

CONFIDENCE – Full trust and assurance in the reliability of a person or thing.

BIBLE REVIEW

MSL 3 Sin and God's Good News | 1–2 Min

In the previous session, we learned about the Fall—how Adam and Eve fell from perfection through their sin against God.

- ◆ What is sin? (*Rebellion or disobedience toward God.*)
- ◆ How did Adam and Eve's sin change their relationships and the world around them? (*It brought separation from God, frustration in work, pain in childbirth, physical death, sickness, suffering, evil, etc.*)
- ◆ What hope did God give Adam and Eve before they left the Garden of Eden? (*God would send someone to deliver them from sin.*)

Today, we will learn how brokenhearted God became over the sin that destroyed His perfect world. He was so grieved that He wanted to wash the world clean and planned to make a fresh start with just one man and his family.

SESSION STARTERS

Unexpected Benefits | 5–10 Min

- ◆ Ask students to imagine that they went to the convenience store to get a snack. They picked something out, but when they went to the cash register to pay, the cashier told them their item was a buy one, get one free deal. They could pick one more out. As a group, discuss the following questions:
 - ◇ How would this unexpected benefit make you feel?
 - ◇ What would you do with the extra snack? How might it change your day or someone else's day?

- ♦ Of course, in terms of sin, God doesn't have a buy one, get one policy. God's grace to us in Jesus is entirely a free gift that not only spares us from judgment, but also brings us into favor with God. God's grace not only pardons and protects us from God's judgment against sin, but also actually brings us into a new loving relationship with Him.

Inherited | 5–10 Min

- ♦ Before class, print out or locate online several pictures of dog owners who look like their pets. Show these to the class and ask what specific characteristics they see shared by the owner and the pet.
- ♦ Afterward, invite students to share physical features (hair or eye color) or personality traits (sense of humor, love for a favorite sports team) they or their siblings have inherited or adapted from their parents. *[Please be sensitive in asking this question due to the various family contexts that may be represented in your group.]*
- ♦ So far in our study of Genesis, we've seen how God created the heavens and the earth and moved on to His most precious creation: human beings, made in His image. Adam and Eve sinned by choosing not to believe and trust the goodness of God's Word. This sin sickness was inherited by their children, and as it spread, it began to show up in increasingly wicked ways. But we have hope. Even though sin entered the world through one man, salvation also entered through one man: Jesus Christ.

BIBLE LESSON: SIN AND GOD'S GRACE | 10–20 Min

Genesis 6:5–22.

Between Genesis 3 and Genesis 6, sin spread from one family to the entire world. Genesis 6:5 tells us that **the effects of sin were so far-reaching that every single thought in each person's mind was evil**. Even though sin, as always, requires payment, **God again revealed Himself as both just and good in His response to it**.

God's response was sorrow. The Bible says **God "was deeply grieved" or heartbroken over the sin of man** (Gen. 6:6). This is because sin is not merely about breaking rules, but about breaking a relationship. The people God created in His image were in full rebellion against Him.

Yet, God was pleased with one man: Noah. The Bible describes Noah as "righteous" and "blameless," a man who walked with God (Gen. 6:9). Noah loved God, spent time worshiping Him and lived in a way that was pleasing to God. **God didn't save Noah from the flood because he was perfect or good enough, but because Noah had confidence that God would do exactly as He said He would.** That confidence (or *faith*) is what prompted Noah to obey whatever God told him to do (Gen. 6:22).

God warned Noah about His plan to destroy the earth and everything in it. Genesis 6:18 tells us that **God told Noah He would save him, his family and at least one pair, one male and female, of every kind of land animal and bird from the destruction of the Great Flood.** And He would do it through an ark. God gave Noah specific instructions on how to build the Ark, an enormous floating waterproof box.

It took Noah around 100 years to build the ark. It was 510 feet long (1½ football fields) and over 50 feet tall (taller than a 4-story building). The ark would have had a storage capacity of 450 semi-trailers (enough to hold over 100,000 sheep). After the ark was finished, Noah and his family gathered food for themselves and the animals, and God brought one pair of every kind of bird and land animal, and seven pairs of every

kind of clean animal to the ark. **Genesis 6:22 tells us that Noah did everything that God commanded him to do** (Genesis 7:5).

As difficult as it would be for Noah and his sons to build the Ark, this wasn't Noah's only concern. Naturally, as Noah built this enormous structure, people would have asked him what it was for. **2 Peter 2:5 refers to Noah as a "preacher of righteousness." Noah explained why he was building the ark and urged his people to turn away from sin and turn to be made right with God.**

It was probably very difficult for the people to believe Noah's story. Noah built the Ark in the land of Mesopotamia. Although the Tigris and Euphrates rivers were nearby, it was nowhere near a large body of water. Additionally, the people may never have experienced rain. The Bible never mentions the existence of rain until the flood. Genesis 2:6 tells us that a mist came up from the surface of the ground and watered the land.

Summary of Genesis 7–8.

Genesis 7 and 8 tell us many details about the Great Flood:

- ◆ Noah was 600 years old when he and his family boarded the ark.
- ◆ Eight people in all boarded the ark: Noah, his wife, his three sons (Shem, Ham and Japheth) and their wives.
- ◆ God brought two pairs of each animal kind to the ark, and seven pairs of every animal that was to be used as a sacrifice in worship of God (sheep, goats, bulls, doves).
- ◆ God brought all the animals to the ark, the flood began exactly when God said it would (7:4, 10), and God shut Noah in the ark (7:16).
- ◆ When the flood began, it rained for 40 days and nights without stopping. Water came from above (the water canopy created on the second day of creation; Genesis 1:7) and below (burst from under the ocean floor) and completely covered the earth.
- ◆ All people, land animals and birds were destroyed in the flood.
- ◆ After 150 days, God stopped the rain (8:2) and brought a wind to dry the earth. Slowly the waters receded until the ark rested "on the mountains of Ararat" (8:4, a region, not a specific place) and then further until the ground was dry enough for Noah, his family and the animals to leave the ark.
- ◆ Noah and his family were on the ark for one year and ten days (Gen. 7:11, 8:14). They stayed on the ark until God told them to come out.
- ◆ When God told Noah and his family to come out of the ark, Noah understood that God's covenant was true and binding—God had done all He had promised, and he worshiped God by sacrificing birds as a gift to God (Gen. 8:20).

Genesis 9:1, 11–15.

After leaving the ark, **God called Noah and his family to live out the same instructions He had given Adam and Eve** in Genesis 1:28: "Be fruitful and multiply, fill the earth and subdue it," (Gen. 9:1–2). **God was pleased with Noah's sacrifice and made a covenant, or solemn promise, with Noah: God would**

never again destroy the earth with a flood. And God gave the rainbow (which appears after it rains) as the sign of that promise (Gen. 8:21–22, 9:8–17).

Big Ideas

- ◆ **God has the authority to judge sin.** God is the creator of the earth and everything in it (Gen. 1:1). He knows and sees all things. He always does what is right and just. Because of who God is, He has the right to judge our sin. His unchanging and just character demanded that He punish the sins of the world.
- ◆ **Sin could not be washed away by the Great Flood.** In spite of God's punishment of sin, sin was not destroyed. After the flood, God promised Noah that He would never bring a worldwide flood again, even though the evil in men's hearts still remained (8:21).
- ◆ **Salvation, or being saved from sin, only comes through placing our confidence in Jesus.** The Great Flood could not wash away sin, but 1 John 1:9 tells us that Jesus' sacrifice on the cross can cleanse us from all sin.

Discussion Questions

- ◆ The Bible says God grieved deeply over the sin He saw in the world. How might this change our attitude about sin in our lives?
- ◆ What do you find most difficult about the way God chooses to judge sin?
- ◆ Why is it important that God's grace must come before our obedience? What difference does it make which comes first?
- ◆ Does it surprise you that, in the Bible, God is always merciful AND just?

REINFORCEMENT ACTIVITIES

Suggested Video | 5–10 Min

BibleProject Video: *The Covenants*; Full video: 5:15.

Suggested Visual Aid | 5 Min.

Poster 1: *Genesis*.

Building the Ark | 5–10 Min

Review the instructions God gave Noah by playing "Sorry."

- ◆ Write the review questions below on 8–10 large colored cards. On the back of most of the cards, write a point value. On the back of two or three cards, write the word "sorry." Place them on a board or wall.
 - ◇ How long did it take to build the ark? (*About 100 years.*)
 - ◇ What did Noah cover the inside and outside of the ark with? (*Pitch or tar.*)
 - ◇ How many levels were on the ark? (*Three.*)
 - ◇ How many pairs of every animal would be on the ark? (*One pair.*)
 - ◇ How long was the ark? (*510 ft., or 1½ football fields*)
 - ◇ How tall was the ark? (*Over 50 ft, or 4 stories tall*)
 - ◇ How many doors were on the ark? (*One door.*)
 - ◇ Who helped Noah build the ark? (*His three sons.*)

- ✧ What did Noah and his family gather and put on the ark? (*Food.*)
- ✧ What did God bring to the ark? (*The animals.*)
- ♦ Divide students into teams. Teams will take turns choosing the color or question they wish to answer. If they get the correct answer, they win the points on the back of the card. If they choose a “sorry” card, the opposite team loses all their points..has their points wiped out.

Living Faith | 5–10 Min

Write four categories on the board (or use a slideshow): *needs, wants, desires, hopes*. Briefly define them.

- ♦ Noah was an ordinary person like each of us. He had needs, wants, hopes and desires just like we do. But Noah knew that the most important thing he could do every day was to put God first. So Noah surrendered. He took all of his needs, wants, desires and hopes and confidently handed them over to God, expecting Him to do what was best.
- ♦ When we surrender, it has nothing to do with holding up a white flag and completely giving up. It’s about yielding: letting go of the good things we want so that God can lead us to the best things.
- ♦ Go through each of the categories and brainstorm ways students could choose to surrender to the Lord. If time allows, ask students to write areas they could surrender to God on post-it notes and place them up on the board or focal wall.

JESUS CONNECTION



Like Noah, Jesus would one day be the only righteous man found on the earth. Through His obedience, He would provide an ark of salvation to all who would receive it. But unlike Noah, Jesus would succeed all the way to the end in saying to God, “Not My will, but Yours, be done” (Luke 22:42).

LIFEWISE QUALITY | 3–5 Min

CONFIDENCE – Full trust and assurance in the reliability of a person or thing.

Living LifeWise

Because God is trustworthy, we can have confidence in what the Bible says as the right way to live.

LWQ Script

When someone doesn’t keep their promises, we say we’ve “lost confidence” in them. Confidence is a real-time, real-world trust in someone or something. It’s not a feeling. It’s knowing we can lean on them and they won’t let us fall. Rather than thinking he was “good enough,” Noah’s confidence in God was built on a long-term relationship—that’s how he knew God would keep His promises.

We put our confidence in things and people all the time. We can even develop confidence in ourselves. But things and people will let us down. We’ll let ourselves down too. God, however, is entirely trustworthy.

When He makes a promise, He will see it through. We can have complete confidence in Him and in what the Bible says. The Holy Spirit will help us trust God for salvation, for help in hard times and for the power to obey Him and live His way, no matter what.

Head, Heart, Hands Reinforcement | In-class or take-home

- ◆ **Head Questions**
 - ◇ Having confidence in God is what the Bible calls *faith*. What are some specific ways Noah showed confidence in God? What blessings or benefits did Noah receive as a result of his faith put into action?
 - ◇ Confidence is depending on the strength, resources or wisdom we believe will best get us through. What does it look like to show confidence in ourselves, in others or in God? Is it okay to have confidence in ourselves? In others? Why is having confidence in God the best idea?
- ◆ **Heart Questions**
 - ◇ How might our relationships with others look different if we lived each day remembering that, in Jesus, God freely shows us mercy and love instead of judgment?
 - ◇ What qualities does God reveal about Himself in Noah's story (for example, mercy, grace, power, etc.)? Why would those qualities help us have confidence in Him in our hard times?
- ◆ **Hands Challenge**
 - ◇ Think of a difficult situation you are dealing with right now. Are you putting your confidence in yourself, in others or in God? How do you know?
 - ◇ Just as Noah spent his life in faith building an ark while the world rejected his message (Heb. 11:7; 2 Pet. 2:5), we can have confidence in God because He is perfectly powerful, gracious, good and merciful. He will never fail us. But other people can and do fail us, and we will have to deal with our own failures, too. Write down two helpful ways you can respond with your thoughts, words and actions when someone you put your confidence in lets you down and when you fail or let yourself down.

EXTENDED LESSON RESOURCES

Bible Commentary for the Teacher

The biblical account of the flood gives us great insight into the character of God:

- ◆ **God is both loving and just (Genesis 6:5–7).** At the beginning of Noah's story, we are told that what bothers us bothers God much more. The reality of sin was so severe (Gen. 6:1–4, 12) that God determined to stop the corruption, sending a flood to cleanse the earth. Modern readers often object to stories in the Bible that show God's judgment. They are bothered by the violence and destruction and accuse God of being too severe. Isn't God supposed to forgive? At the heart of this response lie two misconceptions.
 - ◇ **Forgiveness means letting things go.** This is simply not true in any situation. When someone hurts us or something we own, even if we genuinely forgive them, there is still a cost to make what is wrong right again. Someone must pay for what has been broken.
 - ◇ **A God of love wouldn't punish sin.** This comes from an incorrect view of God. The Bible does reveal God to be loving, kind and compassionately concerned with our lives, but He is also just. We want to eliminate this ancient "wrath" business, but we cannot simply

ignore the parts of God we don't like. He is both loving *and* just, and we must accept the beauty and fullness of who He is.

- ◆ **God declared Noah righteous because of his faith (Genesis 6:8–9,18; 9:12).** Noah had to have faith and follow-through before he was redeemed by God. Here are several truths we must not miss in these verses:
 - ◇ **In His grace, God declared Noah righteous.** It's no accident that the text specifies Noah received favor from the Lord before being declared righteous. It wasn't that he obeyed, therefore God declared him righteous. First, Noah received grace, and that's why he obeyed.
 - ◇ **Noah's righteousness preserved his family.** The covenant God made with Noah benefited the members of his family. In verses 8 and 18, Noah found favor in God's eyes. But because Noah was declared righteous by God, his family was also saved. The same truth is reiterated in Genesis 7:1: "Then the Lord said to Noah, 'Enter the ark, you and all your household, for I have seen that you alone are righteous before me in this generation.'" The Bible says that God would establish His covenant with Noah and those who belong to him.
 - ◇ **Noah's faith involved follow-through.** What does a life of faith look like? It is not the initial "yes" that shows you have faith, but the follow-through that verifies you have faith. It's not what your words say that determines if you have faith; it's what your life says.
 - ◇ **God planned for redemption.** The world is the creation of a loving God, which also longs for God's promised redemption so that it, too, can be what God created it to be (Rom. 8:19-22). Even in the context of the Old Testament's dramatic judgment event, the flood, the passage highlights that God's plan involves blessing the earth by populating it with people who will worship Him.

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SIN AND GOD'S GRACE

God judges sin and provides salvation to those who trust Him.

JESUS CONNECTION



Like Noah, Jesus would one day be the only righteous man found on the earth. Through His obedience, He would provide an ark of salvation to all who would receive it. But unlike Noah, Jesus would succeed all the way to the end in saying to God, "Not My will, but Yours, be done" (Luke 22:42).



LIFEWISE QUALITY

CONFIDENCE – Full trust and assurance in the reliability of a person or thing.



HEAD

Having confidence in God is what the Bible calls *faith*. What are some specific ways Noah showed confidence in God? What blessings or benefits did Noah receive as a result of his faith put into action?

Confidence is depending on the strength, resources or wisdom we believe will best get us through. What does it look like to show confidence in ourselves, in others or in God? Is it okay to have confidence in ourselves? In others? Why is having confidence in God the best idea?



HEART

How might our relationships with others look different if we lived each day remembering that, in Jesus, God freely shows us mercy and love instead of judgment?

What qualities does God reveal about Himself in Noah's story (for example, mercy, grace, power, etc.)? Why would those qualities help us have confidence in Him in our hard times?



HANDS

Think of a difficult situation you are dealing with right now. Are you putting your confidence in yourself, in others or in God? How do you know?

Just as Noah spent his life in faith building an ark while the world rejected his message (Heb. 11:7; 2 Pet. 2:5), we can have confidence in God because He is perfectly powerful, gracious, good, and merciful. He will never fail us. But other people can and do fail us, and we will have to deal with our own failures, too. How should we respond when someone we put our confidence in lets us down? What about when we fail or let ourselves down?



HEAD

SIN AND GOD'S AUTHORITY

Sin drives people to seek greatness for themselves instead of for God's glory.



HEART

JESUS CONNECTION

God confused the language of those who wanted to make a great name for themselves and scattered them. At Pentecost (Acts 2), God enabled Jesus' disciples to declare His praise in many languages to show that He wanted the whole world to know the great name of His Son. One day, God will gather together people from every tribe and language to worship Him in unity.



HANDS

LIFEWISE QUALITY

HUMILITY – Refusing to think of myself as more important than I am.

BIBLE REVIEW

MSL 4 Sin and God's Grace | 1-2 Min

In the previous session, we learned that the sinfulness of mankind grew so great that God chose to destroy everything on the earth with the Great Flood.

- ♦ Why did God choose to save Noah and his family? (*God saw Noah's continual faith and chose to give him and his family favor.*)
- ♦ What changed after the flood? What stayed the same? (*God told humans to "be fruitful and multiply" as before; sin was still present; animals would fear humans; God promised to never again destroy the earth with water.*)

Today, we will learn how Noah's descendants were multiplied into many different tribes and languages.

SESSION STARTERS

Charade Attitudes | 5 Min

- ♦ Write out words describing someone's character on index cards: *arrogant, selfish, humble, generous, hard-working, confused, etc.* Fold each piece of paper in half and place it in a container. Divide students into two or three teams. Instruct one student to come up one at a time and draw a piece of paper. Give them one minute to act out the word. Each team receives a point if their team guesses the correct word within one minute.
- ♦ All of these words are a part of today's Bible lesson. We'll talk about the ways some arrogant people wanted praise for themselves and how God confused their language and changed their plans. Unlike these people, God calls us to be humble, generous and committed to making Him famous, instead of ourselves.

Famous | 10–20 Min

- ◆ Ask students the following questions about the appeal of being famous:
 - ◇ Have you ever wanted to be famous?
 - ◇ In what way did you want to achieve that fame (social media, acting, singing, athletics, inventing, etc.)?
 - ◇ Why do you think the idea of being famous is so appealing?
- ◆ The people we'll learn about as we study today really liked the idea of being famous. Obviously, they didn't have social media, TV or awards back then, but they were determined to make a name for themselves. So, they built a tower that reached high in the sky. But their plan didn't exactly turn out the way they hoped.

BIBLE LESSON: SIN AND GOD'S AUTHORITY | 10–20 Min

Genesis 11:1–4.

Much time had passed since God saved Noah and his family from the flood. Although the flood slowed the spread of sin, humanity was still broken because sin remained in people's hearts (Gen. 8:21). **In the beginning, God commanded Adam and Eve to be fruitful, multiply and fill the earth (Gen. 1:28). After the flood, He gave the same command to Noah and his descendants** (Gen. 9:1). God's image bearers were to be His representatives in every part of the earth.

Many of Noah's descendants rebelled against this command. In fact, they did the exact opposite. They settled in a valley, in modern-day Iraq, and gathered to build a great city and a tower "with its top in the sky" (11:4). In essence, they said, "There's nothing we can't do."

Their motivation for building the tower was pride. God alone deserves to be praised. But the people of Babel wanted to build a name for themselves. They knew God, and they were purposely seeking to take the praise due to Him alone for themselves. Whenever we try to claim the praise that belongs to someone else, it is pride. And this kind of pride never brings positive results.

Genesis 11:5–9.

God knew what the people were doing, and He came down to see their tower. **God saw their rebellion against His good and perfect plan and decided to confuse their language.** Suddenly, instead of one language, there were many languages. Instead of understanding other people easily, it sounded as if they were babbling or speaking nonsense. **Because they could not speak to one another, they could not complete the tower or the city.** Family groups, speaking the same language, left Babel and migrated to other areas of the world. **And so they scattered, ultimately filling the earth as God had originally commanded them to do.** God's plan was accomplished.

At first, it might seem like God judged the people too severely for building this city and tower. However, the issue was not that they were doing these things, but that they were disobeying His instructions, forming a new plan and carrying it out *apart from God*. **God cared deeply about their hearts. He wanted to slow the spread of sin, and humanity's unified language would have led to further rebellion against God** if left unchecked.

Interestingly, God did not destroy the Tower of Babel. He left it to gradually decay and stand as a warning about the end result of pride.

Big Ideas

- ◆ **God sees the motives of our heart.** God not only knows and sees all that we do, He knows our every thought and intention. Nothing is hidden from God (Heb. 4:12–13). He is aware if our reason for speaking or acting in a certain way is an act of worship toward Him or an act of selfishness and rebellion.
- ◆ **The effects of pride can be disastrous.** The people at Babel wanted to attain “greatness” in the eyes of men rather than make God great, and it cost them almost everything. Pride always prevents us from submitting to God’s commands. It separates us from Him and other people because it is about self.
- ◆ **Nothing can stop God’s plan.** God is **sovereign**. He has all the authority, wisdom and power needed to accomplish His perfect plan. And God’s plan will continue no matter what happens.

Discussion Questions

- ◆ Why was it so important for Noah’s descendants to follow God’s plan?
- ◆ Why might it be better for our plans to fail rather than succeed without God? *[Share a personal example to show students how to answer this question.]*
- ◆ How might God use pain or disappointment to protect us or help our faith grow?
- ◆ When are you tempted to believe life is all about you or that the point of life is becoming popular or famous?
- ◆ God’s way of making us right with Him comes through Jesus. Why is God’s way better than trying to get to Him in our own strength and effort?

REINFORCEMENT ACTIVITIES

Suggested Video | 5–10 Min

BibleProject Video: *Genesis 1–11*; Full video: 7:40; Shorter option: 6:13–end.

Human Knot | 5–10 Min

- ◆ Form groups of 6–8. Groups will stand in a circle, cross their arms at the wrist and grasp hands with two people across from them. Challenge students to work together to untie the knot without letting go of each others’ hands.
- ◆ Remind them that while we can eventually untangle the “Human Knot” there is no way for us to untangle ourselves from our sin. The knots sin creates in our lives are so complex, only Jesus could untangle them and set us free.



JESUS CONNECTION



God confused the language of those who wanted to make a great name for themselves and scattered them. At Pentecost (Acts 2), God enabled Jesus' disciples to declare His praise in many languages to show that He wanted the whole world to know the great name of His Son. One day, God will gather together people from every tribe and language to worship Him in unity (Rev. 7:9–10).



LIFEWISE QUALITY | 3–5 Min

HUMILITY – Refusing to think of myself as more important than I am.

Living LifeWise

Because God provides everything we need, we can be humble instead of serving only ourselves.

LWQ Script

Are you a competitive person? Do you think competitiveness can go too far? *[Allow students to answer.]*

The opposite of humility is pride. C. S. Lewis wrote that pride is always competitive. Pride doesn't care if I'm smart or moral. It only cares that I'm smarter or more moral than you. Sin's favorite motto is always "By my will, in my strength, for my glory." This was the attitude shown by the people building the tower. And it ultimately results in cruel, unethical and selfish behavior.

But God calls us to be humble. Humility doesn't compete. The humble person serves and celebrates others without drawing attention to himself. Jesus modeled humility (Phil 2:6–8), and because of His death and resurrection, we can live humbly as He did. This does not mean we compete against other people and compare ourselves to see who can be the most like Jesus. Instead, it means the Holy Spirit empowers us to live as Jesus did. God invites us to the cross so that He can free us from the pride that enslaves us and give us a life of peace and humility.

Head, Heart, Hands Reinforcement | In-class or take-home

◆ Head Questions

- ◆ The opposite of humility is pride. In Genesis 11:1–4, how did the people display their pride instead of humility? Be specific.
- ◆ Even though the people disobeyed God's instructions, His plan endured. What does this tell us about God?

◆ Heart Questions

- ◆ The Bible is clear that God alone deserves glory, but like the people at Babel, we tend to put ourselves at the center of life. How does prideful thinking steal what belongs to God?

- ❖ If humility means not thinking of myself as more important than I am, what are some ways we might show that we do think of ourselves as more important than we are?
- ◆ **Hands Challenge**
 - ❖ Throughout His life, God's son, Jesus, showed humility by serving others. He washed His friends' feet, fed crowds of people, healed the sick and cared for the poor. Make a list of three specific people in your family, at school or in your community and decide on one way you can humbly serve that person or group. Then, commit to doing those things this week.

EXTENDED LESSON RESOURCES

Bible Commentary for the Teacher

The tragedy of the tower of Babel began with the sinfulness of people. But where sin multiplies, God's grace multiplies even more (Romans 5:20).

- ◆ **The effects of sin multiply (Genesis 11:3).**
 - ❖ **The core of sin is selfishness.** One way to help students understand sin is by looking at the middle letter of the word: I. Sin is the great "I" problem. We say "By my will, in my strength, for my glory."
 - "I want" instead of considering what God wants.
 - "In my strength," instead of relying on God's.
 - "My glory and attention," not God's.
 - ❖ **Sin is rooted in pride.** The question is "What's in our hearts?" This isn't a question of how moral or religious we are. The people building the tower may have believed they were incredibly religious. This is a question of what stands at the core of our hearts—God's will or ours. People can do many good things in life—great things—and be completely consumed by pride.
 - ❖ **Sin distorts God's good creation, purpose and plan.** As we saw from Genesis 3, sin always distorts and twists what God has made. Their sin was not reaching for God, but the warped way they did it. The problem of sin isn't necessarily that we want belonging, security or even greatness, but that we look for those qualities in the wrong places. We look to small things like fame or achievement to fill a God-sized void in our hearts. It's no wonder we're unsatisfied.
- ◆ **God's grace multiplies (Genesis 11:6–7).** God could have destroyed the tower, struck the builders with lightning, or caused a massive earthquake, but instead, He confused their languages so that their progress in this evil was stunted. As we have seen time and again in Genesis, God's responses always show an element of mercy even in His acts of judgment.
 - ❖ **God provided physically and spiritually for Adam and Eve.** Genesis 3: Because Adam and Eve sinned, they were judged and banished from paradise. But was this action only judgment? No. God could have annihilated Adam and Eve right then, but He showed them mercy instead. He sacrificed an animal in order to clothe them, and He promised that a Messiah would be born through the seed of Eve and would crush the head of the serpent.
 - ❖ **God protected Cain.** Genesis 4: When Cain killed Abel, Cain was judged and forced to wander. But when Cain expressed his fear of being killed in vengeance, God mercifully placed upon him a mark of protection.

- ✧ **God saved Noah and his family.** Genesis 6–9: When the state of humanity was described as creating new evils with every thought and intent, God brought judgment through the flood. But it wasn't just judgment; He saved a remnant of humanity in the ark.
- ✧ **God disciplines His children.** Hebrews 12:5–11: God continues to show mercy to His children even today. God disciplines us when we sin, but the discipline is good because it is what proves we are His. The discipline is merciful because it produces the fruit of peace and righteousness, even if it isn't enjoyable at the time.

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**SIN AND GOD'S AUTHORITY**

Sin drives people to seek greatness for themselves instead of for God's glory.

JESUS CONNECTION

God confused the language of those who wanted to make a great name for themselves and scattered them. At Pentecost (Acts 2), God enabled Jesus' disciples to declare His praise in many languages to show that He wanted the whole world to know the great name of His Son. One day, God will gather together people from every tribe and language to worship Him in unity.

**LIFEWISE QUALITY**

HUMILITY – Refusing to think of myself as more important than I am.

**HEAD**

The opposite of humility is pride. In Genesis 11:1-4, how did the people display their pride instead of humility? Be specific.

Even though the people disobeyed God's instructions, His plan endured. What does this tell us about God?



HEART

The Bible is clear that God alone deserves glory, but like the people at Babel, we tend to put ourselves at the center of life. How does prideful thinking steal what belongs to God?

If humility means not thinking of myself as more important than I am, what are some ways we might show that we do think of ourselves as more important than we are?



HANDS

Throughout His life, God's son, Jesus, showed humility by serving others. He washed his friends' feet, fed crowds of people, healed the sick and cared for the poor. Make a list of three specific people in your family, at school or in your community and decide on one way you can humbly serve that person or group. Then, commit to doing those things this week.



HEAD

SUFFERING AND GOD'S PRESENCE

God draws near to comfort us when we suffer.



HEART

JESUS CONNECTION

Job wanted a mediator when he suffered—someone to bring him and God together. We know there is one who stands between God and man and pleads for us as a man pleads for his friends. Jesus Christ is that man; He is that friend. He said there is no greater love than to give up your life for your friend (John 15:13).



HANDS

LIFEWISE QUALITY

CONTENTMENT – Being satisfied with what God has given and not desiring anything more.

BIBLE REVIEW

MSL 5 Sin and God's Authority | 1–2 Min

In the previous session, we learned why people originally spread across the earth.

- ♦ Why did the people build the city and Tower of Babel? (*To make themselves great; pride.*)
- ♦ How did God stop them from completing the tower? Why? (*He confused their languages to slow the spread of sin.*)

Today, we will learn about a man named Job and how he dealt with difficult circumstances in life.

SESSION STARTERS

Current Events | 5–10 Min

- ♦ Briefly discuss a recent news headline regarding a natural disaster, act of violence or difficult situation. [*Make sure it is appropriate for the students' ages and situation.*] Ask students to share what they know about it. Be prepared to give them the main facts of the story.
- ♦ It is difficult to understand why bad things like this happen at all. But when they do, we all have one question: Why? Although Job's story doesn't necessarily answer that question, it does show how a **righteous** man dealt with suffering and how he trusted God despite what he experienced. Job didn't understand his suffering at the time, and most often, we don't either. But, just like with Job, our suffering can still be used as a part of God's plan.

What Do You Value? | 5–10 Min

- ♦ Bring in one or two items you value highly. [*If you don't want to transport the item or if you would like to talk about a person, bring a photo.*] Make sure the items vary in monetary and sentimental value. Describe the value and worth of each item to students.

- ◆ Invite volunteers to identify their most valuable possessions and tell why they treasure them so much. Discuss what it would be like if this item was lost, stolen or destroyed?
- ◆ It's never easy to lose something you value. We have all lost something (or someone) we value. Job, the main character in today's passage, lost a lot. But in the midst of his pain and suffering, Job found comfort in God. His example shows us how to do the same.

BIBLE LESSON: SUFFERING AND GOD'S PRESENCE | 10–20 Min

Job 1:6–12, 20–22.

While some have said that the story of Job is just a myth or parable, **Job** was a real man (Eze. 14:14, 20; Jas. 5:11). He lived a real life in a city called Uz (in modern-day Jordan). He **was wealthy and had a large, happy family, but most importantly, he was a “man of complete integrity, who feared God and turned away from evil” (1:1).**

When Satan, the accuser, came before God, God pointed out Job's faithfulness. Satan claimed Job was only faithful to God because God had been faithful to Job. If God were to withhold blessing from Job, Satan countered, Job would curse God for His apparent faithlessness. So **God gave His permission for Satan to test Job.** Satan cannot act without God's permission, and **when God does permit Satan to act, His permission comes with limitations.** Satan did not have authority to touch Job. In chapter 2, Satan was allowed to touch Job, but not take his life.

How do you respond when life gets hard or things don't go your way? **Job responded not with anger but faithful worship: “The LORD gives and the LORD takes away. Blessed be the name of the LORD” (1:21).** Job recognized that life and all good gifts originate in God. All the good things Job had leading up to that day were because of God's kind and gracious provision. But **the same Lord who had authority to give him what he had also maintained the authority to take it away.** Knowing this, Job chose to trust.

Job 9:14–16, 32–35.

Job initially responded in worship, **but the more he lived in his pain, the more he longed for God to make sense of his circumstances.** In fact, **Job wanted to take God to court to plead his case.** He wanted God to explain, **but he also knew he could not demand answers.** He did not believe God would pay attention to what he said (v.16) and knew that he couldn't take God to court as if God was just another man (v.32). **Job recognized that he needed a mediator who had God's ear, someone to bridge the impassable gap between the two of them and help Job communicate with God.** Feeling forgotten, Job declared, **“I am on my own” (v. 35).** But **God did not abandon Job.** God was not distant. God had been involved the whole time, and He was listening.

Summary of Job 38.

At the end of the story, God revealed Himself to Job by speaking out of a powerful whirlwind. God didn't answer any of Job's questions. Instead, God turned the tables **and questioned Job:**

“Where were you when I established the earth?” (v. 4)

“Have you ever in your life commanded the morning or assigned the dawn its place?” (v. 12)

“Have you traveled to the sources of the sea or walked in the depths of the oceans?” (v. 16)

As God questioned him, Job was reminded of God's great power and wisdom, His eternal presence. After this, there was no doubt in Job's mind. **God had not abandoned him. Instead, He was working behind the scenes in ways that Job couldn't fully comprehend.** Job remained silent as God questioned him.

Job 42:1–6.

After God questioned Job, **Job humbly responded. He affirmed that God was Sovereign and His plan would be accomplished.** God's words may have initially stung—especially when the world seemed to be falling apart around Job—but Job needed to hear and remember the full truth about God: God is all-powerful and all-knowing, and His presence fills the universe. Not only that, but God is active. **When Job saw God for who He truly is, he repented, or turned away from the sinful idea that he had a better plan for his life than God did.**

Summary of Job 42:10–17.

After Job's encounter with God, God restored Job's health, relationships and possessions. God blessed Job with twice as much as He had before. Job also had 10 more children and lived to see his great-great grandchildren.

Big Ideas

- ◆ **Suffering is not proof that God doesn't exist.** We live in a world filled with sin—our own sin, the sin of others and the effects of a perfect world undone by the sin of Adam and Eve. Because of the effects of sin in the world, we will experience suffering.
- ◆ **God is sovereign in our suffering.** God has a perfect plan for each person that works for his or her ultimate good (Jer. 29:11; Rom. 8:28). When we go through suffering, God's plan doesn't always feel good. But God can help us to follow the example of Jesus—He willingly went to the cross to obey His Father's plan. He kept his focus on God's character—God's love, compassion, goodness, faithfulness and justice—and believed that God would always do what was best.
- ◆ **God is trustworthy and will bring good out of our suffering.** Because God is good, we can trust Him to bring meaning out of our suffering. It is never pointless. Even though it can cause unimaginable pain and heartache for us and those we love, we can draw close to God and allow Him to take our suffering and shape it into something good within us and for those around us.

Discussion Questions

- ◆ We learn from Job's story that Satan can't do anything without God's permission. Why is this good news for us?
- ◆ When we suffer, it can feel like God is distant. How does God's presence in Job's life tell a different story?
- ◆ Do you think knowing the reason for suffering helps? Why do you think God ultimately did not give Job a reason for his suffering?
- ◆ Which would you rather have—God Himself or a pain-free life? Explain.
- ◆ How might someone who believes in God respond differently to suffering than someone who doesn't believe in God?

REINFORCEMENT ACTIVITIES

Suggested Video | 5–10 Min

BibleProject Video: *The Book of Job*; Full video: 11:00, or show clips 0:00–4:05, 8:45–end.

Walking Through Suffering | 5–10 Min

Draw a 3 by 3 chart on a whiteboard, focal wall, or screen. Label the two headings at the top as God and Job, and the headings on the left column as qualities and actions. Invite the class to brainstorm God and Job's qualities and actions that were revealed throughout the story. For example:

- ◆ **God's qualities:** all-powerful, all-knowing, fills the universe, patient, sovereign
- ◆ **Job's qualities:** righteous, humble, long-suffering, repentant
- ◆ **God's actions:** Says He is pleased with Job, limits suffering, protects Job's life, commands Satan, speaks out of a storm, questions Job, restores Job's life
- ◆ **Job's actions:** open-handed with possessions, praises God in suffering, asks God why, repents

What does Job's story teach us about how God wants us to walk through suffering—our own or with someone we care about?

JESUS CONNECTION

Job wanted a mediator when he suffered—someone to bring him and God together. We know there is one who stands between God and man and pleads for us as a man pleads for his friends. Jesus Christ is that man; He is that friend. He said there is no greater love than to give up your life for your friend (John 15:13).

LIFEWISE QUALITY

CONTENTMENT – Being satisfied with what God has given and not desiring anything more.

Living LifeWise

Because God is all-powerful and good, we can be content even in hard seasons or situations.

LWQ Script

Contentment has been defined as: "I have my 'want-er' under control. I am not bored, greedy or always wanting more, and I don't beg or whine."¹ Do you think you are content, by this definition? [Take answers.]

A discontent person always demands or pushes for their way, what they want or simply for more, but being content is more than words we say. Our hearts can still want and be envious, even if we say we don't care or didn't want that [fill in the blank] anyway. Contentment is not an easy thing for anyone, but it can be learned. Job learned to be content while enduring great pain, but we don't have to wait for suffering to practice having a content heart.

We must learn, along with Job, that contentment starts by seeing God rightly. He is sovereign and good. He gives abundantly and is never stingy. And in His grace, He has provided everything we need. Jesus

¹ "Virtue for Family." We Choose Virtues. 2024. <https://wechoosevirtues.com/collections/tools-for-families>.

came to die for our sins. The Holy Spirit empowers us to know God and live His way. And He has promised to provide all that we need (Matt. 6:33, 2 Pet. 1:3). As we practice thinking and living God's way, we will learn how to be content, even in hard times.

Head, Heart, Hands Reinforcement | In-class or take-home

- ◆ **Head Questions**
 - ◇ How do we see Job respond to God in his suffering? How does God respond to Job's questions?
 - ◇ Many times, we won't know why we are suffering. Does the fact that we don't know the reason prove that there is no reason at all? Explain.
- ◆ **Heart Questions**
 - ◇ List some ways you have typically responded to suffering or hard times in your own life. Not every response we have to suffering is healthy or positive. What are some healthy and helpful responses we can use when suffering comes?
 - ◇ Choosing contentment is not easy, but it can be learned. The Bible tells us that God knows what we need (Matthew 6:32) and will supply everything we need (Psalms 23:1; Philippians 4:19). Why would focusing on those promises, instead of whatever we think we need, help us be content?
- ◆ **Hands Challenge**
 - ◇ Sometimes enduring suffering is easier when someone walks with us. Job found out that God had never left him in his suffering. We can stand with others, too. Think of someone you know who is suffering or going through a tough time in their life. Write out a prayer to God on their behalf. Determine how you will encourage that person this week. [Examples: call them, help them with a practical task or chore, take them cookies, send them the prayer you wrote out on their behalf, invite them to church, etc.]

EXTENDED LESSON RESOURCES

Bible Commentary for the Teacher

The idea of Job's story dating back to some of the earliest moments of history is fascinating. Understanding where Job fits into the Bible's story is helpful, but it is comforting to know that, from the earliest days of the human race, we have wrestled with the idea of suffering. The way we respond during suffering stems from our beliefs on why suffering exists. The book of Job describes flawed responses to suffering, as well as right responses:

- ◆ **Flawed responses to suffering (Job 2).** When Satan's first attempt to cause Job to curse God by taking his family and possessions from him failed, God granted permission for Satan to try again—this time with permission to inflict great physical pain on Job (2:4–6). Even when Job's wife called on him to curse God and die, Job did not sin (2:9–10). After Satan attacked Job's health, Job's three friends sat with Job for a week. The majority of the book of Job records their misconceptions about the cause of suffering and pain:
 - ◇ **Suffering results from personal sin.** Not only does suffering come from living in a fallen world, but suffering can also come from standing up for the gospel—a good thing indeed! In essence, Job's friends' thinking was small—they couldn't imagine how suffering might be used in a good way, to bring Job closer to the grace and mercy of God.

- ❖ **Suffering stops with repentance.** Job's friends wanted Job to repent because they felt that he must have done something wrong to have this great suffering. Job countered that he had done nothing wrong; these things had to be one enormous mistake or misunderstanding.
- ❖ **Suffering doesn't exist for the righteous.** Job's friends had an incomplete view of suffering. They viewed suffering as the direct result of sin and blessing as the direct result of living rightly. So, they thought God punished those who did evil and rewarded those who did good.
- ◆ **Right responses to suffering (Job 42:1–6).** God's message and presence demanded a response from Job. Job begged for a personal encounter with the Lord, and it had happened. What was he supposed to do next? Job's response showed a change in perspective.
 - ❖ **Job acknowledged God's sovereignty.** First, Job acknowledged God's sovereignty. Rather than dwelling on an answer for his grief, he acknowledged God's control over eternal things.
 - ❖ **Job humbled himself.** Second, rather than shaking his fist at God, Job humbled his heart. Our reply to suffering is often based on the emotion of the moment, not staying silent before God. The presence of the Creator filled every void suffering had brought into his life. This is what Job needed most.
 - ❖ **Job drew closer to God in his pain.** In the end, God used Job's suffering to draw him closer to Himself. We cannot miss this: Job did not draw closer to God *despite* his pain; he drew closer to God *through* his pain. The same is true for us. Jesus has told us that we will be persecuted—we will endure hardship and suffer—for Him (Matt. 10:22). And it is this very adversity that will draw us closer to Him as we identify with Him through our suffering (Col. 1:24). When we experience God's presence in the midst of severe pain, it is a faith-expanding adventure.

In Defense

The problem of pain is at the heart of Job's story. Many say they cannot believe in God because there is pain and suffering in the world. But this question is not just a problem for the biblical **worldview**. It is a question that every worldview must answer, and no worldview gives a more consistent and effective answer than the Bible does. The biblical worldview recognizes that pain feels wrong because it is wrong. The world was not supposed to go like this, but sin broke and distorted God's perfect creation. And through Jesus' death and resurrection, God made the way to restore and redeem every part of that creation, including suffering and pain.

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SUFFERING AND GOD'S PRESENCE

God draws near to comfort us when we suffer.

JESUS CONNECTION



Job wanted a mediator when he suffered—someone to bring him and God together. We know there is one who stands between God and man and pleads for us as a man pleads for his friends. Jesus Christ is that man; He is that friend. He said there is no greater love than to give up your life for your friend (John 15:13).



LIFEWISE QUALITY

CONTENTMENT – Being satisfied with what God has given and not desiring anything more.



HEAD

How do we see Job respond to God in his suffering? How does God respond to Job's questions?

Many times, we won't know why we are suffering. Does the fact that we don't know the reason prove that there is no reason at all? Explain.



HEART

List some ways you have typically responded to suffering or hard times in your own life. Not every response we have to suffering is healthy or positive. What are some healthy and helpful responses we can use when suffering comes?

Choosing contentment is not easy, but it can be learned. The Bible tells us that God knows what we need (Matthew 6:32) and will supply everything we need (Psalms 23:1; Philippians 4:19). Why would focusing on those promises, instead of whatever we think we need, help us be content?



HANDS

Sometimes enduring suffering is easier when someone walks with us. Job found out that God had never left him in his suffering. We can stand with others, too. Think of someone you know who is suffering or going through a tough time in their life. Write out a prayer to God on their behalf. Determine how you will encourage that person this week. (*Examples:* call them, help them with a practical task or chore, take them cookies, send them the prayer you wrote out on their behalf, invite them to church, etc).



HEAD

GOD MAKES A PROMISE

God established a covenant with people to reverse the curse of sin.



HEART

JESUS CONNECTION

God promised Abraham that the world would be blessed through his descendants. Jesus Christ is the promised descendant of Abraham through whom God will bring salvation to the rest of the world.



HANDS

LIFEWISE QUALITY

HOPE – Expecting God will do what is best in every situation.

BIBLE REVIEW

MSL 6 Suffering and God's Presence | 1–2 Min

In the previous session, we learned about Job's suffering and how his perspective about his own pain shifted.

- ◆ How does the Bible explain the existence of suffering? (*We live in a sinful world. Suffering can be the result of our own sin, another person's sin or living in a sinful, imperfect world.*)
- ◆ How did Job's focus change after God appeared to him in the whirlwind? (*At first, he questioned why God was allowing it; later, he accepted that God was much greater than him and had a perfect plan, even if he didn't understand.*)

Today, we will learn how God called a man named Abram to leave his home and start a new life and nation.

SESSION STARTERS

Good Faith | 5–10 Min

- ◆ Have you heard the term “good faith”? When you order food at a restaurant, you, in “good faith,” trust that they will bring what you ordered and charge you the correct price for your meal. We regularly buy items that only hold the promise of the product to come. When you download a new song, you trust that it will show up in your playlist. When you order an item online, you trust that it will be delivered to you by the promised day. Have you ever purchased something but not received what was promised? What happened?
- ◆ God asked Abram to trust Him based only on His Word that He would provide. But God wasn't asking Abram to spend a few dollars to attend an event or buy a song; He was asking Abram to leave behind everything he knew, based only on a promise. We can read this story and see that God was faithful in doing as He promised, but at the time, Abram had no guarantees. He chose to step out in faith.

Trust Fall | 5–10 Min

- ♦ Select one student to try the “trust fall” challenge. Have the student stand on the floor, body rigid like a board with arms crossed tightly across the chest. The rest of the class should stand in two vertical lines, shoulder to shoulder, facing one another behind the student. Both lines should have feet spread apart and arms spread out straight, palms facing up. The lines must pay careful attention to the teacher who will tell them when the student is ready to fall backward. The teacher may count down from 10 to help the student know when to fall into his classmates arms. Repeat this process with as many students as you have time for or who volunteer.
- ♦ Debrief with the class after the trust fall challenge. Even though you were promised that you would be caught, it was still risky to fall. You didn’t know what it would feel like or how close to the floor you might be caught. You may have questioned if your classmates were strong enough or quick enough to catch you.
- ♦ When Abram left his home, he was trusting God for everything. He left a home where he was well provided for and followed wherever God chose to lead him: he left the land, customs and gods he knew. He knew nothing but the fact that God promised to provide and bless him beyond anything he had ever known.

BIBLE LESSON: GOD MAKES A PROMISE | 10–20 Min

Several generations passed between the time of the flood and the opening of Genesis 12. The final 38 chapters of Genesis focus on only four generations of a family, four patriarchs, or founders, of faith for God’s chosen people, the Israelites: Abram, Isaac, Jacob and Joseph.

Genesis 12:1–4.

God began by calling on Abram to take a step of faith. Abram was to leave three things: his land, his relatives and his father’s house (v. 1). It is very difficult for us to understand the gravity of this calling. There were no phones, mail service or transportation. If Abram left, he knew he would never see his family or home again.

But God’s considerable calling did not come without considerable promises. If Abram were to step out in faith and follow God, **God promised to do three things for him. He would give him a new land, make him into a great nation and bless him** (v. 2). **God would give Abram all that he left behind, but to a greater degree.**

As God described the blessings He intended to pour out on Abram, He said “I will” six times. Only once did He say “you will” to Abram, and that was in the context of what God would do through Abram rather than what Abram would do for God. **God made it clear that giving Abram a new land, growing a nation and blessing him was God’s project, not Abram’s.** It would be strictly an act of grace.

When God spoke to Abram that day, He was inviting him to leave the sure for the unsure, the known for the unknown, what was in his hand for what God promised to do in the future. **In that moment, Abram had to decide whether or not he trusted this God he just met.**

Genesis 12:5–20.

Abram believed God’s promises. But he was a sinful person, just like us. So he went through periods of great faith in God and others of doubt. Abram’s calling was followed by his journey into the Negev where he chose to worship God instead of the idols in the land of Canaan (Gen. 12:5–9). Yet, when a famine

came, he ran to Egypt for provisions instead of to God (Gen. 12:10–20). While there, Abram worried that the Egyptians would kill him and take his wife, Sarai, because she was so beautiful. God had promised to protect Abram, but he acted out of fear instead, encouraging Sarai to lie and say she was his sister. She did as Abram said, and when the deception was finally uncovered, the Pharaoh angrily sent them away.

Genesis 15:1–6.

Some time later, God came to Abram in a vision and told him not to be afraid. But Abram did not respond with gratitude. Instead, his response was filled with doubt. “You haven’t even given me a single son, and yet you promised I would be a great nation?”

God responded in mercy and grace to Abram’s doubt. Abram’s servant Eliezer would not be Abram’s heir. God would give him a son from his own body. Then, the Lord took Abram outside and invited him to count the stars. **He gave Abram a visible reminder of God’s promise.** In that moment—as Abram gazed into the expanse of God’s creation and was reminded of his Creator’s capability—he believed. And God credited that belief as **righteousness**. Abram’s faith placed him in a right relationship with God. When Abram left his home in obedience to God’s calling in Genesis 12, it was primarily an act of obedience. This moment under the starry night was different. **Because of Abram’s belief, his faith made him right with God.**

Years passed. God wanted to assure Abram that He had not forgotten His promise, so He gave Abram another reminder. God told Abram, “Your name will no longer be Abram, but Abraham, for I will make you the father of many nations” (Gen. 17:4). God also changed Sarai’s name to Sarah, promising that nations and kings would come from her family line (Gen. 17:15–16). God wanted Abraham and Sarah to remember every time they heard their names that God would keep His promise.

Big Ideas

- ♦ **God’s promises depend on His ability to fulfill them.** When God made promises to Abram, it was based on what only God could do. Even when Abram doubted God and made mistakes, God continued to keep His promises to Abram. God waited until Abram and Sarai were as good as dead (Hebrews 11:12) to give them an heir so there would be no question of God’s ability to do as He said.
- ♦ **God is at work even when we cannot physically see it (John 5:17).** Many times, we mistake God’s apparent “inactivity” for His “inability.” We think God is not working at all simply because He is not working how or when we would like or expect. This often leads us to either anxiety or outright rejection of God. God works on His own timetable.
- ♦ **Salvation from sin comes through trusting in God’s promised Savior.** Like Abram, we are called to trust the promises of God for our salvation. But we have a great advantage over those who lived during Old Testament times: Abram’s trust looked forward to what God would do; our trust looks back at what God has already done. We trust in the fulfillment of the covenant Abram longed to see—Jesus Christ, the Savior, who was born in Abram’s family line, grew up to offer Himself as a sacrifice, crushing the power of Satan, sin and death and leading the way to eternal life for all who believe.

Discussion Questions

- ♦ God was willing to accomplish for Abram what Abram couldn’t accomplish for himself. What does this communicate about God’s character?

- ◆ God is the only One able to make us righteous. How might this change your reasons for listening to God's Word?
- ◆ God uses flawed and imperfect people in His good work in the world. What are some ways this encourages you?
- ◆ How does it give you hope to know that God works according to His own perfect timetable?

REINFORCEMENT ACTIVITIES

Suggested Video | 5–10 Min

BibleProject Video: *Genesis 12–50*, full video: 8:08, or show 0:00–4:20.

Suggested Visual Aid | 5 Min.

Poster 1: *Genesis*

Poster 14: *New Covenant*

Poster 16: *God's Compassion*

Leaving It Behind | 5–10 Min

Choose a scene from a movie, in which the main character had to leave something or someone behind.

[Suggested movies: *Narnia: The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*—Edmund goes back for a picture, Edmund's mother sends them away (opening scene); *Frozen*—Kristoff leaves Anna at the castle (scene 12, to 1:14:56); *Monsters Inc.*—Sully takes Boo home (scene 29, to 1:19:51). Play clip, then discuss the following questions as a class:

- ◆ Why do you think this particular situation would have been difficult?
- ◆ How would you have responded in this situation?

Just as the characters in this film were called to leave behind something good, God called Abram to leave many good things behind for something more important.

JESUS CONNECTION



God promised Abram that the world would be blessed through his descendants. Jesus Christ is the promised descendant of Abram through whom God will bring salvation to the rest of the world.

LIFEWISE QUALITY | 3–5 Min

HOPE – Expecting God will do what is best in every situation.

Living LifeWise

Because God responds to us with grace, we can have hope for today and for the future.

LWQ Script

Invite students to finish the sentence: "I hope that..." Allow volunteers to share their sentences out loud.

Humans can't live without hope. If there is no chance, no possible way through, we give up, shrink back or even die. Abram had heard God's promises, but it had been years, and he was losing hope. So he asked God what was going on. And God didn't give Abram a pat on the head or a quick brush-off. He didn't tell Abram that he'd earned God's reward. Instead, God showed Abram that he could anchor his hope in who God is and what He said would happen.

Hope works like that for us, too. We have hope, but not because we've earned enough credit with God or worked hard enough to get a reward from Him. In His grace, He's already provided all that we need to have a relationship with Him through Jesus. His free gift means we don't have to depend on ourselves, but have an unshakeable hope in Him to provide for all we need today and for the future.

Head, Heart, Hands Reinforcement | In-class or take-home

◆ Head Questions

- ◆ Hope is the confident expectation and assurance that God is faithful to keep His promises, regardless of life's circumstances. How did God give Abram hope while he waited on God's promises?
- ◆ Did Abram's hope ever waver? Explain.

◆ Heart Questions

- ◆ Hope is what keeps us focused and moving toward our God-given dreams and goals. Hope is what motivates us when things get tough and we want to give up. How can remembering God's faithfulness to you and others in the past bring comfort and hope when you are in the middle of a difficult situation?
- ◆ God chose Abram and pursued a relationship with him. He does the same for us! How does knowing that God pursues you encourage you to trust in Him?

◆ Hands Challenge

- ◆ What is one way you can remind yourself to have hope in God when you are going through a difficult situation? Find a Bible verse that will remind you of this unwavering hope we should have even when times are tough. Write it down on a notecard and give it to someone who could also use a reminder that God always keeps His promises. Possible verses for hope: Jeremiah 29:11; Romans 5:3-4; John 16:33.

EXTENDED LESSON RESOURCES

Bible Commentary for the Teacher

God blessed Abram for several significant reasons:

- ◆ **To show His goodness and grace (Genesis 12:2).** God was determined to bless Abram and give him a great name, not because of Abram's effort or because he would seek it, but simply out of God's goodness and grace toward Him. Having a great name and blessings doesn't come through our efforts to reach up to God, but from His graciousness to reach down to us.
- ◆ **To bring salvation to the entire world (Genesis 12:2-3).** The blessing God promised to give Abram was not intended to end with him; instead, it was a means to a greater end. He would be the conduit through which "all the peoples of the earth would be blessed" (v. 3). This promise points us back to Genesis 3:15 and God's promise of an offspring who would come from the

nation promised to Abram, crush the head of the serpent and break the curse of sin and death. All who trust in the coming one—in Christ Jesus—receive this blessing.

- ♦ **To foreshadow Jesus' future sacrifice (Genesis 15:1–6).** God reassured Abram not only that he would have children of his own, but that they would be as numerous as the stars (Gen. 22:17; 26:4; 28:14). He demonstrated His commitment to keeping that promise through a covenant ceremony (Gen. 15:7–21). Abram provided and prepared the animals for the ceremony, but God—represented by a smoking fire pot and a flaming torch—performed the ceremony with Himself, not with Abram. God basically said, “If these things do not come true, if I don't uphold this covenant, let Me bear the full punishment, even to the shedding of blood.” The Lord was willing to bear the curse of a broken covenant, and that is exactly what He did at the cross.
- ♦ **To create a spiritual family (Rom. 4:11–12; Gal. 3:7).** God did keep that promise to Abram. His descendants became a great nation (Deut. 1:10, 10:22). But Paul tells us that Abram's family extends beyond the physical, that those who have faith in Jesus Christ are also part of Abram's family. Those who share his faith are sons of Abraham, and these will be an innumerable multitude in Heaven from every nation and people on Earth (Rev. 7).

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GOD MAKES A PROMISE

God established a covenant people to reverse the curse of sin.



JESUS CONNECTION

God promised Abraham that the world would be blessed through his descendants. Jesus Christ is the promised descendant of Abraham through whom God will bring salvation to the rest of the world.



LIFEWISE QUALITY

HOPE – Expecting God will do what is best in every situation.



HEAD

Hope is the confident expectation and assurance that God is faithful to keep His promises, regardless of life's circumstances. How did God give Abram hope while he waited on God's promises?

Did Abram's hope ever waiver? Explain.



HEART

Hope is what keeps us focused and moving toward our God-given dreams and goals. Hope is what motivates us when things get tough and we want to give up. How can remembering God's faithfulness to you and others in the past bring comfort and hope when you are in the middle of a difficult situation?

God chose Abram and pursued a relationship with him. He does the same for us! How does knowing that God pursues you encourage you to trust in Him?



HANDS

What is one way you can remind yourself to have hope in God when you are going through a difficult situation? Find a Bible verse that will remind you of this unwavering hope we should have even when times are tough. Write it down on a notecard and give it to someone who could also use a reminder that God always keeps His promises. Possible verses for hope: Jeremiah 29:11; Romans 5:3-4; John 16:33.

**HEAD****GOD FORESHADOWS HIS PROMISE**

God calls His people to trust Him completely.

**HEART****JESUS CONNECTION**

Isaac's question, "Where is the lamb for the sacrifice?" is ultimately answered when John the Baptist saw Jesus and said, "Here is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!" (John 1:36). Just as God provided a ram to take Isaac's place, God provided Jesus to die on the cross as a sacrifice for our sins—and the sins of the whole world."

**HANDS****LIFEWISE QUALITY**

SACRIFICE – Giving of myself to help someone else.

BIBLE REVIEW**MSL 7 God Makes a Promise | 1–2 Min**

In the previous session, we learned about God calling a man named Abram to leave his home and start a new life and nation.

- ♦ What promises did God make Abram? (*He would give him a new land, make him into a great nation and bless him.*)
- ♦ What did God give to Abram as a result of Abram's belief in God's promises? (*Righteousness, or a right relationship with God.*)

Today, we will learn how God tested and strengthened Abraham's confidence in Him.

SESSION STARTERS**Pair Up | 5–10 Min**

- ♦ Bring two blindfolds for this activity. If possible, go outside for this activity. If staying in the classroom, create enough open space in the room for students to make a circle.
- ♦ Instruct students to stand at random places inside the circle. Place two students in the center of the circle, blindfold them and give them pairing names. [Examples: *peanut butter and jelly, Rey and Finn, ketchup and French fries, cookies and milk, Bugs and Daffy, etc.*] Using these code names, students will attempt to find one another while the other students distract them. They must use only their voices and code names to find each other.
- ♦ In order to complete this activity, you had to listen carefully and respond to your partner. Similarly, Abraham had to decide whether to follow God's call and trust that He would provide a sacrifice, even though he couldn't see exactly how God would provide at the time.

Packing List | 5–10 Min

- ◆ Give each student a piece of paper and a pen or pencil. Ask students to imagine that they will all take a trip together, and they need to make a packing list. Share the following details about their trip in an overly excited way, like a travel agent or tour guide:
 - ◇ This trip will take a while.
 - ◇ You don't need to know where we're going. It's a surprise! I'll let you know when we arrive.
 - ◇ You should pack everything you need because our date of return is unknown.
 - ◇ I'm asking you to leave behind a lot, but trust me. This journey will be so incredible! It will be worth it.
- ◆ Give students one minute to write a list of the most important things they would take with them on this trip. Let them share what items they included.
- ◆ Sometimes, God asks us to do difficult things without giving us a glimpse into His plan. Like Abram, we have two choices: We can stay or we can go. Which would you choose?

BIBLE LESSON: GOD FORESHADOWS HIS PROMISE | 10–20 Min

When Abraham (formerly Abram) was 100 years old, he and Sarah (formerly Sarai) finally had a son, and they named him Isaac (Gen. 21:1–7). Twenty-five years after God first promised He would make Abraham into a great nation, the son of promise was finally born. But several years later, God came to Abraham again. God was about to put Abraham's faith to the test.

Genesis 22:1–2.

God told Abraham to take his son, Isaac, to the land of Moriah and offer him as a burnt sacrifice on the mountain. This son, Isaac, was a symbol of hope for Abraham and Sarah. **Isaac was evidence of God's promise to make Abraham and Sarah's descendants into a great nation.** God promised this son and gave him to Abraham and Sarah despite their advanced age and doubt.

Isaac was not merely a fulfillment of God's promises—a sign of God's faithfulness. **Isaac was the son whom Abraham loved.** Although love is implied earlier in the Bible, this is the first time the word is used. The first use of the term *love* is not between a husband and wife, although there were certainly opportunities for that before. God chose to reserve the first mention of love for a loving father preparing to sacrifice his only son.

Abraham must have thought, "What is God doing?" The future promise was based on Isaac and the family he would have. How would God bring those promises to pass—including bringing blessing to all the people of the world—if he sacrificed Isaac? **Even though Abraham didn't understand how God's promises and His command would work together, he believed God would keep His promises, even if He had to raise Isaac from the dead (Heb. 11:19).**

Genesis 22:3–8.

We know very little of what took place as Abraham prepared for the journey to Moriah. Was he tempted not to go at all? What did he tell Sarah and Isaac about the trip? What we do know is that Abraham wasted no time. He, Isaac and two servants departed the following morning and traveled 45 miles to Moriah over the next three days.

When they arrived at Moriah, Abraham told his servants to wait nearby while he and Isaac traveled on to make the sacrifice alone. **We see several glimpses of Abraham's faith after their arrival.** He told his

servants, “The boy and I will go over there to worship; then we will come back to you.” As Isaac and Abraham walked on with their supplies, Isaac observed that they were missing the most important item needed to worship God: the sacrifice. Abraham’s answer is telling; he affirmed that God would *provide* the sacrifice for them. Abraham chose to believe God more than what his eyes could see.

Genesis 22:9–14.

At what seemed to be the last moment, the angel of the Lord called out to Abraham and instructed him not to harm Isaac (v. 11). The test was over. Abraham had proven his faithfulness. Abraham truly **feared God**. He was willing to give up what he loved most: his son. **By not holding anything back from God, Abraham revealed that God was more valuable to him than anything else.**

God prevented Abraham from sacrificing Isaac, but He did not stop there. Abraham looked up, saw a ram caught in the thicket and sacrificed it in place of Isaac. **Abraham saw the ram as God’s gracious provision and substitute for Isaac, and he named the place: “The Lord Will Provide” (v. 14). A sacrifice was necessary, but God spared Isaac’s life by providing another to stand in his place.**

Big Ideas

- ♦ **Faith in God comes from understanding who God is.** Abraham knew that God was able to accomplish the impossible in His mighty strength. He knew that God was faithful to keep His promises even when Abraham was not. And Abraham knew that God was good; He gave incredible blessings even when they were undeserved.
- ♦ **Abraham’s sacrifice is a picture of what God has done for us.** Because of our sin, we deserve death (Rom. 6:23). As a result, we were dead in our sin and under God’s wrath (Eph. 2:1–3), unable to do anything about our situation. God the Father was not only willing, but He also provided His only Son, Jesus, to be the lamb sacrificed in our place (Rom. 5:8; Gal. 1:5; Eph. 1:7). Jesus was nailed to the cross as our substitute for sin, taking the payment of our sin on Himself to provide us with forgiveness and His righteousness (2 Cor. 5:21). God was willing to go through with the very sacrifice that He asked of Abraham, only, because of His great love for us, God went all the way.
- ♦ **Following Jesus requires sacrifice.** God’s command to Abraham was not optional. If Abraham truly followed God, then he would put Him first, before his own son. Similarly, when Jesus saw the great crowds following Him, He turned to them and challenged their understanding of what was required to follow Him. Those who wanted to follow Him had to be willing to sacrifice their families and even their own lives (Luke 14:25–35). Everything.

Discussion Questions

- ♦ What had Abraham already learned about God? How do you think that knowledge helped Abraham to trust Him?
- ♦ Why do you think God would test someone with what they love the most?
- ♦ Are faith and love more than emotions? Explain.
- ♦ What are some ways we can demonstrate the love we have for God and others?
- ♦ What are some things you are tempted to withhold from God? Why?

- ♦ God showed His love for us by giving up His Son. How does this encourage you to love Him more and be more committed to Him?

REINFORCEMENT ACTIVITIES

Suggested Video | 5–10 Min

BibleProject Video: *The Test*; Full video: 5:47, or show 0:00–3:07.

Suggested Visual Aid | 5 Min.

Poster 1: *Genesis*

Poster 15: *Lord Will Provide*

Holding Back | 5–10 Min

Before the session, gather sheets of paper, markers and a container. Place the paper and markers in a central location in the room. Ask students to think of the one thing they are tempted to hold back from God.

- ♦ Give students time to write down their answers and ask them to fold their paper. Then, invite students to prayerfully release that item/person/area of life to God by placing their paper in a container. If time and weather permits, the papers could be burned outside or put through a paper shredder (under close supervision).
- ♦ God wants us to place everything we have been given back in His hands until there is nothing we consider more valuable than God himself.



JESUS CONNECTION



Isaac's question, "Where is the lamb for the sacrifice?" is ultimately answered when John the Baptist saw Jesus and said, "Here is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!" (John 1:36). Just as God provided a ram to take Isaac's place, God provided Jesus to die on the cross as a sacrifice for our sins—and the sins of the whole world."



LIFEWISE QUALITY | 3–5 Min

SACRIFICE – Giving of myself to help someone else.

Living LifeWise

Because God promises to provide all we need, we can sacrifice what God has given us for others.

LWQ Script

Sacrifice always reveals what is important to us. When something costs us, we quickly discover just how valuable it is to us. God wanted to know (and wanted Abraham to know) whether Abraham loved God or

Isaac more. Without Isaac, would Abraham still follow and serve God? After this test, Abraham, Isaac *and* God knew the answer.

Of course, sacrifice is hard. Our selfish, sinful hearts want to hoard our resources “just in case,” but God says He will provide everything we need, just as He did for Abraham. Jesus modeled this kind of trusting sacrifice in His willingness to come to earth and die for us. His sacrifice reveals just how much God values us (Eph. 5:2). And when we trust in God’s provision, the Holy Spirit helps us willingly sacrifice for others and for Him.

Head, Heart, Hands Reinforcement | In-class or take-home

- ◆ **Head Questions**
 - ◇ What was the purpose of God testing Abraham’s faith?
 - ◇ What evidence of Abraham’s willingness to sacrifice for God do you see?
- ◆ **Heart Questions**
 - ◇ How does it make you feel when you give up what you see as valuable—time, money or things—to help someone else?
 - ◇ What does the Bible tell us about God’s character? How can that knowledge help you trust Him enough to sacrifice for Him or others?
- ◆ **Hands Challenge**
 - ◇ John 3:16 says, “For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life.” Write a note to God telling Him what that verse means to you and what you would be willing to sacrifice for Him this week (time, popularity, etc.)

EXTENDED LESSON RESOURCES

Bible Commentary for the Teacher

God does not test to lead people toward failure; He tests to give His people the opportunity to prove the quality of their faith. Abraham’s testing reveals the certainty and importance of God testing our faith.

- ◆ **God’s tests are certain (Genesis 22:1).** In order to place affliction in our lives—because these afflictions produce endurance, which produces character, which produces hope (Rom. 5:3–4).
- ◆ **God tests us because of grace (Genesis 22:4).** We know that the mountain God chose was not random. Moriah was the region near where Jerusalem would later be built. It’s also possible that the temple itself would later be built on this mountaintop. But there may have been another reason. While each step of that 45-mile journey may have been painful, each may have been gracious as well. This journey may have been a gift to Abraham; the opportunity for the patriarch to wrestle with God’s command, and perhaps to develop the faith he would need as he raised a knife over his beloved son.
- ◆ **God provides for us during tests (Genesis 22:5).** God stopped Abraham before he could plunge the knife into his son, sparing his life. But in a sense Isaac did die and was resurrected. That is what the writer of Hebrews needed us to see as he wrapped up this account in the “hall of faith.” Abraham received Isaac back from the dead, “figuratively speaking” (Heb. 11:19). Abraham believed God could do the impossible, and when He did, the patriarch received what God had provided. He did not sigh with relief thinking he had dodged a bullet. He understood that Isaac

was indeed given back to him from the dead. Surely Abraham never looked at his son the same way again after that day.

- ◆ **God's tests strengthen our faith (Genesis 22:8; Hebrews 11:17-19).** Since temptation is the result of our own sin nature, God will never tempt us. James 1:13–14 affirms, “God is not tempted by evil, and He himself doesn’t tempt anyone. But each person is tempted when he is drawn away and enticed by his own evil desire.”
- ◆ **God's tests will mature us (Genesis 22:15-18).** It can be difficult to see in the moment, but God's tests are for our good. They strengthen us and give us the confidence we need to persevere through future difficulties.

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GOD FORESHADOWS HIS PROMISE

God calls His people to trust Him completely.

JESUS CONNECTION



Isaac's question, "Where is the lamb for the sacrifice?" is ultimately answered when John the Baptist saw Jesus and said, "Here is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!" (John 1:36). Just as God provided a ram to take Isaac's place, God provided Jesus to die on the cross as a sacrifice for our sins—and the sins of the whole world."



LIFEWISE QUALITY

SACRIFICE – Giving of myself to help someone else.



HEAD

What was the purpose of God testing Abraham's faith?

What evidence of Abraham's willingness to sacrifice for God do you see?



HEART

How does it make you feel when you give up what you see as valuable—time, money or things—to help someone else?

DO
NOT

What does the Bible tell us about God's character? How can that knowledge help you trust Him enough to sacrifice for Him or others?

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HANDS

John 3:16 says, "For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life." Write a note to God telling Him what that verse means to you.

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HEAD

GOD PROVIDES FOR HIS PROMISE

God works providentially to bring about His purposes.



HEART

JESUS CONNECTION

God provided Rebekah as a wife for Isaac because of His covenant promise to bless the world through Abraham's family. Many years later, Jesus was born into Abraham's family line, blessing the whole world through His ministry, death and resurrection.



HANDS

LIFEWISE QUALITY

KINDNESS – Being considerate, generous and compassionate towards others.

BIBLE REVIEW

MSL 8 God Foreshadows His Promise | 1–2 Min

In the previous session, we learned about God calling Abraham to sacrifice his only beloved son.

- ♦ Why did God ask Abraham to do this, when He didn't intend for Isaac to die? (*God was testing Abraham's faith and helping it to grow stronger.*)
- ♦ How was the ram, sacrificed in Isaac's place, a picture of Jesus' future sacrifice? (*Jesus was nailed to the cross as our substitute for sin, taking the payment of our sin on Himself to provide us with forgiveness and His righteousness.*)

Today, we will learn how God tested and strengthened Abraham's confidence in Him.

SESSION STARTERS

Partner Art | 5–10 Min

- ♦ Give each student a piece of paper and a pencil. Have pairs of students sit back-to-back so they can't see the other's paper. Allow one minute for one student in each pair to draw something simple. Then, the artist will have two minutes to instruct his partner to recreate the same drawing, without using specific names or showing their drawing. For example, instead of saying, "Draw a face," they would say, "Draw a circle," then, "Draw a smaller circle beside it." When time is up, let them compare drawings. If time allows, switch roles and repeat.
 - ♦ What kinds of clues were most helpful to you as you drew?
 - ♦ Was this task easy or difficult? Explain.
- ♦ Sometimes, we know what the end result should be (i.e., my picture should look like theirs), but we aren't exactly sure what steps to take to get there. And the drawings don't always turn out like we think they will. Abraham knew what God had promised, and he knew what God was asking him to do. However, Abraham didn't know how God would work those two things together. Still, he trusted and obeyed, and God provided.

Building Blindly | 5–10 Min

- ◆ Before class, use blocks, legos, clay or playdough to build something simple (a house, a snowman, etc.). Place your creation where students cannot see it. Divide the class into groups of three or four students, and provide each group with building supplies. Pick one student from each group to be the inspector. Allow the inspectors to look at and study your creation where it is hidden. They may look at it again as often as they need to. The inspectors will describe for their group how the structure should be built but cannot tell them what they are building. Give five minutes for groups to build their creation, trying to make it look like your original creation. When the time is up, reveal your creation and compare it to theirs.
 - ◇ Ask the Inspectors: What was it like to try to communicate what you saw to your builders without them seeing it?
 - ◇ Ask the Builders: What was it like to build this without being able to see it? Did you ever find yourself confused by your inspector's instructions?
- ◆ It is difficult when we know the end goal but aren't sure the best way to get there. In our story today, Abraham knew that God would fulfill His promise of a great nation through Isaac, but he didn't know the details of how it would happen. Abraham's role, and the role he gave to his servant, was to listen carefully to God and allow God to show them what to do.

BIBLE LESSON: GOD PROVIDES FOR HIS PROMISE | 10–20 Min

Genesis 24:1–11.

After Sarah, Abraham's wife, died (Gen. 23), Abraham decided it was time for Isaac to be married.

Abraham wanted to see God's promise of bringing forth a great nation from Isaac's descendants

fulfilled, but he was very cautious about whom Isaac should marry. Abraham believed that if Isaac took a wife from the Canaanite women around them, he might be led away from worshiping the Lord. With this in mind and recognizing his own days were running out, **Abraham called for his most trusted servant to return to the land Abraham was from to find a wife for Isaac.**

Abraham's servant wasn't sure how he would find the right place or family in an area that was unfamiliar to him. He was also afraid he might not be able to accomplish what Abraham asked of him. **Abraham reassured his servant, "The Lord, the God of Heaven ... He will send His angel before you, and you can take a wife for my son from there" (Gen. 24:7).**

Abraham's servant swore an oath that he would complete the assignment as he had been instructed and then took ten camels loaded with goods and traveled to Aram-naharaim, Nahor's town. He arrived at a well in the evening when women went to draw water and waited. But that is not all he did.

Genesis 24:12–19, 23–27.

Abraham's servant knew that he would not be able to find the right wife for Isaac by himself. So he placed all his faith in God, asking God to bring the right woman to him. He also prayed specifically, asking that this woman would fulfill very specific needs: she would be kind, offering the servant water, but also very generous and strong, drawing enough water to satisfy the thirst of all of the servant's camels too. Abraham's servant knew that ultimately God must be the one to choose Isaac's wife.

Before the servant even finished his prayer, God answered it. The servant saw Rebekah coming to the well with a jug on her shoulder. Rebekah was from Abraham's family; her grandfather, Nahor, and Abraham were brothers. The servant ran to meet Rebekah and asked her for a drink of water. Rebekah gave the

servant a drink of water and then offered to water the camels. When she was done, the servant asked who she was. Rebekah revealed that she was from Nahor's family and invited the servant to stay with them.

When Abraham's servant recognized that God had answered his prayer, he knelt low and worshiped the Lord, recognizing His kindness to Abraham.

Abraham's servant told her father, Bethuel, and her brother, Laban, all that had happened. **When they heard the servant's story, her family agreed that God had arranged the match, and they allowed Rebekah to return with him to become Isaac's wife.**

Genesis 24:63–67.

Abraham's servant returned with Rebekah, and she became Isaac's wife. God arranged for His covenant promises to continue through this marriage. Isaac was the heir, or recipient, of God's promise to Abraham. He was now positioned to provide grandsons of promise and great-grandsons of promise. God had led the family one step closer to becoming a great nation.

Big Ideas

- ◆ **God provides everything necessary to fulfill His promises.** God made a covenant with Abraham. This promise was something that depended on God's power and ability to accomplish, not Abraham's. God led Abraham's servant to the right woman for Isaac and gave Rebekah and her family the wisdom to see God's plan and the willingness to accept it.
- ◆ **God involves us in accomplishing His plan.** God did not need Abraham's servant to accomplish His plan. He could have brought Rebekah to Isaac by other means. But God delights in using imperfect people to accomplish His plan, so they can see God's great power and wisdom in action and have their own faith stretched and strengthened.
- ◆ **God invites us to pray specifically and confidently for His will to be done.** Abraham's servant relied upon God's promises to Abraham. He asked God not only for a woman from Abraham's family, but also for a woman of character. God will always say "yes" to prayers that are in agreement with His plan.

Discussion Questions

- ◆ How does knowing that God is good encourage us to obey even when we can't see everything He's doing?
- ◆ What parts of this story remind us that God is working out even the smallest details in our lives?
- ◆ Does the servant's faithfulness to pray and believe in God to act encourage you in your prayer life? Why or why not?

REINFORCEMENT ACTIVITIES

Suggested Video | 5–10 Min

BibleProject Video: *Generosity*, Full video: 4:53.

The Big Picture | 5–10 Min

Prepare by printing several images of everyday items (e.g., a basketball), both zoomed-in and zoomed-out. Place the zoomed-in images at the front of the room, give students a pen and sheet of paper and ask them

to identify the object. Then, reveal the zoomed-out photos and allow students to check their answers. The student with the most correct answers wins.

- ♦ Why was it difficult to recognize what some of these images were?
- ♦ The everyday details of our lives are also “zoomed-in.” They can look very different from God’s big-picture view. Like Abraham and his trusted servant, we must remember that God’s plan is perfect and good and allow Him to lead us in the right direction.

JESUS CONNECTION



God provided Rebekah as a wife for Isaac because of His covenant promise to bless the world through Abraham’s family. Many years later, Jesus was born into Abraham’s family line, blessing the whole world through His ministry, death and resurrection.

LIFEWISE QUALITY | 3–5 Min

KINDNESS – Being considerate, generous and compassionate towards others.

Living LifeWise

Because of God’s kindness and care for us, we can show kindness even in uncertain times.

LWQ Script

What is the kindest thing anyone has done for you? *[Allow students to answer.]*

Kindness isn’t just being “nice” to someone else. It’s an intentional act that brings good to someone else. When we experience true kindness, it stays with us. Abraham’s servant could have focused on God’s power to arrange such a perfect outcome, but instead, he thanked God and talked to others in the story about God’s kindness most of all.

God’s kindness—His care and generosity—to us changes everything. He sent Jesus to die for us. He gives us His Spirit and His power. But He also surrounds us every single minute of the day with His kind attention. He loves us, sees us and cares for us. We can trust Him, even when we aren’t sure where we’re going or how He’s going to work it all out. His kindness should prompt us to show kindness to others.

Head, Heart, Hands Reinforcement | In-class or take-home

- ♦ **Head Questions**
 - ❖ In Genesis 24:14, Abraham’s servant said, “Let the girl to whom I say, ‘Please lower your water jug so that I may drink,’ and she responds, ‘Drink, and I’ll water your camels also’—let her be the one you have appointed for your servant Isaac. By this I will know that you have shown kindness to my master.” What was the result of this prayer?
 - ❖ How did Rebekah show kindness?

♦ Heart Questions

- ♦ If we are followers of Christ, we have been called to practice kindness even if it comes at great cost or is seemingly impossible. Ephesians 4:32 says, “Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.” When is it difficult to be kind to someone? When is it difficult to forgive someone?
- ♦ God was considerate, generous and compassionate to Abraham’s servant. In what ways has God shown kindness to you?

♦ Hands Challenge

- ♦ God demonstrated the ultimate act of kindness by giving up His only Son to save us from our sins. We do not deserve this extreme generosity and compassion. Think of someone in your life who does not deserve your kindness. Show them compassion and generosity by genuinely helping them with something, giving them something or saying something positive to them.

EXTENDED LESSON RESOURCES

Bible Commentary for the Teacher

We can learn important principles about prayer from Abraham’s servant. God’s Word teaches us to:

- ♦ **Pray for God’s expressed will to be done (Genesis 24:12).** First, Abraham asked God to act based on the promises God had already made—not for his benefit or even Isaac’s, but to do what He’d already said He would do. Similarly, we can base our prayers on what God’s Word says and come to God confident that He will answer us every time.
- ♦ **Pray for specific needs (Genesis 24:14).** Second, he prayed specifically for what he wanted. He didn’t just pray “that God would provide,” but for a woman of character—generous and kind. (The request that she would water his camels meant she would willingly offer to haul 2,500 pounds of water for a stranger at the well...it was a big job!)
- ♦ **Pray with confidence, expecting God to work (Genesis 24:12-14).** There was no way Abraham’s servant, even with all of his wisdom and creativity, could have orchestrated a better plan for finding Isaac a wife than this one. He is the one at work, often behind the scenes, to bring about His purposes in and through us.
- ♦ **Seek God’s will and follow His plan (Genesis 24:10-67).** This is the longest continuous passage in Genesis and its quality of narration is striking. Generally, it is one of the classic biblical case studies on seeking to follow God’s will. Specifically, it reflects how important it was for the heir of promise to have the right wife and for that marriage to come about according to God’s direction.
- ♦ **God abundantly provides for our needs (Genesis 24:67).** God is at work in the “big” story we are part of, but He is also at work in our stories for His glory and our good. Isaac loved Rebekah and found comfort after his mother’s death. God did not just provide a wife, He provided a wife whom Isaac loved and who loved him.
- ♦ **God graciously gives us good things (Ephesians 3:20).** God will bring to pass what He desires as He works in us and through us, but this does not mean that we are merely tools to Him. We are people He deeply loves and cares for (Deut. 7:9; Ps. 136:26; Eph. 2:4-5; 1 John 3:1). He is aware of our fears, our doubts, our sorrows and our pains. And He is equally aware of our joys, our

hopes, our dreams and our desires. He gives us good gifts beyond anything we could ever hope or imagine. (Eph. 3:20)

In Defense

Facts don't interpret themselves. For example, if you were to walk into your first period classroom and see that all of the chairs had been placed neatly on the desks and pushed to the center of the room, then the facts you see before you are just that—the chairs are now on the desks and at the center of the room. But that doesn't explain how they got there or the reason they are there. For these "facts" to make sense, you have to interpret them by giving an explanation. Maybe the chairs were set up this way for the custodians to clean the floors, or maybe the teacher—who has done similar things in the past—is planning to do an activity with the class.

The Christian worldview offers the most consistent explanation for the things we see around us. Where some worldviews can only conclude chance or randomness against all odds, the Christian worldview can rightly conclude, like in this text, that God is providentially at work to accomplish His plan in the lives of His people.

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GOD PROVIDES FOR HIS PROMISE

God works providentially to bring about His purposes.



JESUS CONNECTION

God provided Rebekah as a wife for Isaac because of His covenant promise to bless to the world through Abraham's family. In the same way, God provides the Church, Christ's Bride, to bless the world by sharing about God's plan of salvation through Jesus.



LIFEWISE QUALITY

KINDNESS – Being considerate, generous and compassionate towards others.



HEAD

In Genesis 24:14, Abraham's servant said, "Let the girl to whom I say, 'Please lower your water jug so that I may drink,' and she responds, 'Drink, and I'll water your camels also'—let her be the one you have appointed for your servant Isaac. By this I will know that you have shown kindness to my master." What was the result of this prayer?

How did Rebekah show kindness?



HEART

If we are followers of Christ, we have been called to practice kindness even if it comes at great cost or is seemingly impossible. Ephesians 4:32 says, "Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you." When is it difficult to be kind to someone? When is it difficult to forgive someone?

God was considerate, generous and compassionate to Abraham's servant. In what ways has God shown kindness to you?



HANDS

God demonstrated the ultimate act of kindness by giving up His only Son to save us from our sins. We do not deserve this extreme generosity and compassion. Think of someone in your life who does not deserve your kindness. Show them compassion and generosity by genuinely helping them with something, giving them something or saying something to them.



HEAD

GOD RENEWS HIS PROMISE

God's covenant promises are based on His faithfulness, not ours.



HEART

JESUS CONNECTION

God's covenant promise to bless the world through the line of Abraham and Isaac was fully realized in Jesus. Specifically, Jesus was born into unusual circumstances and died to save unworthy people from our sin.



HANDS

LIFEWISE QUALITY

PATIENCE – Being willing to wait.

BIBLE REVIEW

MSL 9 God Provides For His Promise | 1–2 Min

In the previous session, we learned about God providing a wife for Isaac.

- ◆ How did Abraham and his servant show faith in God? (*Abraham told his servant that God would send an angel ahead of him. He obeyed God by not allowing Isaac to marry a woman from the Promised Land. The servant prayed for God to bring the right woman to him, thanked God after the prayer was answered and acknowledged God's sovereignty to Rebekah's family.*)
- ◆ How did God show kindness to Abraham? (*God brought Rebekah to Abraham's servant and gave Rebekah and her family the willingness to agree to be married to Isaac.*)

Today, we will learn that God continued to keep His promises to Abraham, even when Abraham's family didn't deserve it.

SESSION STARTERS

Choose Your Adventure | 5–10 Min

- ◆ Invite students to choose between a series of two incredible and free adventures. [*Make it more exciting by using the voice of a game show host!*] Present two approaches for deciding which adventure to take. Ask students to vote with a show of hands on the best approach to determine their adventure. Then, read the results of using the chosen approach:
 - ◇ A trip to Busch Gardens or Disney World. Will you:
 - Roll a die (Outcome: You miss your flight and end up stuck at the airport.)
 - Ask a friend for advice (Outcome: Your friend ends up coming too.)
 - ◇ A helicopter ride or hot air balloon ride over your city. Will you:
 - Shake a Magic 8 ball (Outcome: It rains the day of your trip.)
 - Read online reviews of the pilots (Outcome: You find a coupon for the helicopter.)
 - ◇ A five-day cruise around the Hawaiian Islands or the Caribbean. Will you:

- Look at some library books about each place (Outcome: You discover some great activities to do at your destination.)
- Read a fortune cookie (Outcome: Your wallet is stolen during the trip.)
- ❖ Tickets and backstage passes to see Dude Perfect or the Harlem Globetrotters:
 - Write a pros and cons list (Outcome: Your ticket wins a prize in a drawing.)
 - Use your spinner app (Outcome: You get stuck in traffic and miss part of the show.)
- ♦ People often make decisions based on what looks good, how they feel or what they will gain right now but rarely consider the potential consequences or dangers of that decision. But God sees it all. The very best thing we can do is ask God to help us make decisions through His Holy Spirit. As we read about Isaac and Rebekah's children, we will see how terrible the consequences can be when we make impulsive decisions that go against God's will.

Waiting | 5–10 Min

- ♦ Have you ever heard the saying, “Good things come to those who wait”? Maybe you're waiting to get a driver's license or go to high school. Maybe some of you are planning where to eat your next meal or what you will do this weekend. No matter what we're waiting for, the wait is difficult, especially if the end result is something we want. However, trying to get these things before the right time can cause issues. You may be able to drive before you turn 16, but if you get caught driving without a license, you'll wait even longer for your license.
- ♦ Pass out paper and pencil to each student. Ask them to make a list of 2–3 privileges they are waiting on and 1–2 benefits of waiting on these important things until the right time.
- ♦ In today's story, we'll see how one family's impatience with God's process caused problems that lasted for years. It can be difficult to wait to see and experience all God has planned for us. But we can trust that God will fulfill His promises and that His promises are always worth the wait.

BIBLE LESSON: GOD RENEWS HIS PROMISE | 10–20 Min

God's plan to provide forgiveness for sin would come through a people of promise, a covenant people. God made that covenant with Abraham and restated it to his son, Isaac (Gen. 12:1–3). But the next part of Isaac and Rebekah's lives did not turn out as they may have planned.

Genesis 25:21–26.

Like Sarah before her, Rebekah was barren. Isaac was the son of promise, so he and Rebekah must also have a son in order for God to fulfill His promises to Abraham. Like his father, Isaac faced a difficult dilemma. Yet, unlike his father, **Isaac did not take matters into his own hands. Instead, he turned to God in prayer and left the outcome in the Lord's hands.** The Lord heard Isaac's prayer, and Rebekah conceived. But the long-desired pregnancy—which surely caused great joy, thankfulness and celebration—took an unexpected turn. The twins inside of Rebekah began to struggle, apparently causing her such concern and discomfort that she asked God what was going on.

Once again, God heard and responded. **God told Rebekah her eldest son would serve the younger, an unexpected twist in a place where the firstborn was considered the most important.** God revealed to Rebekah that He sometimes turns traditions and cultural expectations upside down to accomplish His plan to save us from the power of sin, Satan and death.

Genesis 25:29–34.

Eventually, Rebekah gave birth to two sons: Esau and Jacob. As they grew older, Esau became a great hunter, but Jacob was described as a tent-dweller, a quiet man who stayed at home. **Though God had said that Jacob would lead the family someday, Jacob took matters into his own hands,** tricking his brother into selling Jacob the birthright (or right to rule) for a bowl of stew. After the hunt recorded here, Esau had exhausted himself and had no game to show for it. **Jacob took advantage of Esau's hunger and impulsiveness for his own selfish gain. But Esau wasn't innocent. He allowed this absurd trade because he did not care about his birthright to lead Abraham's family. Esau was not worthy of God's promises, and neither was Jacob. Yet God still worked through this family to bring about the promises He made to Abraham.**

Big Ideas

- ♦ God's ways are **counter-cultural**. God doesn't place value on the things this world views as most important (1 Cor. 1:20). God often chooses to work outside of our traditions and expectations to help us see what He values most, and likewise, what we should value.
- ♦ God works through our weaknesses to magnify His greatness. God chose two couples (Abraham and Sarah; Isaac and Rebekah) that had no hope of producing a child to continue the family line of promise. God uses weakness so that no one may boast in their own power or wisdom but recognize and glorify God for His unlimited power and wisdom (1 Cor. 1:27–29).
- ♦ God is both personal and **sovereign**. He hears our prayers and responds while He works out everything according to His plan. God knew and understood all of Isaac and Rebekah's pain and concerns. He responded and comforted them both. God doesn't necessarily work on the timetable that we want. Rather, He patiently waits for the perfect time to unfold His plan.

Discussion Questions

- ♦ Why do you think Esau was so quick to trade his birthright for something so unimportant?
- ♦ Why is it easier to pursue tangible things like money, popularity and good grades, rather than doing what is right and choosing to love God and others?
- ♦ How does God display mercy and faithfulness in keeping His promises to Isaac and Rebekah?
- ♦ This account reminds us that God's promises don't depend on our faithfulness. How does God's faithfulness help us to have patience when it is hard to wait?
- ♦ We may not barter stew for family control, but people still struggle to make good decisions. What are some ways that people make bad decisions in today's world?
- ♦ The story of Jacob and Esau shows that God uses unlikely and unworthy people to accomplish His plan. How does this free us from the fear of not being qualified to share His message?

REINFORCEMENT ACTIVITIES

Suggested Video | 5–10 Min

BibleProject Video: *Genesis 12-50*; Full video: 5:00.

Desert Despair | 5–10 Min

Have students imagine they are in the desert—no one and nothing else in sight. The day is getting warmer, and they have no water. In other words, there is no hope of survival. *[Ask students to share what their first response would be.]*

- ♦ Those are all valid responses. Some of you would be tempted to give up, others to keep walking as long as they could. But the best thing we could do is ask someone much more powerful than us for help. There is no situation we go through that God is not able to help us face.
- ♦ This problem is similar to Isaac and Rebekah's situation. They didn't have a child, and there was nothing they could do about it. Isaac did the best thing he could have done—ask a loving, wise, all-powerful God for help. God invites us to do the same thing when we find ourselves in discouraging circumstances.

JESUS CONNECTION



God's covenant promise to bless the world through the line of Abraham and Isaac was fully realized in Jesus. Specifically, Jesus was born into unusual circumstances and died to save unworthy people from our sin.

LIFEWISE QUALITY | 3–5 Min

PATIENCE – Being willing to wait.

Living LifeWise

God's promises cannot fail, so we can live with patience in both good and hard times.

LWQ Script

What is something you have or are waiting for? *[Allow students to answer.]* Isaac and Rebekah (like Abraham and Sarah) had to wait for God's promise to be fulfilled. We wait for summer break, to be noticed or for a movie or video game we want to come out. But no one likes to wait. Like Jacob, we think that we should have whatever we want or expect *right now*. No hard work, no detours or crushed dreams. We try to hurry things along, cut corners or decide that because we haven't seen God work *right now*, He isn't going to work *at all*.

But God is patient, and He invites us to live patiently in step with Him, no matter how much we want to rush ahead. His big-picture view (or sovereignty), His goodness and glory and His "great and precious promises" (2 Pet. 1:3–4) guarantee that we will receive all that He has promised. Though it took thousands of years, He sent Jesus to die for us so that we are able to be in step with Him, and through His Spirit, we can patiently move at His speed toward His goals, for our good and His glory.

Head, Heart, Hands Reinforcement | In-class or take-home

◆ Head Questions

- ◇ What is an example of patience and an example of impatience in Genesis 25:21–26, 29–34?
- ◇ What possible explanations can you think of for why Esau was willing to despise his birthright?

◆ Heart Questions

- ◇ What are examples today of when people aren't willing to wait? Where do you struggle to be patient?
- ◇ How is God patient with us?

◆ Hands Challenge

- ◇ Think of an area of your life that you would rather take into your own hands to fix right away. Write Psalm 27:14 on a notecard and put it somewhere you will see it every day (on your mirror, on a notebook, in your Bible, etc.). Say it out loud when you see it and ask God to help you live this out. “Wait for the Lord; be strong, and let your heart be courageous. Wait for the Lord” (Psalm 27:14).

EXTENDED LESSON RESOURCES

Bible Commentary for the Teacher

God showed His faithfulness to Isaac and his family, just as He did to Abraham.

- ◆ **God hears and answers prayer (Genesis 25:21).** Isaac’s wife, Rebekah, was barren for 20 years after marrying Isaac (Gen. 25:20, 26). Being barren was difficult enough in itself, but God’s promises to make a great nation through Abraham, Isaac and Rebekah surely added more pressure. Isaac turned to the only one who could change their situation.
- ◆ **God can accomplish the impossible.** God’s supernatural power was at work in both Rebekah’s conception and in selecting the younger son over the elder son. The Messiah would indeed come through the line of Abraham, but it would not be through the efforts or merits of Abraham, Isaac or anyone else. Sarah’s and Rebekah’s pregnancies after years of barrenness remind us that God was the one fulfilling His promises and working toward salvation for mankind.
- ◆ **God uses imperfect people to fulfill His perfect plan (Genesis 25:27-33).** Isaac and his family proved to be unworthy of God’s great promises to Abraham. They played favorites and manipulated, yet God remained faithful, involving them in His plan.
- ◆ **God gives unworthy sinners immeasurable grace.**
 - ◇ **Genesis 25:32** – Esau was the epitome of what not to do in the Christian life: “And make sure that there isn’t any immoral or irreverent person like Esau, who sold his birthright in exchange for a single meal” (Heb. 12:16). Esau’s mind had been so taken over by his natural desires that he convinced himself that exchanging his birthright for a bowl of stew was a good trade. Yet, God still blessed Esau because he was part of Abraham’s family (Gen. 36:6-9).
 - ◇ **Genesis 25:33** – While the Scriptures do not condemn Jacob’s actions here, they don’t offer approval either. Jacob recognized Esau’s weakness and took advantage of him, asking for an unfair trade, but God graciously chose Jacob in spite of his sins and deceit.

- While God's grace toward sinners is ultimately displayed in the cross of Jesus, God's grace toward sinners did not begin there. We see God's unmerited love given to unworthy people throughout the Bible, starting with Adam and Eve.
- ♦ **God reminds us of His faithfulness (Genesis 26:1–6).** Isaac viewed the famine as a threat to God's promises of land, offspring and blessing, but God took this opportunity to restate the promises to Isaac. God told Isaac to remain in the land of Gerar as a foreigner, and He promised to be with and bless Isaac. He promised Isaac offspring as numerous as the stars, and He foretold these offspring would bless all the nations of the earth.

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GOD RENEWS HIS PROMISE

God's covenant promises are based on His faithfulness, not ours.



JESUS CONNECTION

God's covenant promise to bless the world through the line of Abraham and Isaac was fully realized in Jesus. Specifically, Jesus was born into unusual circumstances and died to save unworthy people from our sin.



LIFEWISE QUALITY

PATIENCE – Being willing to wait.



HEAD

What is an example of patience and an example of impatience in Genesis 25:21–26, 29–34?

What possible explanations can you think of for why Esau was willing to despise his birthright?



HEART

What are examples today of when people aren't willing to wait? Where do you struggle to be patient?

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How is God patient with us?

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HANDS

Think of an area of your life that you would rather take into your own hands to fix right away. Write Psalm 27:14 on a notecard and put it somewhere you will see it every day (on your mirror, on a notebook, in your Bible, etc.). Say it out loud when you see it and ask God to help you live this out.

"Wait for the Lord; be strong, and let your heart be courageous. Wait for the Lord." Psalm 27:14

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HEAD

GOD'S MERCY TO A DECEIVER

God is merciful to use even the most unlikely people to build His kingdom.



HEART

JESUS CONNECTION

Jacob's stairway shows that God, in His mercy, planned to reach down to us. He sent Jesus, the true stairway to Heaven (John 1:51). Through His life, death and resurrection, Jesus is the only way back to God the Father (John 14:6).



HANDS

LIFEWISE QUALITY

MERCY – Choosing not to punish someone who deserves to be punished.

BIBLE REVIEW

MSL 10 God Renews His Promise | 1–2 Min

In the previous session, we learned about God providing a wife for Isaac.

- ♦ How did God show mercy and faithfulness to Isaac and his family? (*He listened to Isaac and Rebekah's prayers, told Rebekah the future of her sons and continued to bless Esau and Jacob even though they didn't deserve it.*)
- ♦ What did Esau trade Jacob for a bowl of stew? Why was this a bad trade for both Isaac and Esau? (*Birthright; Esau didn't care about the birthright and gave up his God-given position as the family leader; Jacob took advantage of Esau for selfish gain.*)

Today, we will learn that God continued to keep his promises to Abraham, even when Abraham's family didn't deserve it.

SESSION STARTERS

Then What? | 5–10 Min

- ♦ Have five students line up at the front of the class, or split the class up into groups with several lines. Provide an object that will be passed down the line. This object allows only the student holding it to speak. Read one of the scenarios below, then ask the first student in line, "What happens next?" The student will state a possible consequence based on the scenario, then pass the object to the next student, who will add to the possible repercussions of the decision, and so on. Each time the object is passed, the teacher should ask "Then what?" to prompt the next student's answer.
- ♦ Suggested Scenarios:
 - ✧ You are shopping with a good friend. You go into a clothing store and see a shirt you've wanted for weeks but can't afford. Your friend notices that you like it and quickly stuffs it in her book bag. She tells you not to worry, because she does this all the time and has never gotten caught. You decide to leave the store. What happens next?

- ❖ You saw a new boy getting bullied by some older boys at school yesterday. Today, you see him getting bullied again, and he looks scared. No one else is around. You decide to go straight to class. What happens next?
- ❖ You and your older sister are at your house alone. She pulls a bottle of alcohol out and begins to drink it. Then she offers you some, but you decide not to try any. What happens next?
- ♦ It is easy to make choices and decisions in the moment without considering how it might affect us or those around us later. Today, we will learn about how one family's unwise choices created unintended, far-reaching consequences.

Two Truths and a Lie | 5–10 Min

One at a time, volunteers will share two truths and one lie about themselves. Challenge the other students to identify which statement is the lie. For larger groups, form groups of 2–4 students so everyone has a chance to go.

- ♦ It isn't always easy to spot the truth when others tell it. It can also be difficult for us to be truthful ourselves. Perhaps some of us have bent the truth without fully recognizing it at the time. Other times we may have told outright lies. There are many reasons for this. We might be afraid of others' reactions. Sometimes we lie to get what we want.
- ♦ Unfortunately, lying doesn't get us what we want and can have some pretty big consequences when the truth is uncovered. We will learn this as we continue reading about Jacob and Esau.

BIBLE LESSON: GOD'S MERCY TO A DECEIVER | 10–20 Min

Summary of Genesis 27:1-17.

In Genesis 27, we see how dysfunctional Isaac and Rebekah's family was. Jacob had already tricked Esau into selling his birthright. But the oldest son would normally receive a special blessing too. God told Rebekah before her sons were born that He had chosen Jacob to receive the promises given to Abraham (Gen. 25:23), yet near the end of his life, Isaac planned to give the patriarchal blessing to Esau rather than Jacob.

Isaac asked Esau to hunt for game and prepare a special meal before he received the blessing. Rebekah overheard Isaac's request. Rather than confronting Isaac, asking God to intervene in the situation or simply relying on God to fulfill His promises in His time, Rebekah took advantage of Isaac's poor eyesight and Esau's absence. She planned to deceive Isaac so that Jacob would get the blessing instead. She covered Jacob's arms in goat skins and dressed him in Esau's clothes. She fixed a meal and sent Jacob to Isaac.

Genesis 27:18–20, 25–29.

Jacob put their plan into action and lied to his father about who he was. Isaac ate, drank and then blessed his son. The aging father gave Jacob a four-part blessing: Jacob was granted an abundance of grain and wine, authority over their family and other nations, curses for those who curse him and blessings for those who bless him. This echoed God's covenant with Abraham.

Summary of Genesis 27:30–28:5.

Jacob's decision to deceive his father led to a progression of painful events. When Isaac and Esau learned of Jacob's deceit, Isaac reacted visibly—trembling uncontrollably in his distress (v. 33). Esau cried out bitterly for a blessing his father couldn't give and vowed to kill his brother (v. 41). Rather than deal

directly with the threat on Jacob's life, **Rebekah sent Jacob to safety far away in Paddan-Aram where her brother Laban lived**, telling Isaac that she wanted Jacob to marry a woman from their family line. Isaac embraced Jacob as the one who would carry on the covenant of Abraham, blessing him once again before he left home.

Jacob's deceitful plan afforded him the family blessing, but with disastrous consequences. He had deceived his father, stolen from his brother and had to flee from the only home he had ever known.

Genesis 28:10–15.

Jacob's encounter with God is surprising. **Instead of facing God's wrath like we might expect, Jacob experienced God's gentle mercy just like Abraham and Isaac.** God showed Jacob a vision of a golden stairway or ladder. God was at the top, with angels going up and down the ladder. This way to Heaven was created by God Himself. **God was showing Jacob something extraordinary through this vision. No human effort or deceitful plan would allow Jacob, or any other person, to enter Heaven. Instead, God in His mercy and grace, reaches down to sinful people to make Himself known. He sent Jesus to show us the way to God (John 14:6).**

Big Ideas

- ◆ **God gives us free will.** God told Isaac and Rebekah about His plan and promises for their family but still allowed them to choose how they would manage their family. They chose to go outside of God's expressed plan and desire for them and made a mess of things. Fortunately, none of their—or our—shortcomings, failures and outright refusals to wait for Him can stop or ruin God's sovereign plan.
- ◆ **God disciplines His children.** God didn't allow Jacob to continue in his deceit and pride. He let Jacob see and feel the natural consequences of his actions. He often does the same for us.
- ◆ **God is merciful.** Instead of punishing Jacob as he deserved, God gave him a vision filled with promises. God's presence would go with Jacob—he wouldn't be alone. He confirmed that Jacob would return and possess the land given to his grandfather Abraham. Lastly, God showed Jacob His plan to make a way for mankind to come to Him in Heaven.

Discussion Questions

- ◆ How do we excuse or justify lying in our lives? What does that instinct reveal about what we desire?
- ◆ How would you expect God to respond to Jacob because of his lies? How did God respond?
- ◆ Do you find it easy to accept God's grace and mercy toward Jacob in light of his sin?
- ◆ How does it give you hope to know God can work even through our lies and sinfulness to accomplish His plan?

REINFORCEMENT ACTIVITIES

Suggested Video | 5–10 Min

BibleProject Video: *Pesha—Transgression*; Full video 5:15.

Suggested Visual Aid | 5 Min.

God's Blessings | 5–10 Min

- ◆ There is nothing that we can do to earn God's favor or **blessings**. He freely gives His blessings to every follower of Jesus. While God sometimes does bless His followers with extra money and possessions, more often than not, He blesses them spiritually, with greater faith, contentment and the fruit of the spirit (Gal. 5:22–23).
- ◆ Place students in groups, give them a poster board and marker and allow two minutes for them to write out how God has blessed them. Ask each group to briefly present their posters. *[With small classes, this activity could be done as one large group on the board.]*

JESUS CONNECTION



Jacob's stairway shows that God, in His mercy, planned to reach down to us. He sent Jesus, the true stairway to Heaven (John 1:51). Through His life, death and resurrection, Jesus is the only way back to God the Father (John 14:6).

LIFEWISE QUALITY | 3–5 Min

MERCY – Choosing not to punish someone who deserves to be punished.

Living LifeWise

Because of God's mercy to us, we can show mercy to others.

LWQ Script

It's easy to judge Jacob and Esau, as if we would never do what they did. But of course, we do. No one is exempt from bad decisions, using other people and making mistakes. That means everyone deserves judgment. But God didn't judge Jacob or Esau. Instead, He chose to show mercy.

Mercy doesn't erase or ignore a wrong that is done, but it sets aside the punishment. Mercy doesn't say hurt, sin and dysfunction are acceptable; it bears the hurt to make space for healing and redemption for the person or situation. It is never deserved. God's mercy is so powerful because He offers it to us despite our unworthiness.

God cannot ignore our sins, so in His love and grace, He paid for them Himself on the cross. We can choose to reject His mercy, but when we accept it, He transforms us so that we can offer mercy to others (instead of judging them to protect ourselves) and even to ourselves (instead of beating ourselves up for not being perfect). Because of Jesus, we do not have to stand under judgment any more. Because of Jesus, we can experience the full mercy of God and pass it on.

Head, Heart, Hands Reinforcement | In-class or take-home

- ◆ Head Questions

- ❖ What was the result of the deception in Genesis 27? Why did God allow it to happen?
- ❖ How did God offer mercy to Jacob?

◆ Heart Questions

- ❖ How do you want to respond when you find out someone lied or deceived you? Why? How do you want others to respond to you when they discover you lied or deceived them? Why?
- ❖ How do you feel when someone shows mercy to you and doesn't give you what you deserve? Name someone who has done that for you.

◆ Hands Challenge

- ❖ Think of situations in your circle of friends, your school or your house when someone has done something to you that they should be called out for. Now, think of what it would be like to show them mercy. What would others think? Could this be an opportunity to act the opposite way the world expects? Find a way to show mercy this week, the way God showed mercy to Jacob and to us.

EXTENDED LESSON RESOURCES

Bible Commentary for the Teacher

Despite all of the dysfunction and sin in Abraham's family, God has a redemptive plan:

- ◆ **God uses flawed people to show His glory.**
 - ❖ **Genesis 27:18–20** – Genesis paints an unflattering picture of Isaac and his offspring. They lied, cheated and manipulated. Isaac played favorites with his son Esau and stubbornly refused to recognize Jacob as God's choice to lead the family, even though he wasn't interested in spiritual matters. Rebekah favored Jacob and encouraged him to lie to his own father—her husband—and steal what they thought should be Jacob's. None of them deserved God's blessing.
 - ❖ **1 Corinthians 1:27–31** – God delights in using the ordinary, the weak and flawed, for His redemptive purposes so that He receives all the credit and glory. Only God could bring about good through those who acted so sinfully. We can celebrate a God who brings beauty even from the ashes of our lives through His mercy and grace.
- ◆ **God provides us with His presence.** Scholars debate many details about Jacob's dream, but it helps to focus where Jacob did. In his dream, Jacob saw a ladder and heard God speak to him and repeat His covenant promises to him. God promised to go with Jacob and bring him back to the land, "for I will not leave you until I have done what I promised you" (Gen. 28:15). Rather than focusing on the ladder, Jacob focused on God's presence ("Surely God was in this place," 28:16) and named the place Bethel, or "house of God," because God's presence was there (Gen. 28:19).

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GOD'S MERCY TO A DECEIVER

God is merciful to use even the most unlikely people to build His kingdom.

JESUS CONNECTION



The people of Babel tried to build a tower to reach God, but humans can never reach God on their own. Instead, Jacob's stairway shows that God, in His mercy, planned to reach down to us. He sent Jesus, the true stairway to Heaven (John 1:51). Through His life, death and resurrection, Jesus is the only way back to God the Father (John 14:6).



LIFEWISE QUALITY

MERCY – Choosing not to punish someone who deserves to be punished.



HEAD

What was the result of the deception in Genesis 27? Why did God allow it to happen?

How did God offer mercy to Jacob?



HEART

How do you want to respond when you find out someone lied or deceived you? Why? How do you want others to respond to you when they discover you lied or deceived them? Why?

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How do you feel when someone shows mercy to you and doesn't give you what you deserve? Name someone who has done that for you.

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HANDS

Think of situations in your circle of friends, your school or your house where someone has done something to you that they should be called out for. Now, think of what it would be like to show them mercy. What would others think? Could this be an opportunity to act the opposite way the world expects? Find a way to show mercy this week, the way God showed mercy to Jacob and to us.

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HEAD

GOD'S NEW NAME FOR JACOB

God is working to change our hearts and give us new identities.



HEART

JESUS CONNECTION

God gave Jacob a new name, Israel, to reveal his identity as the father of God's chosen people. It was a mark of both privilege and responsibility. As Christians, we reflect the name of Christ. We receive both the privilege of salvation and the responsibility of serving Jesus.



HANDS

LIFEWISE QUALITY

TEACHABLE – Being willing to change my mind and actions as I learn.

BIBLE REVIEW

MSL 11 God's Mercy to a Deceiver | 1–2 Min

In the previous session, we learned about Jacob stealing his brother Esau's blessing.

- ♦ What did Jacob's deceit cost him? (*Broken trust with his father Isaac, a broken relationship with his brother Esau and his home—he had to flee to another place for 20 years.*)
- ♦ How did God respond to Jacob's deceit? (*God didn't punish Jacob. Instead, He showed grace: He promised to go with Jacob, bring him back to the land and give the land to Jacob.*)

Today, we will learn how God blessed Jacob and called him by a new name and to a new way of life.

SESSION STARTERS

New Purpose | 5–10 Min

- ♦ Before the session, gather items that serve a specific purpose but are often used in different ways, such as empty cans or mugs, newspapers or glass mason jars. Show them to the class. These items have an identity—what they were made to do. Cans keep food fresh (or mugs hold hot drinks) and hold pencils, the newspaper tells us what's going on and makes great gift wrap while glass jars preserve food but can be cool drink glasses. What items do you or your family use in ways other than what's intended?
- ♦ When we choose to use an item another way, we don't change what it looks like, but we do change what it contains. We don't change its physical appearance; we change its purpose. When we become a Christian, God doesn't change our appearance, but we become a "new creation" (2 Cor. 5:17) and have a new identity in Christ. Throughout our lives, God changes us so that we become more and more like Him—filled with love, peace and joy on the inside and able to live out His plan and purpose for His glory and our good (Rom. 8:28; Phil. 1:6).

Snowball War | 5–10 Min

- ♦ For this lesson, you will need two large containers and enough paper for each student to have three sheets. Create a designated area in the back of the classroom that students can't cross. In the front of the classroom, designate an area for the students holding the containers to stay in.
- ♦ Start the activity by giving each student three sheets of paper and having them crumple them into a ball or "snowball." Divide the class into two teams and select one student from each team to hold a container. Have the two students holding the containers in front of the class and their teammates in the back in their designated area. Set a timer for one minute and have the students in the back of the classroom throw the "snowballs" to the student holding the container in the front of the room. The team with the most "snowballs" at the end of the minute wins.
- ♦ What kinds of strategies did the winners use? How would you play Snowball War differently next time? A good strategy in most games and competitions is simply "Don't give up." When Jacob wrestled with God, he refused to let go, even when asked, until God blessed him (Gen. 32:26). And God's persistence in changing Jacob reveals His persistence in changing our hearts, too. And we can learn from Jacob to be persistent in our prayers and in seeking the Lord.

BIBLE STORY: GOD'S NEW NAME FOR JACOB | 10–20 Min

Summary of Genesis 29–32:23.

As we've learned about Jacob, we have seen good, bad and ugly moments in Jacob's life: he deceived his father, stole from his brother, fled from his home, saw a vision from God and traveled to Paddan-Aram to the safety of his uncle's household. Yet **God was faithful to His promise to be with Jacob and blessed him during the 20 years he lived in Paddan-Aram.** Jacob worked as a shepherd and married two of Laban's daughters: Rachel and Leah. **God gave Jacob a large family and many possessions.** But both Jacob and Laban acted deceitfully and made bad choices during those years, and when Jacob left to return home, he and his uncle were not on good terms.

However, before **he returned to the land of Canaan, the Promised Land,** Jacob found himself in another uncertain situation. **After 20 years, Jacob did not know whether Esau was still angry with him,** so he sent servants ahead to Esau to gain his goodwill. He received news that Esau was coming to meet him with 400 men.

Jacob was so distressed that he prayed desperately for God to save him. For the first time, Jacob admitted he couldn't handle things on his own. **But still trying to scheme his way out of trouble, he also formed a plan to appease his brother and save his family.** He divided his family into two camps; if Esau attacked one, he hoped the other might be able to escape and survive. Jacob then sent a parade of servants to Esau with lavish gifts and instructed the messengers to say, "These belong to your servant Jacob. They are a gift to my lord Esau" (Gen. 32:18). **That night, Jacob stayed behind by himself.**

Genesis 32:24–27.

Although he never learned the name of his challenger, **Jacob later exclaimed that he had wrestled with God** (Gen 32:30). During the lengthy wrestling match, God dislocated Jacob's hip socket, leaving him at a disadvantage. **As the two wrestled, Jacob recognized he could not defeat God and confessed his dependence on God—He refused to let go unless God blessed him.**

Genesis 32:28–32.

God blessed Jacob by giving him a new name. *Jacob* means “trickster,” “heel-grabber” and “deceiver.” God first asked Jacob to reveal his name, forcing him to admit his own character out loud. Then, God changed his name to *Israel*, to show that the name ***Jacob* would no longer define his character and choices.** **God had given him a new identity. *Israel*, not *Jacob*, would be the father of a nation chosen to be God’s people.**

The name *Israel* means “strives with God.” It is a fitting name for Jacob because this was the main lesson he needed to learn that night. All his life, Jacob had struggled with other people. But **Jacob’s real struggle was never with another person; it was with God.** All of his life, Jacob had relied on himself to handle everything, including acquiring the spiritual blessings God promised him. **Jacob was the one causing heartache in his life and in the lives of those around him by constantly trying to force what God wanted to give him freely.** But *Israel* also means “God fights,” and this was the answer to Jacob’s desperate prayer (v. 9–12). God Himself would fight for Jacob, for his family and for the nation they would become. As *Israel*, Jacob could trust that God would never leave him unprotected or forsaken.

Summary of Genesis 33:1–11.

God demonstrated His ability to protect and provide for Jacob the very next day. **Jacob met Esau in humility, and humility paved the way for reconciliation.** But **God had something bigger in mind that required Jacob’s humility as well. God also had a greater reconciliation in mind—His plan to bless all mankind through Jacob’s family.** God was still working to fulfill His promise to Adam and Eve (Genesis 3:15) and to Abraham (Genesis 12:1), providing the one who would defeat sin and death.

Big Ideas

- ♦ **God gives us grace.** Jacob didn’t deserve God’s continued blessings, but God poured them out anyway. And over time, Jacob chose to cling to God and put his trust in Him. The definition of G.R.A.C.E. is God’s riches at Christ’s expense. Like Jacob, we don’t deserve God’s incredible blessings, but God gives them to us in abundance because of Jesus’ sacrifice for our sins.
- ♦ **God pursues us.** God didn’t wait for Jacob to come to Him. He pursued Jacob over and over again so Jacob would know and trust Him (Gen. 28:12–15, 31:11–13, 32:1, 32:24–29).
- ♦ **God changes us.** Jacob’s faith in God grew as God pursued and blessed him. Jacob knew that God was a promise-keeper. And as Jacob trusted, God called him to a new identity and way of living. God doesn’t allow His followers to wallow in sin but pursues us and calls us out of sin into right living through His power.

Discussion Questions

- ♦ Based on all we’ve learned about Jacob’s life, what do you think is the significance of God changing his name?
- ♦ Do you think people can really change overnight, like Jacob seems to here? Is the change really instant or is it just more difficult to see the gradual work God’s Spirit does in our lives?
- ♦ What are some ways we might “wrestle” with God today? How do these moments develop a teachable heart?

- ♦ Have you ever wrestled with God about something? What did you learn, or what are you learning, during this time?
- ♦ Based on Jacob's story, do you think God wrestles with us out of anger or as an act of grace? Explain.

REINFORCEMENT ACTIVITIES

Suggested Video | 5–10 Min

BibleProject Video: *Character of God: Grace*; Full video 4:10.

Power Outage | 5–10 Min

Have you ever experienced a power outage before? What is the longest you have ever gone without electricity? Name some things that are affected by a power outage. What was the most difficult thing about not having power?

- ♦ Many times, we don't realize how much we depend on electricity until it is gone. Then, we realize it is such a part of our lives that it is very difficult to function without it. We would have to learn to live in a completely different way in order to do so.
- ♦ God wanted Jacob to realize that he was depending on his own strength to move forward in life. He allowed Jacob to experience a "power outage" so that Jacob would recognize how much he relied on himself. When Jacob could no longer depend on his own strength and he acknowledged his dependence on God, God began to show him a completely different way of living. Jacob began to learn how to depend on someone much greater than himself—an all-powerful, sovereign and gracious God.

JESUS CONNECTION



God gave Jacob a new name, Israel, to reveal his identity as the father of God's chosen people. It was a mark of both privilege and responsibility. As Christians, we reflect the name of Christ. We receive both the privilege of salvation and the responsibility of serving Jesus.

LIFEWISE QUALITY | 3–5 Min

TEACHABLE – Being willing to change my mind and actions as I learn.

Living LifeWise

We choose to be teachable when we accept God's wisdom and authority.

LWQ Script

Most people do not like to change their minds. Simply put, we don't cultivate a teachable heart. We see the world a certain way, and it is difficult to realize that reality is different from what we thought was true. For years, Jacob wasn't teachable. He struggled against people and God to accomplish his goals his own way.

But when Jacob finally saw God—that He can be trusted and that His plans are best—it changed his mind and his actions. That is what it means to be teachable.

Being teachable doesn't mean being gullible, being easily tricked or believing anything you hear. It means we know we don't know everything, so we seek out Truth and align our thoughts and choices to it. And while we can learn a lot from books or other people, the best source of Truth is God's Word. The Bible is where God reveals Himself and the gospel. It's where He spells out His purpose for us and the world. As we cultivate a teachable heart and learn from God's Word, His Spirit makes us more like Jesus every day.

Head, Heart, Hands Reinforcement | In-class or take-home

◆ Head Questions

- ◇ What was Jacob's new name and why was it given to him?
- ◇ What was Jacob's real struggle?

◆ Heart Questions

- ◇ What are some ways we might "wrestle" with God today? How do these moments help us be more teachable?
- ◇ We might be tempted to think God is angry when we wrestle with Him. Why is it important to see these moments as acts of God's grace instead?

◆ Hands Challenge

- ◇ Are you teachable—willing to change your thoughts and actions as God continues to mold you into who He wants you to be? Ask someone you trust (a close friend, relative, pastor) what areas they see in your life you have been teachable and what areas they see unwillingness to change. Commit to becoming more teachable in an area in which you need to grow.

EXTENDED LESSON RESOURCES

Bible Commentary for the Teacher

God takes flawed people and gradually molds them into His image and likeness:

- ◆ **God personally engages with us (Genesis 32:24–30).** God pursued Jacob, taking the form of a man and wrestled with His creation to bring about Jacob's spiritual transformation. Yet, one day it would be Jesus, from the line of Jacob, who would pursue sinners, becoming a man and wrestling with sin and death to bring about redemption to the world.
- ◆ **God disciplines us (Genesis 32:24–27).** God wrestles with Jacob, confronting his flawed character and dislocating his hip. Jacob needed to be broken before he could change.
- ◆ **God blesses us with a new identity (Genesis 32:28–32).** In God's wisdom, He gave Jacob the name Israel as an ever-present reminder. The true source of strength, power and provision in his life was God. It was time for Jacob to stop fighting against God in order to receive His blessing in his life and instead fight alongside God as part of His plan to extend His blessing to the world.
- ◆ **God leads us toward spiritual maturity.**
 - ◇ **Genesis 33** – The day after his wrestling match, Jacob met with Esau as a humbled and changed man. Jacob was no longer the deceiver or usurper; he trusted God to go before him and work in the heart of his brother. And that is what God did. He fought the battle for Jacob, and when the two brothers met, they experienced true reconciliation after

years of estrangement. There was victory in the changed lives of both Jacob and Esau. This victory was a beautiful end to strife and an important beginning to the nation of Israel. Jacob was settled back in the land of promise, and though he still faced struggles and trials (Gen. 33–34), he faced them with a growing spiritual maturity and a growing responsibility to the people of God.

- ✧ **Genesis 35: 1-17** – Later, God appeared to Jacob once more and commanded Jacob to settle in Bethel and repent of his idolatry. So, Jacob got rid of all his family's false gods. In these events, we see the gradual transformation in Jacob's life. Yes, the transformation was slow, but it was progressive. (The same is true with us!)

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GOD'S NEW NAME FOR JACOB

God is working to change our hearts and give us new identities.



JESUS CONNECTION

God gave Jacob a new name, Israel, to reveal his identity as the father of God's chosen people. It was a mark of both privilege and responsibility. As Christians, we reflect the name of Christ. We receive both the privilege of salvation and the responsibility of serving Jesus.



LIFEWISE QUALITY

TEACHABLE – Being willing to change my mind and actions as I learn.



HEAD

What was Jacob's new name and why was it given to him?

What was Jacob's real struggle?



HEART

What are some ways we might “wrestle” with God today? How do these moments help us be more teachable?

DO
NOT

We might be tempted to think God is angry when we wrestle with Him. Why is it important to see these moments as acts of God's grace instead?

DISTRIBUTE



HANDS

Are you teachable—willing to change your thoughts and actions as God continues to mold you into who He wants you to be? Ask someone you trust (a close friend, relative, pastor) what areas they see in your life you have been teachable and what areas they see unwillingness to change. Commit to becoming more teachable in an area in which you need to grow.

FOR
REVIEW
ONLY



HEAD

GOD REDEEMS BETRAYAL

The sin of favoritism and jealousy continues in Jacob's family.



HEART

JESUS CONNECTION

Joseph was his father's beloved son who was betrayed by his own brothers and sold into slavery. Jesus is the Father's beloved Son who was betrayed by His own and died on the cross to rescue us from our sin.



HANDS

LIFEWISE QUALITY

SELF-CONTROL – Not acting carelessly on my own impulses, emotions and desires.

BIBLE REVIEW

MSL 12 God's New Name for Jacob | 1–2 Min

In the previous session, we learned about how God kept His promises to Jacob.

- ♦ What promises did God keep? (*To go with Jacob and bring him back to the Promised Land.*)
- ♦ How did Jacob change over time as he learned to trust God? (*He depended more on God and less on himself.*)

Although God called Jacob by a new name and identity, Israel, Jacob still made choices that negatively impacted his family. Today we will learn more about Jacob's sons and their struggles.

SESSION STARTERS

Birth Order | 5–10 Min

Ask students to imagine that they have 11 brothers (or sisters).

- ♦ What are the benefits of having that many siblings? What challenges might exist? If you could pick where you were in the birth order, where would it be and why?
- ♦ Jacob's son Joseph was born as the eleventh out of twelve sons. Of all of them, Jacob favored Joseph the most (Gen. 37:3). Jacob lavished Joseph with love and gifts. Unfortunately, this special attention led to jealousy and bitterness among Joseph's older brothers. Joseph was caught in very difficult circumstances, indeed. But during these difficulties, God worked for the good of Jacob's entire family.

Five Favorites | 5–10 Min

- ♦ Give each student a piece of paper and a pencil. Instruct students to title the page "Five Favorites." Ask them to number the paper 1 to 5 and make a list of their top five favorite celebrities (social media influencers, musicians, actors, comedians, athletes) in order, with one being their very favorite. Give students several minutes to complete their list.

- ♦ Whom did you list as your most favorite celebrity? How did you decide who did or didn't make your list? What qualities or criteria did you use to rank the ones you chose? We all have favorites, though why we prefer them is a bit different. In real life, having favorite people is okay for many reasons. It's important to have people we enjoy, love and trust around us. However, excluding people based on unfair or unkind criteria can be extremely hurtful and cause big problems.

BIBLE LESSON: GOD REDEEMS BETRAYAL | 10–20 Min

Genesis 37:3–8.

Jacob loved Joseph more than his other sons (Gen. 37:3) because he was born to Rachel, his favorite wife. He gave Joseph special recognition, responsibilities and clothes. But **Jacob's special treatment of Joseph was disastrous for the entire family. Joseph's brothers hated him, and the situation did not improve when Joseph told his brothers about his dream in which their sheaves of grain bowed to his.** The meaning of the dream—that they would one day bow down to Joseph—was not lost on the brothers, and they hated him even more.

Favoritism says one person is fundamentally worth more than someone else—despite the fact that every person is made in the image of God. Of course, **God had a special plan for Joseph**, but it wasn't because of who his mother was or because he was better than his brothers. God's plan was to bless the entire world through Abraham's offspring. **By raising Joseph above his family, God would rescue Israel and the surrounding peoples. But God also had special plans for Jacob's other sons. The Messiah did not come from Joseph's family line, but Judah's.** Despite the pain, hatred and strife that favoritism causes, God is still able to bring about His plans.

Genesis 37:18–22.

At some point after Joseph shared his dreams, **his brothers took Jacob's flocks to the fields** in Shechem, fifty miles from home. **Jacob sent Joseph to report back on his brothers and the flocks**, but they had gone on to Dothan (another 15 miles). It likely took two days for Joseph to arrive. **When they saw Joseph in the distance**, his brothers saw an opportunity to rid themselves of the one they hated so much, and **they made plans to kill him.**

Joseph's brothers were blinded by jealousy and hatred. But Jacob was also blind to the situation. He naively sent Joseph to report on his brothers, not recognizing the danger that awaited him. Jacob had unwittingly given his 10 vengeful sons the opportunity they needed to get rid of his beloved son, Joseph.

Genesis 37:23–28.

Jacob's oldest son, Reuben, asked his brothers to throw Joseph into a pit instead of killing him. But **Reuben's stand against murder was not enough. He failed to stand for his brother. None of the brothers defended Joseph or called the other brothers to turn away from their sin. Instead, while Reuben was gone**, the brothers saw another way to get rid of Joseph without taking his life. **They pulled him from the pit and sold him to passing traders who took him to Egypt.**

The brothers did not murder Joseph with their hands, but they sold him into slavery. They were blind to the seriousness of sinning against their brother, their father and, above all, their God. **Although they intended harm to come to Joseph, God planned to work all things together for good.** God sent Joseph to Egypt to save his family, and through them, the Messiah would come.

Big Ideas

- ◆ **God does not show favoritism (Romans 2:11).** God has created each of us in His image, and we are all equally loved and significant to Him. God told Rebekah that He had chosen Jacob over Esau (Gen. 25: 23), not because he was better, but simply to fulfill a different role than Esau. God tells us that instead of judging others and showing favoritism, we are to show mercy to all through our speech and actions just as He does (James 2:12–13).
- ◆ **God prepares us by foretelling His perfect plan.** God prepared and strengthened Joseph for the future through two dreams. God gives glimpses of His plan many times in the Bible so that we are ready to follow Him. He promised to:
 - ◇ Raise up a Messiah from Adam and Eve's family line to deliver them from the power of sin, Satan and death (Gen. 3:15)
 - ◇ Bless the whole world through Abraham (Gen. 12:3)
 - ◇ Require the sacrifice of Abraham's one and only son (Gen. 22)
- ◆ **God is near to His people.** God was present with Joseph, just as He was with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. He went with Joseph to Egypt, strengthening Joseph with His kindness and helping him to persevere through difficult circumstances. Later, God sent Jesus to the earth to be "God with us" (Mat. 1:23), and Jesus sent the Holy Spirit to live within us. It is always God's desire to draw near to us as we draw near to Him (Jas. 4:8).

Discussion Questions

- ◆ We train our bodies and minds by testing them, working a little harder so they develop strength and maturity. How can the same truth apply to our character?
- ◆ Joseph had both good and bad experiences in this story. How might God use good things to prepare him for the future? What about bad experiences?
- ◆ What challenges have you faced that prepared you to handle future challenges and blessings?
- ◆ Proverbs 27:4 says, "Fury is cruel, and anger a flood, but who can withstand jealousy?" Why do you think jealousy can be more harmful than anger or fury?
- ◆ How might spending more time in God's Word help us learn to handle every situation with maturity and wisdom?

REINFORCEMENT ACTIVITIES

Suggested Video | 5–10 Min

BibleProject Video: *How to Read the Bible: Character*; Full video: 5:00.

Suggested Visual Aid | 5 Min.

Poster 1: *Genesis*

Poster 2: *Joseph*

No Pain, No Gain | 5–10 Min

Form groups of 3–4 students, and provide each group with a piece of paper. Give 2–3 minutes for groups to list as many things that hurt or are uncomfortable but are for our good (i.e., shots, surgery, eating vegetables) as they can. Have groups take turns reading one of their ideas. If another group also has that

idea, all groups must cross it off. After all ideas have been read, the group with the most ideas remaining wins.

- ♦ Many things we go through in this life do not feel good at the time. They cause pain or make us feel uncomfortable. However, when we look back on these experiences later, we can see the good in them. A battle with illness might bring your family closer together, or a disagreement with a friend may allow you to branch out and find other good friends. Joseph was rejected, despised and betrayed by his family. He, like Jesus, was familiar with pain and suffering. Yet, God's plan was to **redeem** all the pain and bring a greater good than Joseph could imagine.

JESUS CONNECTION



Joseph was his father's beloved son who was betrayed by his own brothers and sold into slavery. Jesus is the Father's beloved Son who was betrayed by His own and died on the cross to rescue us from our sin.

LIFEWISE QUALITY | 3-5 Min

SELF-CONTROL – Not acting carelessly on my own impulses, emotions and desires.

Living LifeWise

Because Jesus died and rose again, we can choose to act and react with self-control.

LWQ Script

Developing maturity is all about learning self-control. Small children need loving boundaries because they can't do what's right on their own. But we don't always learn to live this way, especially if sin is in control. In Joseph's family, no one was providing or living out of loving boundaries for themselves or each other. Their sin-controlled hearts led to dysfunction, murderous plots, lies and a brother being sold into slavery.

The Bible says that one evidence of God's presence in our lives is self-control (Gal. 5:23). But self-control is not micromanaging your circumstances to prevent bad things or living rigidly by the rules. It means allowing God to control us instead of sin and selfishness. And even though we won't do it perfectly, self-control is possible because of Jesus' resurrection. We can live God's way instead of being controlled by sin, our emotions or other people.

Head, Heart, Hands Reinforcement | In-class or take-home

- ♦ **Head Questions**
 - ◇ Suffering is a part of life, but it doesn't prove God isn't real or doesn't care. What caused the suffering in Joseph's family and life? What role do you think sin has in suffering?
 - ◇ How did Joseph's brothers show a lack of self-control?
- ♦ **Heart Questions**
 - ◇ Professional athletes have a lot of self-control. They put great time and effort into training their bodies so they will be ready for the next competition. How can you apply that

principle in other areas, such as school work, your chores or job or preparing for the future?

- ✦ Jesus was betrayed by one of His closest followers (Mt. 26:14–15) and abandoned by the rest of His friends (Mt. 26:47, 56) the night before He was crucified. How might the fact that Jesus also suffered and was betrayed help you when you face similar situations?
- ✦ **Hands Challenge**
 - ✦ Think about the way you live—do you have self-control when you are angry, sad, jealous or excited? Write down a specific incident when you did not have self-control when you felt one of those emotions. Find a Bible verse to memorize and recite the next time you are angry, sad or jealous (e.g., James 1:19; Eph. 4:26; 1 Pet. 5:7; Is. 41:10; Ps. 62:1; 1 Cor. 13:4; Gal. 5:22-23; Phil. 2:3; Gal. 5:14). Write it down and commit to memorizing it for the next week. Recite it to your LifeWise teacher.

EXTENDED LESSON RESOURCES

Bible Commentary for the Teacher

Genesis 37 clearly shows the effects of sin at work in Jacob and his family:

- ✦ **Jacob showed consistent favoritism (Genesis 37:2–8).** Isaac and Rebekah each had a favorite son, so Jacob first-hand the harm that comes from parents who play favorites. And yet Jacob didn't try to hide his favoritism of Rachel over Leah or his preference for Joseph over his other sons. The multi-colored robe Jacob gave Joseph was an obvious symbol of the love he had for the son born to his favorite wife, Rachel. It also drew the attention and jealousy of his other sons because Jacob placed Joseph in the role of a supervisor over his older brothers (Gen. 37:12–17).
- ✦ **Jacob doubted God's plan (Genesis 37:9–11).** Joseph recounted a second dream in which the sun, moon and 11 stars bowed to him (Gen. 37:9–11). Jacob rebuked Joseph for implying that he, along with Joseph's mother and brothers, would bow to him.
- ✦ **Reuben failed to defend Joseph (Genesis 37:21–22).** As the oldest son, it was Reuben's responsibility to intercede for Joseph. He convinced his brothers to spare Joseph's life, intending to rescue him later. Reuben failed to rebuke his brothers. Reuben didn't ask his brothers to repent of their sins of jealousy and hatred. Each of the brothers was accountable for his failure to come to his brother's defense—the defense Joseph deserved and needed. The sin of jealousy led each of them to view Joseph not as a brother or a person, but as an obstacle.
- ✦ **Judah failed to protect Joseph (Genesis 37:26–28).** Judah offered to sell Joseph as a slave in place of killing him. Judah saw Joseph was worth enough not to take his life, but not worth more than twenty pieces of silver (the price of a slave), divided between the brothers.

In Defense

Skeptics try to use the existence of evil and suffering as an argument to prove God doesn't exist. Why doesn't this argument work? They would need to prove God doesn't have good reasons to permit evil and suffering in our world, which is difficult since we are not omniscient like God. What's more interesting is that atheists who reject God on the basis of evil in the world actually hurt their argument in the end. Think about it: If you do away with God, then you do away with objective goodness; if you do away with objective

goodness, you do away with its opposite (evil). By rejecting God, the atheist has no leg to stand on when making moral pronouncements like “human trafficking is wrong” or “racism is bad.”

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GOD REDEEMS BETRAYAL

The sin of favoritism and jealousy continues in Jacob's family.



JESUS CONNECTION

Joseph was his father's beloved son who was betrayed by his own brothers and sold into slavery. Jesus is the Father's beloved Son who was betrayed by His own and died on the cross to rescue us from our sin.



LIFEWISE QUALITY

SELF-CONTROL – Not acting carelessly on my own impulses, emotions and desires.



HEAD

Suffering is a part of life, but it doesn't prove God isn't real or doesn't care. What caused the suffering in Joseph's family and life? What role do you think sin has in suffering?

How did Joseph's brothers show a lack of self-control?



HEART

Professional athletes have a lot of self-control. They put great time and effort into training their bodies so they will be ready for the next competition. How can you apply that principle in other areas, such as school work, your chores or job or preparing for the future?

Jesus was betrayed by one of His closest followers (Matthew 26:14–15) and abandoned by the rest of His friends (Matthew 26:47, 56) the night before He was crucified. How might the fact that Jesus also suffered and was betrayed help you when you face similar situations?



HANDS

Think about the way you live—do you have self-control when you are angry, sad, jealous or excited? Write down a specific incident when you did not have self-control when you felt one of those emotions. Find a Bible verse to memorize and recite the next time you are angry, sad or jealous. Write it down here and commit to memorizing it for the next week. Recite it to your LifeWise teacher.



HEAD

GOD REDEEMS ADVERSITY

God uses Joseph's circumstances and sufferings to accomplish His plans and purposes.



HEART

JESUS CONNECTION

Joseph's life pointed forward to Jesus. Like Joseph, Jesus would suffer: He would be betrayed, handed over to captivity, stripped of His robe, unjustly sentenced to death and abandoned. But God was with them: Both were unjustly condemned, but God raised them both to places of honor to accomplish His good plan to bless Israel and all nations (Gen. 12; Phil. 2).



HANDS

LIFEWISE QUALITY

PERSEVERANCE – Not giving up despite difficulties, failure or opposition.

BIBLE REVIEW

MSL 13 God Redeems Betrayal | 1–2 Min

In the previous session, we learned about how Joseph's brothers sold him into slavery.

- ◆ Jacob treated Joseph with special favor. How did his older brothers respond to this? (*They responded with jealousy, hatred and ill will toward Joseph.*)
- ◆ What did God reveal to Joseph in dreams? (*God would raise Joseph up as the leader of his family.*)

Today, we will learn how God was with Jacob's son, Joseph, in the midst of great difficulty.

SESSION STARTERS

Stereograms | 5–10 Min

For this activity, print out some stereograms in color online (accessible through an internet search).

Stereograms are hidden 3D images embedded within another picture.

- ◆ Show students these images, explaining that if you stare at them long enough, the hidden 3D image within them will begin to take shape.
- ◆ God often works in a way that is similar to these stereograms. His involvement may not be evident on the surface of your circumstances, but through deeper reflection and over time, we begin to see His plan in working all things out for His glory and our good.

Charades | 1–2 Min

- ◆ Prepare a stack of index cards before class with one major event of Joseph's life per card: Jacob presenting the multicolored coat to Joseph, Joseph telling his brothers about his dreams, his

brothers plotting against him, Joseph being thrown into the pit, and Joseph being sold to the Ishmaelites.

- ◆ Place students in groups of 3–4. Call one group at a time, give them a card and invite them to act the index card out silently until the class guesses correctly.
- ◆ Do you think Joseph expected or enjoyed the difficult things that happened to him? Explain. How would you have responded if any of these things happened to you? Today, we will learn how Joseph responded to adversity in his life and how God was with Him through it all.

BIBLE LESSON: GOD REDEEMS ADVERSITY | 10–20 Min

Joseph was only 17 when his brothers betrayed him and sold him into slavery. He was torn away from his beloved father and taken to a foreign land. Suddenly, **Joseph was a lowly slave in the house of a powerful Egyptian named Potiphar—the captain of the Pharaoh’s guard. Even so, Joseph continued to trust in and follow God.**

Genesis 39:1–6.

The Lord was with Joseph and brought him success in Potiphar’s house, which did not go unnoticed by his Egyptian master (39:2–3). **Potiphar recognized God had blessed his young servant and** that all he did prospered. The shrewd Egyptian **made Joseph his personal assistant, in charge of his household and all he owned**, and the Lord continued to bless Potiphar because of Joseph. Even though he was still a slave in Egypt, separated from his family, Joseph’s life appeared to be improving. But Joseph’s world was about to be turned upside down again.

Genesis 39:7–18.

The Bible says Joseph was well-built and handsome. This fact did not escape the notice of his master’s wife. **Potiphar’s wife spoke to Joseph day after day, trying to persuade him to have an affair with her, but Joseph refused**, saying it would be evil against Potiphar and sin against God (Gen. 39:9).

One day, Joseph found himself alone with **Potiphar’s wife**. She grabbed him by his clothing and **told him once more to sleep with her. Joseph broke free and ran from her, but** when he ran, **she was left holding his garment. Potiphar’s wife** called for the other servants, showed them Joseph’s garment and **accused him of attacking her**. Later, when Potiphar came home, she showed him the garment and shared the same story.

Genesis 39:19–23.

Joseph was immediately thrown into prison, where he stayed for years. We might expect Joseph to lash out or shake his fist at God at this point, but he didn’t. God had not forgotten Joseph. **And even in prison, God was with Joseph. The prison warden recognized this and had Joseph oversee the entire prison.**

Summary of Genesis 40.

Some time later, **Pharaoh threw his chief cupbearer and chief baker into prison for offending him—the very prison where Joseph was.** One night, the cupbearer and baker both had dreams that distressed them. Neither could figure out what his dream meant. **When Joseph arrived in the morning** to tend to them, **they shared their dreams with him and God helped Joseph to interpret what each dream meant.**

The cupbearer's dream meant he would be restored to his role serving Pharaoh in three days. The baker's dream was not as encouraging: he would be executed in three days. **Joseph asked the cupbearer to remember him and speak to Pharaoh on his behalf** when he was restored to serve Pharaoh. Both men's dreams came true, just as Joseph said. **The chief cupbearer was restored, but he did not remember Joseph** (v. 23). **Two years later, Pharaoh himself had a dream that no one could interpret.** Finally, the cupbearer remembered Joseph. **The cupbearer shared the story of his imprisonment and told Pharaoh about Joseph.**

Genesis 41:14–16, 25–30.

Thirteen years after he was sold into slavery, Joseph was taken before Pharaoh. As he had for the cupbearer and the baker, **God interpreted Pharaoh's dream through Joseph.** Both dreams had the same meaning: **After seven years of plenty, a famine would come upon the land and last for seven years.**

Summary of Genesis 41:33–40.

Joseph advised Pharaoh to appoint a man to oversee the process of storing up food during the seven years of plenty to prepare for the famine. Pharaoh agreed to the plan, recognizing that God's Spirit was with Joseph and **appointed Joseph as the "wise and discerning" man** (Gen. 41:39) **needed to oversee the process.** Joseph was thirty years old (Gen. 41:46) when **Pharaoh raised him up to be the second most powerful man in Egypt.** **God's sovereign plan to exalt Joseph had been fulfilled.**

Big Ideas

- ♦ **God works all things together for our good (Romans 8:28).** Life for Joseph was not easy. In fact, it seemed to get worse and worse. Joseph's brothers hated him and sold him as a slave. Though he was innocent of wrongdoing, he was thrown in prison. But God was not finished with Joseph. Even though he must have felt very low, God used each trial to develop Joseph's character and skills and patiently waited to raise him up at just the right time.
- ♦ **God speaks to His people.** God communicates with His people in many ways. God spoke with Adam and Eve, Noah and Abraham directly. God spoke to Jacob and Joseph through dreams and the interpretation of the dreams. Much later, God sent Jesus to speak God's Word to us (Heb. 1:1–2), and in turn, Jesus sent the Holy Spirit to speak to us always. Most importantly, God speaks to His people through His powerful Word, the Bible. It is the living and active Word of God (Heb. 4:12).
- ♦ **God works providentially on behalf of His people.** God's work on Joseph's behalf was personal, but behind the scenes. Instead of directly intervening for Joseph, God providentially worked out Joseph's circumstances over time so that His perfect plan prevailed. Examples of God's providential care for His people can be found over and over in the Bible (Rebekah, Moses, etc.) as well as our own lives.

Discussion Questions

- ♦ Does your perspective of Joseph's trials change when you look at them as one big story? How can seeing that God was working in Joseph's life *over time* help us face our own trials?
- ♦ Joseph didn't give in to temptation, but doing the right thing got him thrown in jail. Why is it important to do the right thing, regardless of the outcome?
- ♦ How might we benefit during hard times by focusing on who God is rather than our situation?

- ♦ We often assume that God is present and in favor of us in the good times, but absent or angry in the bad. How does Joseph's story contradict that idea?

REINFORCEMENT ACTIVITIES

Suggested Video | 5–10 Min

BibleProject Video: *Genesis 12-50 Torah Pt. 2*; Full video: 4:21.

Suggested Visual Aid | 5 Min.

Poster 1: *Genesis*

Poster 2: *Joseph*

Journaling | 5–10 Min

- ♦ Because of his brothers' jealousy, Joseph went from being the favored son of his father to being a slave. God was setting the stage for His plans to come to pass, but first, Joseph had to endure great adversity. We can be confident that God works behind the scenes in our lives—even through adversity—for His glory and our good.
- ♦ Give students paper or a journal. Have them take a few minutes to think through and answer the following questions individually: What have you prayed for that God didn't answer the way you hoped? Looking back, how do you think God was working in that situation to accomplish His purpose?

JESUS CONNECTION



Joseph's life pointed forward to Jesus. Like Joseph, Jesus would suffer: He would be betrayed, handed over to captivity, stripped of His robe, unjustly sentenced to death and abandoned. But God was with them: Both were unjustly condemned, but God raised them both to places of honor to accomplish His good plan to bless Israel and all nations (Gen. 12; Phil. 2).

LIFEWISE QUALITY | 3–5 Min

PERSEVERANCE – Not giving up despite difficulties, failure or opposition.

Living LifeWise

Because God is sovereign and kind, we can persevere, even in difficult circumstances.

LWQ Script

Joseph's life seemed to take one bad turn after another. There probably were moments he got angry or wanted to give up, but his emotions did not determine his behavior. He refused to give up because he knew that God's kindness is never measured by our circumstances, but by God's character.

God calls us to persevere because of who He is. In Jesus, He has already paid for our sins. He has promised to provide all we need (Rom. 8:32) and nothing can separate us from His love (Rom. 8:38–39). He will ultimately restore the entire world and redeem every single hurt and sorrow we experience (Rev. 21–22). No matter how difficult our circumstances are, because of Him, we can persevere.

Head, Heart, Hands Reinforcement | In-class or take-home

- ◆ **Head Questions**
 - ◇ How did Joseph respond to difficult and unfair situations?
 - ◇ How did God use Joseph's circumstances to accomplish His plan?
- ◆ **Heart Questions**
 - ◇ Which is easier: continuing to be kind and diligent during difficult circumstances or becoming bitter and giving up? Which did Joseph choose? Explain.
 - ◇ Why do you think God allows you to suffer and go through hard times?
- ◆ **Hands Challenge**
 - ◇ The story of Joseph reminds us that God never abandons His people. Write out three specific ways this truth encourages you to persevere in something you are facing this week by completing the following sentence: "Because God never abandons His people, I _____."
 - ◇ Think of a person (or people) in your school or community who is suffering or dealing with difficult circumstances. Find a way to help them persevere. [Examples: make an encouraging phone call, send a card with a Bible verse, take flowers to someone in the hospital, bake treats for someone, offer to stay and help a teacher, etc.]

EXTENDED LESSON RESOURCES

Bible Commentary for the Teacher

God shows us how we can persevere during adversity through the life of Joseph:

- ◆ **Remembering and believing God's promises (Genesis 39:2–6).** Joseph knew and believed the promises God made to his great-grandfather, Abraham. He knew Isaac (his grandfather) and Jacob (his father) were sons of that promise. He also knew the promise would continue through one of his father's 12 sons. He knew God was at work, and he knew from the past that God often works in unusual ways. God gave children to the childless. God chose the older to serve the younger. God had remained faithful to His covenant promises and blessed Joseph's family even when they doubted and disobeyed.
- ◆ **Recognizing God's presence and blessing (Genesis 39:19–23).** The betrayal and heartache Joseph had endured was difficult, but he knew God had been kind to his family in the past. He witnessed God's continued kindness to him even as a slave hundreds of miles from his family. God was with him and working through him while he was in a place of loneliness and pain. God moved both Potiphar and the prison warden to place Joseph over everything, and God made everything Joseph did successful.
- ◆ **Extending God's kindness to others (Genesis 40:6–8).** Joseph knew that the situations he faced were not good but recognized that God was always good. He continued serving God and accepting God's kindness. When he saw that fellow prisoners were afraid and discouraged, he asked God to help them.

- ♦ **Giving glory to God (Genesis 41:14–16).** Joseph did not take credit for what God was doing, even if that approval could lead to his freedom from prison. Ultimately, this moment was not about Joseph; it was about God. So, Joseph trusted God and gave Him all the praise for revealing the coming famine. In response, God gave Joseph what He had given him all along—favor.
- ♦ **Trusting in God's plan (Romans 8:28).** Joseph trusted God whether he was in the pit or the palace; before Potiphar's wife or jailers; walking as a slave or riding as the vice-regent of Egypt; in jail or before the king. Likewise, believers must stand firm on the Word of God. We have an advantage Joseph lacked: We have received Jesus Christ as Savior and know the end of the story. "We know that all things work together for the good of those who love God, who are called according to his purpose" (Rom. 8:28). Consequently, we are to submit to God's plan, even when we cannot understand or see it. We are to believe in the God of the promise even when it is difficult to believe in the promise of God.
- ♦ **Displaying fruitfulness (Genesis 41:46–57).** Joseph was fruitful in all the work he did: at home, in Potiphar's house, in prison or for Pharaoh. He had not only God's favor, but the favor of men because of his diligent work. He was also fruitful in his family. He named his firstborn Manasseh, which meant, "made to forget." God had made Joseph forget the hardship he had endured. He named his second son Ephraim, which meant, "made fruitful." God made Joseph fruitful through his affliction. Not only had God brought Joseph through his hardship, but God also produced something in Joseph through his suffering that would not have otherwise been produced.

FOR
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GOD REDEEMS ADVERSITY

God uses Joseph's circumstances and sufferings to accomplish His plans and purposes.

JESUS CONNECTION



Joseph's life pointed forward to Jesus. Like Joseph, Jesus would suffer: He would be betrayed, handed over to captivity, stripped of His robe, unjustly sentenced to death and abandoned. But God was with them: Both were unjustly condemned, but God raised them both to places of honor to accomplish His good plan to bless Israel and all nations (Gen. 12; Phil. 2).



LIFEWISE QUALITY

PERSEVERANCE – Not giving up despite difficulties, failure or opposition.



HEAD

How did Joseph respond to difficult and unfair situations?

How did God use Joseph's circumstances to accomplish His plan?



HEART

Which is easier: continuing to be kind and diligent during difficult circumstances or becoming bitter and giving up? Which did Joseph choose? Explain.

Why do you think God allows you to suffer and go through hard times?



HANDS

The story of Joseph reminds us that God never abandons His people. Write out three specific ways this truth encourages you to persevere in something you are facing this week by completing the following sentence: "Because God never abandons His people, I _____."

Think of a person (or people) in your school or community who is suffering or dealing with difficult circumstances. Find a way to help them persevere. *Examples:* make an encouraging phone call, send a card with a Bible verse, take a bouquet of flowers to someone in the hospital, bake some treats for someone, offer to stay and help a teacher, etc.



HEAD

GOD OVERRIDES EVIL WITH GOOD

God can bring good out of evil circumstances.



HEART

JESUS CONNECTION

God used Joseph's brothers' evil deeds for His greater plan of providing salvation from the famine. In the same way, God used the evil injustice of those who crucified His Son, Jesus, to bring about His master plan of providing salvation from sin and death.



HANDS

LIFEWISE QUALITY

FORGIVENESS – Erasing a debt that another person owes me.

BIBLE REVIEW

MSL 14 God Redeems Adversity | 1–2 Min

In the previous session, we learned about how God worked providentially, or behind the scenes, for the good of His people.

- ◆ How did God position Joseph in the right place at the right time? (*God sent Joseph to Egypt. He was falsely accused and thrown in prison and elevated as overseer of the prison where he was able to interpret the dreams of the wine taster.*)
- ◆ What good came from the 13 hard years Joseph was in slavery and prison? (*Joseph was able to warn Pharaoh and help him prepare for the coming famine; Joseph was elevated to second in command in Egypt.*)

Today, we will learn how God continues to take the painful things Joseph experienced and bring good from them.

SESSION STARTERS

Paper Tower | 5–10 Min

- ◆ Divide your class into teams of 3-5 students. Give each team 20 sheets of plain printer paper. Students will be tasked with building the tallest tower possible with only 20 sheets of paper. They can fold or tear the paper, but no other supplies will be needed to construct the tower.
- ◆ Give students a specific time limit and encourage them to use creativity. Offer any tips and suggestions when needed (for example, rolling the paper to form tubes and standing them up like legs of a table). After the time is up, towers must be sturdy enough to be measured.
- ◆ Suffering can be compared to 20 sheets of blank paper. We see only individual pieces of hurt and sorrow, but how they fit together to create a structure is puzzling at first. However, from a Christian perspective, suffering does begin to make sense as we understand that God has promised to bring good out of it (Rom. 8:28).

Complete Forgiveness | 5–10 Min

Read the scenarios below to the class, or create your own, and have students identify whether or not they demonstrate true forgiveness. Discuss what might need to change in each scenario to show complete forgiveness.

- ♦ Tyson accidentally broke his brother's video game controller. He apologized right away and offered to replace it when he gets his birthday money next month. His brother said it was fine to wait until next month for a new one, but he has been doing small things to Tyson, like breaking his pencil or knocking his lego build apart. Tyson thinks it's going to be a long wait for his birthday.
- ♦ Maria's missing favorite necklace turned up in her stepsister's room, and Maria said it was fine, only to avoid causing a scene. Later, Maria realized the chain was broken. She's already accepted her sister's apology, but she isn't sure she should let the matter drop.
- ♦ Lia and Payton compete in just about everything. Payton bumped into Lia's table at the science fair and knocked over her replica of an atom. It broke. Payton apologized, and with teachers watching, Lia felt like she had to say it was okay. But she also keeps daydreaming of ways she could sabotage something of Payton's to get even.
- ♦ Sam struggles to control his temper. He got so angry during kickball at recess that he threw the ball and hit his best friend, Joey, in the face. He felt awful for the rest of the day. First thing the next morning, Sam apologized to Joey and to the other guys. He promised to work on his temper and asked for one more chance. The guys all agreed and even started helping him calm down before he lost his temper so everyone could enjoy the game.

BIBLE LESSON: GOD OVERRIDES EVIL WITH GOOD | 10–20 Min

When Joseph was 17, God **foretold** his future rule over his family through two dreams that showed his brothers bowing to him. Joseph's brothers rejected the idea that their younger brother would rule over them. Roughly 20 years later, however, they would discover just how wrong they were.

Summary of Genesis 41:53–57.

The seven years of plenty that God **foretold** in Pharaoh's dream ended, and the seven years of famine began. When the people of Egypt had no food left, they cried out for Pharaoh for help, and Joseph sold them the grain that had been stored away. The famine was very severe, affecting everyone in that part of the world.

Genesis 42:1–6.

Jacob and his family were also on the brink of starvation. Jacob told his ten oldest sons to go buy food in Egypt. Little did they know that it was only because of Joseph's obedience to God that Egypt had grain.

When Joseph's brothers arrived in Egypt to buy grain, they did not recognize Joseph and bowed down before him as the ruler of the land, fulfilling Joseph's dreams. It might seem strange that they didn't recognize their own brother, but it had been over 20 years since they had seen him, he now dressed and spoke as an Egyptian and they assumed he was either a slave or dead. Never in their wildest dreams did Joseph's brothers think that he was a powerful ruler in Egypt.

Summary of Genesis 42:7–45:3.

Although the brothers did not recognize Joseph, he recognized them. **Joseph pretended not to know them, treated them as strangers and accused them of being spies.** After he questioned them closely about their home and family, Joseph was sure they were his brothers.

Joseph placed them through a series of tests to see if they had changed and to give them the opportunity to repent of their past sins. After holding them under guard for three days, Joseph allowed all of them except Simeon to return home with food for their families. To prove their innocence and secure Simeon's release, however, Joseph demanded that they return with their youngest brother, Benjamin. He gave them food, then placed their money back in the grain sacks. When they stopped to eat along the way and discovered the money, they were even more afraid.

When they returned home and told Jacob what had happened, Jacob refused to allow Benjamin to go. When they ran out of food, however, they had no choice but to take Benjamin and return to Egypt.

Joseph released Simeon and provided a feast for them. He secretly instructed that his personal cup be placed in Benjamin's food sack and sent all 11 brothers on their way with more food. Then, Joseph sent his men after them, accusing them of stealing his cup. His brothers were shocked and promised that if anyone had stolen it, he would be bound into slavery to Joseph for the rest of his life. The cup was found in Benjamin's bag. Filled with grief and fear, the brothers returned to Joseph to beg for his mercy.

Joseph tested his brothers again, saying that they were all free to go in peace, except Benjamin. **The brothers admitted their guilt before God for their treatment of Joseph during this time of testing (42:21–22), but when Joseph demanded that their youngest brother, Benjamin, become his prisoner, Judah showed a true change of heart by offering himself as a slave instead (44:18–34).**

Summary of Genesis 45:4–8.

When Joseph saw Judah's willingness to sacrifice for Benjamin (43:30–31; 44:18–45:3), he was overcome with such emotion that it could be heard throughout his entire house. **Joseph called his brothers to come close to him and revealed his identity to them. He reminded them of what they had done, not to hold it against them, but to affirm that he had forgiven them. He encouraged them not to be grieved or angry with themselves for their past actions, declaring that it was God's plan to send Joseph to Egypt. God had worked through, and in spite of, their actions to preserve their family and the line of the Messiah.**

Summary of Genesis 45:9–50:14.

Joseph told his brothers that the famine would continue for five more years and urged them to return home, gather their families and possessions and move to Egypt. They returned home and told Jacob all that Joseph had said. They took Jacob and their families—70 people in all—and moved to Egypt. Jacob and Joseph were reunited, and Jacob spent the rest of his life there.

Genesis 50:15–21.

After Jacob's death, Joseph's brothers became afraid that Joseph would seek revenge for their past treatment of him. Joseph encouraged them not to be anxious, stating that he was not in God's place—that what they intended for evil, God used for good to save many lives. Joseph forgave them, comforted them and took care of them and their families. He showed amazing grace to his brothers.

Big Ideas

- ◆ **God leads us to repentance.** Out of His kindness, God calls us to repent, or have a change of heart and mind, turn away from sin and instead do what is right so that we may enjoy a right relationship with Him. Joseph tested his brothers to lead them toward repentance and a right relationship with God and their family.
- ◆ **God forgives us and does not hold our sins against us.** God does not treat us as our sins deserve, but has removed our sins “as far as the east is from the west” (Ps. 103:10–12). Despite the evil that was intended, Joseph forgave. He provided for his brothers and showed them great kindness, rather than punishing them for the past.
- ◆ **God brings purpose out of our pain.** God ultimately works through our pain to bring us hope and shape us into His image (Romans 5:3–5). Joseph recognized that God took his painful circumstances—being hated by his brothers, thrown into a pit, sold into slavery, falsely accused and sent to prison for years—and used them to preserve Abraham’s family line and the lives of millions of people.

Discussion Questions

- ◆ Joseph’s brothers coming to Egypt was part of God’s plan not only to save them from the famine, but also to restore their broken family. What does this show us about God’s heart?
- ◆ Many people struggle with offering forgiveness to those they dislike or disagree with. How can we show love and mercy to those we disagree with?
- ◆ After Jacob died, the brothers tried to manipulate Joseph because they didn’t believe he had really forgiven him. How did Joseph respond? Why do you think it is hard for us to accept forgiveness sometimes?
- ◆ When do you think Joseph forgave his brothers? While he was alone in Egypt? When they showed up in Egypt? When they defended Benjamin? Explain.

REINFORCEMENT ACTIVITIES

Suggested Video | 5–10 Min

BibleProject Video: *Avon – Iniquity*; Full video: 4:40.

Suggested Visual Aid | 5 Min.

Poster 1: *Genesis*

Poster 2: *Joseph*

Poster 3: *Genesis 50 Verse*

Wolfing Yourself Down | 5–10 Min

- ◆ If possible, display the following quote on a whiteboard or powerpoint slide. Read it aloud to your class: “Of the seven deadly sins, anger is possibly the most fun. To lick your wounds, to smack your lips over grievances long past, to roll over your tongue the prospect of bitter confrontations still to come, to savor to the last toothsome morsel both the pain you are given and the pain you are

giving back—in many ways it is a feast fit for a king. The chief drawback is that what you are wolfing down is yourself. The skeleton at the feast is you” (Buechner, 1973).¹

- ◆ What does the image of the feasting wolf represent? (*The damage of unforgiveness.*) Ask students to think of a person toward whom they hold feelings of anger, resentment or unforgiveness. Then, ask them how they think they, as well as the unforgiven person, might be affected if they continue to harbor these feelings rather than offer forgiveness.
- ◆ It can be very difficult to forgive someone who has caused us pain, but in the end, it is much more harmful to let unforgiveness eat at us. Forgiveness is not a one-time decision, but a daily choice we make not to hold the past against someone. Forgiveness does not mean forgetting. Joseph made the choice to forgive his brothers, even though he still had painful memories and feelings. We can only make the daily choice to forgive with God's help. Challenge students to spend a few moments in silent prayer or have them write a prayer down for someone they need to forgive and ask God to help them forgive that person. Encourage them to continue to pray until they are able to forgive.

JESUS CONNECTION



God used Joseph's brothers' evil deeds for His greater plan of providing salvation from the famine. In the same way, God used the evil injustice of those who crucified His Son, Jesus, to bring about His master plan of providing salvation from sin and death.

LIFEWISE QUALITY | 3–5 Min

FORGIVENESS – Erasing a debt that another person owes me.

Living LifeWise

Because God forgives us, we are free to forgive others.

LWQ Script

When we talk about food, we say the opposite of bitter is sweet. But in life, the opposite of bitterness isn't sweetness. It's actually forgiveness. When bad things happen or people hurt us, there is room in our hearts for only one of those two responses. Joseph could have held on to the hurt until his heart was bitter, untrusting and cold. Instead, he saw God's purpose in all that he had suffered and chose to trust God, open his heart and forgive.

Forgiveness is never the easy choice. The bigger our hurt, the harder it is to forgive. But God calls us to forgive: to let go of how we feel and leave any punishment to Him. It means trusting that God's plan is

¹ Frederick Buechner, *Wishful Thinking: A Theological ABC* (New York: Harper & Row, 1973), 2. Accessed January 25, 2024. <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/justin-taylor/of-the-seven-deadly-sins-anger-is-possibly-the-most-fun/>

good, even when it is difficult, remembering that Jesus forgave us for our sins when we didn't deserve it and asking His Spirit for the power and willingness to forgive. Forgiveness doesn't mean we have to keep letting someone hurt us, but it kills the roots of bitterness in our heart and leaves open the possibility of reconciliation when that person also receives God's forgiveness and new life in Jesus.

Head, Heart, Hands Reinforcement | In-class or take-home

- ◆ **Head Questions**
 - ◇ How did Joseph respond to his brothers when they came for food the first time? The second time?
 - ◇ Why did Joseph's brothers think they needed to protect themselves from Joseph after Jacob died (Genesis 50)? What did Joseph tell them?
- ◆ **Heart Questions**
 - ◇ Give three reasons why we sometimes find it difficult to forgive others who have offended or wronged us.
 - ◇ Why do you think Joseph was able to forgive his brothers for what they did? How can his reasons help us forgive others who wrong us?
- ◆ **Hands Challenge**
 - ◇ Since Jesus is the Savior who offers forgiveness to the world, how important is it to take the message of His forgiveness to everyone? What would it look like for you to share that message?
 - ◇ Do you need to extend forgiveness to someone? What step will you take to do that?

EXTENDED LESSON RESOURCES

Bible Commentary for the Teacher

Adversity highlights the true nature of a person's character. God's character, as well as that of Joseph and his entire family, is revealed in how each responded to and through adversity:

- ◆ **God used adversity to bring blessing (Genesis 42:1–5).** We can easily trace the evidence of God's goodness and sovereignty in every part of Joseph's story. The brothers sold him into slavery, but God used that action to get Joseph to Egypt so that he might preserve their lives and provide for them during the famine. Though many people suffered during the severe famine, God used it to reunite Joseph and his family in order to bring repentance and restoration.
- ◆ **Jacob's sons blindly focused on preserving their lives.** Adversity kept the brothers so focused on surviving that they could not see the significance of their circumstances or God at work in them.
- ◆ **Joseph trusted God and did what was right (Genesis 42–45:15).** He is one of the few characters in the Bible who is never shown to disobey God. Of course, he sinned like every other person, but his character is used to represent Jesus who, because of His willingness to suffer on our behalf, enables us to experience true repentance and a relationship with God.

In Defense

The natural response to experiencing suffering is to ask the "why" questions: "Why is this happening?" "Why did God allow this?" "Why me?" While it is common for people to ask the "why" questions in times like these, greater peace of heart and mind comes from answering the "who" question instead (Job 1:20–22). When we ask the "who" questions, like Job and Joseph, we come face to face with the God who is sovereignly in control of all things and works all things for the good of those who love Him and are called

according to His purposes (Rom. 8:28). Whatever the source of our suffering might be, knowing God is good and sovereign brings the type of lasting comfort we are really looking for during difficult times.

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FOR
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ONLY

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JESUS CONNECTION

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LIFEWISE QUALITY

FORGIVENESS – Erasing a debt that another person owes me.



HEAD

How did Joseph respond to his brothers when they came for food the first time? The second time?

Why did Joseph's brothers think they needed to protect themselves from Joseph after Jacob died (Genesis 50)? What did Joseph tell them?



HEART

Give three reasons why we sometimes find it difficult to forgive others who have offended or wronged us.

DO

NOT

Why do you think Joseph was able to forgive his brothers for what they did? How can his reasons help us forgive others who wrong us?

DISTRIBUTE



HANDS

Since Jesus is the Savior who offers forgiveness to the world, how important is it to take the message of His forgiveness to everyone? What would it look like for you to share that message?

FOR

REVIEW

Do you need to extend forgiveness to someone? What step will you take to do that?

ONLY



HEAD

GOD HEARS HIS PEOPLE

God sees and responds to the oppressed and suffering.



HEART

JESUS CONNECTION

God told Moses His name “I AM” to reveal that He is the eternal God. He existed before anything and has no beginning or end. Jesus is the eternal Son of God, the great “I AM,” who came to us to save us from sin (John 8:58).



HANDS

LIFEWISE QUALITY

COMPASSION – Recognizing the suffering of others and taking action to help.

BIBLE REVIEW

MSL 15 God Overrides Evil With Good | 1–2 Min

In the previous session, we learned about how God brought good from all of Joseph’s difficult circumstances.

- ♦ What good came from Joseph’s pain? (*He was able to save the lives of many people in Egypt and the surrounding countries, including his own family, by storing up and giving out food during the famine.*)
- ♦ How did Joseph lead his family toward repentance? (*He put them through a series of tests so they would have the opportunity to consider their sin.*)

Today, we will learn how God continued to bless Jacob’s family and the specific ways that God answered them when they cried out for help.

SESSION STARTERS

Community Charities | 5–10 Min

- ♦ Invite students to call out the names of charities or nonprofits and list the names on a whiteboard or large piece of paper. Allow students to tell how the organizations are helping those in need.
- ♦ Charities often begin when someone sees a need and decides to do something about it. For example, the Salvation Army, the group that rings the bells around Christmas, began when a man named William Booth saw the widespread struggles of the poor and homeless in England and the sins that many of them struggled with. He began to tell them the good news about Jesus. As more and more people came to trust in Jesus, Booth’s followers fought against sin with the power of God’s Word and against poverty by helping the poor find work.
- ♦ Even more than these organizations, God sees His people and their needs. There is never a single moment when God is not aware of your hurt, disappointments or challenges. He sees our needs and will respond with compassion and wisdom, just as we will see Him do in today’s story.

Listen and Act | 5–10 Min

Assign students partners. Give them one or two minutes for each partner to share a high and a low from the last few weeks.

- ♦ In what ways did your partner show that they were listening? What things do people do that show us they aren't listening very well? What other qualities make someone a good (or not good) listener? When we listen well to others, it shows them that they matter; how we listen communicates whether or not we value and respect others.
- ♦ God provides an amazing example of listening. Exodus 2–3 tells us that God's people, the Israelites, cried out to Him for help in the midst of great suffering. God heard His people—their words and their hearts—and He responded. He does the same for us today.

BIBLE LESSON: GOD HEARS HIS PEOPLE | 10–20 Min

Summary of Exodus 1:1–3:1.

Joseph and his family lived in Egypt for the rest of their lives. God greatly blessed them there. They grew from 70 people into a nation known as the Israelites or Hebrews. **A new Pharaoh** came to power in Egypt who did not know Joseph and how he saved the country. **Pharaoh forced the Israelites into slavery,** fearing the Israelites were a powerful threat to Egypt. **But the more Pharaoh oppressed the Israelites, the more God blessed and multiplied them.** When their numbers continued to grow, **Pharaoh ordered all male Israelite babies to be killed after they were born.**

When Moses was born, his parents had faith in God and chose to hide him, rather than obey Pharaoh's orders (Heb. 11:23). **When Moses was three months old, his mother saved his life by placing him in a basket along the banks of the Nile River, where Pharaoh's daughter found him and took him in. So Moses was spared from death and grew up in Pharaoh's household.**

When Moses was 40 years old, he saw a fellow Israelite being mistreated by an Egyptian. He killed the Egyptian and tried to conceal what he had done. **Pharaoh heard about it and tried to kill Moses, so Moses fled to Midian** and spent the next 40 years establishing a family and working as a shepherd.

Still slaves in Egypt, **the Israelites cried out to God in their distress, asking for deliverance. God not only heard their groaning but also saw and understood their pain (2:23–25).** He remembered His covenant with Abraham and prepared to act on behalf of His people.

Exodus 3:2–10.

Forty years later, **as Moses' flock grazed at Mt. Horeb** (also called Mt. Sinai, where God later appeared to His people and gave Moses the 10 Commandments and the law), **the angel of the Lord appeared within a burning bush.** The phrase "the angel of the Lord" indicates that God Himself is acting as a messenger. Another sign of God's presence was that **the bush was on fire without being burned up. Because he was in God's presence, God told Moses that he stood on holy ground.** Moses responded to God's holy presence in great fear, hiding his face.

God talked to Moses and declared that He had seen the misery of His people, heard their cry, knew their agony and planned to bring about their deliverance through Moses.

Exodus 3:11–15.

Moses responded to God's call with doubt. Having been raised in Pharaoh's palace, Moses was well educated in Egyptian beliefs, traditions and language. Before demanding the release of Pharaoh's entire

slave force, he needed to be certain about the God that was speaking to him, as well as the mission he was undertaking. **Moses asked questions, and God responded with exactly what Moses needed to hear.**

Moses' first question was "Who am I, that I should go?" Because of his past (he was a wanted murderer), Moses felt completely unequal to the task. God wasn't looking for someone perfect, eloquent and confident. He was looking for someone who would rely on Him and obey in faith. So, **God responded by saying that He would go with Moses and bring him and his people back to Mt. Sinai.**

Next, Moses asked God, "What is your name?" Moses had grown up in Egypt, a land that worshiped many gods. **God answered by revealing His personal name to Moses: "I am who I am," or Yahweh, which means "to be."** God's name told Moses that He was greater than all things and beyond Moses' ability to understand, but at the same time personal and near to His people.

Exodus 4:1–5.

Third, Moses questioned how the people would believe him. He knew he wouldn't be trusted by either the Israelites or the Egyptians. The Israelites would see him as an Egyptian—a traitor siding with those who were enslaving them. The Egyptians would see him as an Israelite—a murderer who had betrayed them. God didn't try to make Moses feel better about any of this. Instead, **the Lord gave Moses three signs, or pieces of evidence, of God's power: the supernatural power to turn a staff into a snake, make his hand leperous (skin diseased) and turn water into blood.**

Summary of Exodus 4:10–31

Moses objected to God's call, saying he was not a skilled speaker. God insisted that this was not a problem. God had created his mouth, would cause it to work and **would tell Moses exactly what to say** (4:11–12).

Finally, **even after all God's reassurances, Moses flatly refused to go, saying, "please send someone else"** (4:13). Up until this point, God patiently responded to all Moses' anxieties. **When Moses said this, God became angry. But God showed mercy and compassion to Moses, saying He would send Moses' brother Aaron—who spoke well—to help Moses.** In fact, God knew Moses so well that He had already commanded Aaron to meet Moses before his encounter with God (4:14). God would teach Moses what to say, Moses would tell Aaron and Aaron would speak the words to Pharaoh.

After this promise, Moses took his staff, returned to his family and told them about God's rescue plan for His people. Moses, his wife Zipporah and their sons, Eliezer and Gershom, met Aaron in the wilderness and traveled to Egypt to speak with Pharaoh.

Big Ideas

- ♦ **God is faithful to His promises.** God promised Abraham, Isaac and Jacob that He would give them and their descendants the land of Canaan and greatly bless them. God told Abraham that his descendants would be slaves in a foreign land for 400 years, but that He would punish their oppressors and bring them back to the land of Canaan with great possessions (Gen. 15:13–16). God's call for Moses to deliver the people from slavery and bring them back to the land shows us that He had not forgotten his promise but was working faithfully to keep it at the right time.
- ♦ **God is attentive and compassionate toward His people.** God not only saw, heard and knew what was going on with the Israelites, but He also heard and responded to their prayers for deliverance.

God was attentive and compassionate toward Moses. He listened and understood Moses' concerns and encouraged him to honor God's call.

- ◆ **God is near to His people.** God came down from Heaven to bring about the deliverance of His people from slavery. Moses spoke with Him and witnessed firsthand who God is. Centuries later, God came down again in an even greater way—as a baby, born to deliver the people from slavery to sin (Matt. 1:21; Rom. 8:2).

Discussion Questions

- ◆ Does it comfort you to know God sees every sin committed against you? Does it challenge you to know God sees every sin you have committed against someone else?
- ◆ God hears the cries of the oppressed and acts. Do you consider yourself to be a compassionate person who cares about the needs of others? What are some ways we can hear and act on injustice and oppression in our world?
- ◆ Do you think there is a difference between fear (being “terrified”) of God and reverence (being “awed”) by God?
- ◆ List at least two things we learn about God's character from His speech to Moses.
- ◆ What are some areas where you feel unqualified or unable to do what you think God wants you to do?

REINFORCEMENT ACTIVITIES

Suggested Video | 5–10 Min

BibleProject Video: *God's Character: Compassion*; Full video: 4:37.

Suggested Visual Aid | 5 Min.

Poster 4: *Exodus*

Poster 10: *Moses*

Making Excuses | 5–10 Min

Give students two to three minutes to write down a list of excuses they use when someone asks them to do something they don't want to do. This can be done individually or as a class. Invite them to share some of their excuses if done individually.

- ◆ While not a list of rules to follow, God's Word does give us instructions we are to obey, especially about showing compassion or helping those in need. Do we use the same excuses for not obeying God's Word or showing compassion? Different ones? Do any of these excuses sound similar to Moses' response when God called him to deliver the Israelites from slavery? Discuss how God's responses to Moses apply to their own excuses.
- ◆ God promised Moses and all His followers that He will be with us, teach us what to say through His Word and the Holy Spirit and give us the ability and power to do what His Word calls us to do.



JESUS CONNECTION



God told Moses His name “I AM” to reveal that He is the eternal God. He existed before anything and has no beginning or end. Jesus is the eternal Son of God, the great “I AM,” who came to us to save us from sin (John 8:58).



LIFEWISE QUALITY | 3–5 Min

COMPASSION – Recognizing the suffering of others and taking action to help.

Living LifeWise

Because God shows compassion to us, we can choose to show compassion to others.

LWQ Script

Compassion is much deeper than giving some money or doing a “good deed.” In His response to both Moses and Israel, God shows us that true compassion always has two parts: hearing *and* doing. Compassion feels someone else’s pain—“com” (*together*) + “passion” (*suffer*)—and then does something about it. God heard His people’s misery as slaves, and He acted by sending Moses to rescue them. But He also saw Moses and his deepest fears about himself and his value. And in choosing Moses, He was acting to rescue Moses, too.

God’s compassion is a fundamental part of His character. He cannot be anything but compassionate. We are desperately in need of His compassion—to know He sees and cares for us *and* that He acts on our behalf. That is the beauty of Jesus’ life, death and resurrection. Because He has shown us compassion, we can show that same kind of compassion to others.

Head, Heart, Hands Reinforcement | In-class or take-home

- ◆ **Head Questions**
 - ◇ How did God offer compassion to the Israelites?
 - ◇ How did God respond to Moses' fears at the burning bush?
- ◆ **Heart Questions**
 - ◇ How does it encourage you to know that God hears the cries of the oppressed?
 - ◇ The Bible is full of God’s calls for us to pay attention to injustice and oppression in our world. List some specific ways that we can become aware of injustice or help those who are suffering in your community.
- ◆ **Hands Challenge**
 - ◇ Create a card for someone who is struggling with their mental, physical, spiritual or emotional health. Write a compassionate message filled with the encouragement you would want to hear if you were struggling. Deliver it this week.

EXTENDED LESSON RESOURCES

Bible Commentary for the Teacher

At first glance, there seem to be several contradictions in the narrative of Exodus. As we examine them more carefully through God's Word, we find that they are not contradictions at all, but merely how God's qualities work together and are revealed to people in a way they can understand.

- ◆ **God is all-knowing and sovereign (Exodus 2:24–25).** When the Bible says God “remembered” the covenant promises He made to His people, it doesn't mean He had forgotten those promises. Rather, He determined it was the right time for Him to act on those promises, rescuing His people from their distress and furthering His plan of redemption through them.
- ◆ **God is an invisible Spirit who appears in many different forms (Exodus 3:6).** God's Word tells us that God is invisible (1 Tim. 1:17, 6:16) and no one has ever seen Him (Jn. 1:18; 1 Jn. 4:12, 20). But God has chosen to take the form of many things—a storm (Job 38:1), a fire (Deut. 4:12), a fiery cloud (Exod. 13:21), a burning bush (Exod. 3:2–4) and a human being (Gen. 18:1–33). The Bible suggests that these appearances were limited, rather than a full appearance of God. The Israelites saw the fire of God, but they did not see Him; they heard God's voice, but they never saw His mouth speaking (Deut. 4:12). Moses saw God's form (Num. 12:8) but never saw His face (Exod. 33:20–23). God chooses to reveal Himself so that we can know Him, but because we are created and finite, He appears in limited ways to protect us.
- ◆ **God is greater than all things, yet near to us (Exodus 3:14).** God does not abandon His creation; He is not absent from it. He is active within it. This seeming contraction means that He is more than enough for all of our needs and close enough to care deeply about them.
- ◆ **God's anger is righteous, but His compassion never fails (Exodus 4:10–17).** God is perfect and set apart from sin. He also feels and expresses many emotions. When Moses asked God to send someone else, the Lord's anger burned against Moses. Moses saw a bush burning without being consumed. He grabbed a snake by its tail to see it become a staff once more. Moses witnessed God's power yet could not shake his own perceived weaknesses. God could have destroyed or punished Moses in His anger, and He had every right to. But in His perfect, compassionate nature, Moses was given mercy and a helper, Aaron, to walk by his side.



GOD HEARS HIS PEOPLE

God sees and responds to the oppressed and suffering.



JESUS CONNECTION

God told Moses His name “I AM” to reveal that He is the eternal God. He existed before anything and has no beginning or end. Jesus is the eternal Son of God, the great “I AM,” who came to us to save us from sin (John 8:58).



LIFEWISE QUALITY

COMPASSION – Recognizing the suffering of others and taking action to help.



HEAD

How did God offer compassion to the Israelites?

How did God respond to Moses' fears at the burning bush?



HEART

How does it encourage you to know that God hears the cries of the oppressed?

DO
NOT

The Bible is full of God's calls for us to pay attention to injustice and oppression in our world. List some specific ways that we can become aware of injustice or help those who are suffering in your community.

DISTRIBUTE



HANDS

Create a card for someone who is struggling with their mental, physical, spiritual or emotional health. Write a compassionate message filled with the encouragement you would want to hear if you were struggling. Deliver it this week.

FOR
REVIEW
ONLY



HEAD

GOD FREES HIS PEOPLE

God's people are saved through a substitute.



HEART

JESUS CONNECTION

Just as a perfect lamb was sacrificed in order to spare God's people from His judgment in Egypt, so also Jesus Christ is the perfect Passover Lamb who was sacrificed in order to protect us from God's wrath.



HANDS

LIFEWISE QUALITY

COURAGE – Boldly doing the right thing, even in difficult circumstances.

BIBLE REVIEW

MSL 16 God Hears His People | 1–2 Min

In the previous session, we learned that the Israelites cried out to God for deliverance from slavery in Egypt. God heard their prayers and called Moses to rescue them.

- ◆ How did God appear to Moses? (*He appeared within a burning bush.*)
- ◆ Moses did not want to accept God's call. What excuses did he give? (*He wasn't the right person, he didn't know God's name, no one would believe him, he couldn't speak well.*)

God encouraged Moses, promised to be with him, teach him what to say and do mighty miracles through him. Today, we will learn how God rescued Egypt from slavery through His mighty power.

SESSION STARTERS

Unbroken Promises | 5–10 Min

Invite the class to play a game of Simon Says, and announce that the person who wins the game will be awarded \$50. Play until one student wins. However, instead of real money, award a \$50 bill of play money from a board game.

- ◆ Did any of you doubt that I would actually award such a large prize? What was your reaction when you saw the prize I offered? What was the winner's reaction? Award the student a real prize for being a good sport. Think of a promise someone made to you and kept. How did that situation strengthen your relationship with that person?
- ◆ God never fails to keep His promises. There isn't a single promise in the Bible He has broken. People may break promises or maybe even be unable to keep them for legitimate reasons, but God will always do what He says He will do.

Be Prepared | 5–10 Min

Imagine that you are suddenly alerted that an F6 tornado is heading for your community. You have 15 minutes to prepare. What immediate actions would you take?

- ◆ Discuss a plan as a class, or have students work in groups and allow each group to briefly present their plan.
- ◆ It's always good to create a plan for how to respond to a disaster before it happens and hope we never have to use it. Thousands of years ago, Moses and Aaron alerted Pharaoh that disastrous plagues were coming upon his country for a specific reason—to judge the Egyptians for their sin against the Israelites. Pharaoh could have taken immediate action and released God's people from slavery to avoid these catastrophic plagues, but he refused to listen.

BIBLE LESSON: GOD FREES HIS PEOPLE | 10–20 Min

Summary of Exodus 4:19–7:13.

God sent Aaron to join Moses and his family in the wilderness. Together, **Aaron and Moses assembled the elders of the Israelites and performed the miraculous signs God had given them. The people believed and worshiped the Lord.** Then, **Moses and Aaron took the Lord's message to Pharaoh, but he refused to let God's people go**, saying, "Who is the Lord that I should obey Him by letting Israel go?" (Exod. 5:2). **Instead, he made the people's workload even more difficult.**

God told Moses and Aaron to go back to Pharaoh and command him to let the Israelites go. They demonstrated God's power by turning Moses' staff into a snake, but Pharaoh's magicians also turned their staffs into snakes through Satan's power. Moses' snake swallowed the snakes of the magicians to show God's power, but Pharaoh's heart was hard, and he refused to believe.

Exodus 7:14–18.

Moses and Aaron delivered God's message to Pharaoh at the Nile River. **God warned Pharaoh that He would strike the Nile so that Pharaoh would know He is the Lord. God told Moses to strike the Nile with his staff. Then, God told Aaron to stretch his hands over the waters—the rivers, canals, ponds, reservoirs and water in every stone and wood container. It all turned into blood.**

The people of Egypt depended on the Nile for their survival (for water, a food source, growing food, cleanliness) and even worshiped it like a god. When God turned the Nile to blood, **the fish died, and the people could not drink or use the water. They had to dig underground to find water to drink.** Pharaoh's magicians turned water to blood through Satan's power, but the magicians could not reverse the damage that had been done. God showed all of Egypt that He alone is God. **Even still, Pharaoh hardened his heart toward God.**

Exodus 8–10.

One by one, God unleashed nine more plagues on Egypt, each one more severe than the last. Each time, **God sent Moses and Aaron to command Pharaoh to let His people go.** Pharaoh would refuse, **God would warn him that He would send a plague and the plague would come. Sometimes, Pharaoh promised to let the Israelites go if God took the plague away, yet even after God removed it, Pharaoh hardened his heart and stubbornly refused to let God's people go.**

The plagues fell on every area of life that was supposed to be protected by Egypt's gods. God put His glory and power on display by judging these false gods and showing that He alone was God.

The second plague caused frogs to fill all of Egypt. Pharaoh's magicians brought more frogs onto the land through Satan's power, so Pharaoh hardened his heart against God. Next, God brought gnats to cover the

land, including animals and people. Pharaoh's magicians attempted to produce gnats but failed. Even the magicians declared this plague to be the "finger" or hand of the Lord.

Next, God sent flies, and they ruined the land of Egypt. Fifth, God struck the Egyptians' livestock, and many of them died. Then, He afflicted the Egyptians with painful boils. The seventh plague brought the worst hailstorm Egypt had ever encountered. Any plants and trees in the field were destroyed, along with people and livestock. For the eighth plague, God sent a great swarm of locusts, and they devoured all the wheat in the fields, fruit on the trees and every green plant left. Next, God sent a darkness so great that it could be felt. The Egyptians could see nothing and were unable to go anywhere or do anything for three days.

Exodus 12:3–8,12–13.

Before the tenth plague, the death of the firstborn, God sent Moses and Aaron to warn Pharaoh one final time (Exod. 11:4–8). By this point, Pharaoh should have known that Moses didn't bring empty threats. He had seen nine plagues come to pass. He had heard God's words and witnessed His power. There was no reason to believe this tenth plague would be different. Yet, Pharaoh's heart remained hard, even if it put his firstborn son, and his people's lives, at risk. Unlike the first nine plagues, **the tenth plague would not be reversed, and not even the Israelites would be exempt from its judgment.**

Though the Egyptians were the oppressors and worshiped idols, the Israelites were not blameless. They were also guilty of idol worship (Josh. 24:14). Being an Israelite would not spare them from God's judgment. **God told them there was only one way to save the lives of their firstborn sons. God instructed the Israelites to take a perfect lamb, without defect, slaughter it and then cover their doorposts with its blood.**

Exodus 12:29–32.

That night in Egypt, each Israelite family took shelter under the blood of a Passover lamb, yet it was only a shadow of the rescue they needed. **Centuries later, Jesus, "the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world"** (John 1:29), **celebrated the Passover meal with His disciples.** He took the bread and said, "This is my body, which is given for you" (Luke 22:19). He said, "This is the new covenant of my blood, which is poured out for you" (Luke 22:20). **Jesus, God's Son, introduced a greater Passover, where His suffering would free everyone from slavery to sin and the curse of death.**

Big Ideas

- ♦ **God alone is the one true God.** Over and over again, God's message to the Egyptians and Israelites is: "You will know that I am the Lord" (Ex. 7:17). In sending the plagues, God performed many miracles to show that He alone is God. God's desire is to be known and worshiped because He alone is deserving of our love and affection.
- ♦ **God must punish sin.** God is always completely just, and because this is who He is, He punished the Egyptians and Israelites for their sin against Him. Romans 6:23 tells us that "the wages of sin is death." The result of disobedience against God is the same for all people. Just like the Israelites and Egyptians, we have sinned and deserve death and eternal separation from God.
- ♦ **God calls us out of slavery to sin.** God sent Moses to call the people out of physical slavery so that He might lead them to the Promised Land. Similarly, God calls us out of slavery to sin. Romans 6:23 finishes, "But the gift of God is eternal life in Jesus Christ our Lord." He sets us free from our bondage to sin through Jesus' sacrifice for us on the cross. Through Jesus, we are transferred

from the kingdom of darkness to the kingdom of God's Son (Col. 1:13–14) where we are forgiven and set free from the power of sin and death so that we may enjoy a personal relationship with God forever (John 8:30–36; Rom. 6:6–7).

Discussion Questions

- ◆ How does the story of the plagues highlight both God's judgment and grace?
- ◆ Why was it important for the sacrificial lamb to be spotless? What did being spotless signify?
- ◆ Why is it easier to put our trust in things we can see (money, people, etc.)? What lies do people in our culture turn to for security, purpose, and joy in life?
- ◆ Ten plagues were not enough to convince Pharaoh to listen to God's command. Instead of being quick to criticize him, however, let's consider: How easy is it for adults or authorities (or God) to get your attention? What keeps you from paying attention?
- ◆ How is the culture Moses and Aaron faced in Egypt similar to ours today when it comes to speaking truth?

REINFORCEMENT ACTIVITIES

Suggested Video | 5–10 Min

BibleProject Video: *Setting in Biblical Narrative*; Full video: 5:22.

Suggested Visual Aid | 5 Min.

Poster 4: *Exodus*

Poster 10: *Moses*

Poster 15: *Lord Will Provide*

Substitutes | 5–10 Min

- ◆ Let's think about the word *substitute*. Why are substitutes valuable, at school, in sports or even in cooking? (*Without substitute teachers, classes would be canceled and students would fall behind in their studies. Subs allow athletes to rest, preventing injury and sloppy play. Substitutes let us modify recipes if we don't have the correct ingredients, for people with allergies/sensitivities or to make healthier choices*). In most cases, substitutes are a good thing.
 - ◇ Think of a time when someone subbed in for you or your teacher or you had to substitute something in a recipe or meal. What were some positive or negative things you experienced?
- ◆ More than saving the energy of a team member or the frustration of a teacher, the substitute in today's passage saved lives. The Passover lamb provided protection from the death of the firstborn among God's people. Later, God would send a better substitute—Jesus, the final Passover Lamb. Jesus gave His life by taking the punishment we deserved for our sin, dying in our place (John 1:29; 1 Cor. 5:7).



JESUS CONNECTION



Just as a perfect lamb was sacrificed in order to spare God's people from His judgment in Egypt, so also Jesus Christ is the perfect Passover Lamb who was sacrificed in order to protect us from God's wrath.



LIFEWISE QUALITY | 3–5 Min

COURAGE – Boldly doing the right thing, even in difficult circumstances.

Living LifeWise

By relying on God's power and care for us, we can face hard situations with courage.

LWQ Script

God's people did not know how the night of the tenth plague would end. What they did have was God's promise that He was about to rescue them and His instructions for what they needed to do (Passover) to see His power in action. They showed courage not by fighting, but by boldly trusting God and obeying Him, and they watched as He defeated Egypt and brought them out of slavery, just as He promised He would.

Courage is never dependent on knowing the end result. Courage is based on knowing God and trusting Him to care for us and provide for us just as He has promised. Because of the cross, we are saved from our sins, and His Spirit provides His power to overcome every difficulty. We may not know how a situation will end, but with God's presence and power, we can live with courage in any circumstance.

Head, Heart, Hands Reinforcement | In-class or take-home

◆ Head Questions

- ◆ What message did God tell Moses to deliver to Pharaoh at the Nile River (Exod. 7:15–18)? Why would Moses need courage to follow God's command?
- ◆ What instructions did God give the Israelites so that He could pass over their houses during the last plague?

◆ Heart Questions

- ◆ The Israelites had to show courage to do exactly what God asked of them during very difficult circumstances. Moses had to show courage as he delivered God's words and warnings to Pharaoh. How and why were they able to do it? Be specific.
- ◆ Think of a time you have had to boldly do the right thing in a difficult situation when you may have gotten hurt, rejected or another negative consequence. Were you able to do it? How would knowing God is on your side give you courage in that situation? Explain.

◆ Hands Challenge

- ◆ "Haven't I commanded you: be strong and courageous? Do not be afraid or discouraged, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go" (Joshua 1:9). Draw a picture of what you think of when you read this verse. Write the verse below it. Share your picture and

verse courageously with someone who may not know that God is always with them, even in difficult circumstances. Be bold in sharing this truth.

EXTENDED LESSON RESOURCES

Bible Commentary for the Teacher

God used the plagues to teach the Israelites and Egyptians.

- ◆ **To make His righteous character known (Exod. 7–12)**
 - ◇ **God is faithful.** God made a promise to Abraham to bring his descendants back to the land (Gen. 15:13–16). This was based on the promise that God sent Moses to rescue His people (Exod. 3:7–10, 16–17).
 - ◇ **God is just.** The Egyptians enslaved the Israelites for hundreds of years. God judged them for their harsh treatment of His people and worship of false gods without distinction: “from the firstborn of Pharaoh, who sat on the throne, to the firstborn son of the prisoner who was in the dungeon and every firstborn of the livestock” (Exod. 12:29). God responded to Pharaoh’s unrighteous judgment—to throw the Hebrew boys into the Nile—by enacting a righteous judgment on the Egyptians.
 - ◇ **God is jealous.** Jealousy isn’t always a bad thing. To be jealous can also mean a deep commitment to “seeking the honor or welfare of someone.”¹ God seeks to protect His own honor and reputation because He alone deserves our worship. He will not share the honor due to Him with anyone. Thus, God confronted and judged the false gods of Egypt one by one (Exod. 12:12).
 - ◇ **God protects His people (Exod. 8:22–24).** God made a distinction between His people and the Egyptians when He brought the fourth through ninth plagues (Exod. 8:22). The plagues did not enter the land of Goshen, where the Israelites lived.
 - ◇ **God provides the way to salvation (Exod. 12:6–7).** The last plague passed over all those who celebrated the Passover. God’s instructions were to take an unblemished lamb and kill it at twilight. Obedience to God’s directions showed that they believed God would keep His word and pass over them, sparing their house from judgment. Israel escaped judgment through this sacrifice, and they were saved by faith in the work of the substitute. The blood on their doors served as a sign that judgment had already fallen at that house. Just as the plagues were a sign to Egypt of God’s justice and judgment, the Passover was a sign of God’s mercy to Israel.
- ◆ **To remind His people of the past and to prepare them for the future (Exodus 12:8).** God instructed the Israelites to celebrate the Passover meal every year to remember how the Lord brought salvation to His people. Just as the plagues were a sign to Egypt of God’s justice and judgment, the Passover was a sign of God’s mercy to Israel.
- ◆ The Passover meal also points to the future when Jesus, the Passover Lamb, would be sacrificed to set us free from sin.

In Defense

Skeptics will often say Christian faith isn’t rational or founded upon the evidence but is the result of wishful thinking. Of course, based on the way the Bible presents faith—along with two thousand years of church history—nothing could be further from the truth. Faith has never been an intellectual blind leap

¹ Wayne Gruden, *Bible Doctrine: Essential Teachings of the Christian Faith* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1999), 94.

into the dark but has always stood on historical facts and evidences. Even in this story, it is reasonable to conclude that the Israelites needed to witness these miraculous plagues themselves in order to have faith that God had heard them and was coming to their rescue. While faith is much more than evidence, faith certainly relies upon evidence and makes use of it. Historical evidences for events such as the resurrection of Jesus are what serve as the very bedrock of our faith.

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GOD FREES HIS PEOPLE

God's people are saved through a substitute.



JESUS CONNECTION

Just as a perfect lamb was sacrificed in order to spare God's people from His judgment in Egypt, so also Jesus Christ is the perfect Passover Lamb who was sacrificed in order to protect us from God's wrath.



LIFEWISE QUALITY

COURAGE – Boldly doing the right thing, even in difficult circumstances.



HEAD

What message did God tell Moses to deliver to Pharaoh at the Nile River (Exodus 7:15-18)? Why would Moses need courage to follow God's command?

What instructions did God give the Israelites so that He could pass over their houses during the last plague?



HEART

The Israelites had to show courage to do exactly what God asked of them during very difficult circumstances. Moses had to show courage as he delivered God's words and warnings to Pharaoh. How and why were they able to do it? Be specific.

Think of a time you have had to boldly do the right thing in a difficult situation when you may have gotten hurt, rejected or another negative consequence. Were you able to do it? How would knowing God is on your side give you courage in that situation? Explain.



HANDS

"Haven't I commanded you: be strong and courageous? Do not be afraid or discouraged, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go" (Joshua 1:9). Draw a picture of what you think of when you read this verse. Write the verse below it. Share your picture and verse courageously with someone who may not know that God is always with them, even in difficult circumstances. Be bold in sharing this truth.



HEAD

GOD DELIVERS HIS PEOPLE

God protects His people.



HEART

JESUS CONNECTION

God made a way of deliverance for His people through the Red Sea. In a similar manner, God made a way of deliverance for us by sending His Son, Jesus. Through faith in Jesus we are saved from sin and death.



HANDS

LIFEWISE QUALITY

RELIABILITY – Living so that others can depend on me.

BIBLE REVIEW

MSL 17 God Frees His People | 1–2 Min

In the previous session, we learned that God displayed His power by sending 10 plagues on Pharaoh and the Egyptians to free His people from slavery.

- ◆ Each plague was an attack on a different god of Egypt. What did the plagues reveal about the Lord and the gods of Egypt? (*The Lord is the only true God. The gods of Egypt were not real and had no power to help the Egyptians.*)
- ◆ What instructions did God give the Israelites so that the plague of the firstborn son would pass over them? (*They were to take a perfect lamb, without defect, into each of their homes, slaughter it and then cover their doorposts with its blood.*)

Today, we will see how God delivered the people from slavery in Egypt and the power of Pharaoh with a mighty hand and outstretched arm.

SESSION STARTERS

What's It Worth? | 5–10 Min

- ◆ Using a variety of items (or images from the internet), play “What’s It Worth?” Hold up one item at a time and invite students to guess what it costs. For a larger class, have students write down their guesses. Share the correct price, and award a point to the student whose guess is closest to the actual price. Continue with each item and declare a winner. After the game, for each item, ask: Is this item actually worth this price? Is it as valuable as the price suggests? Why or why not? How do we determine how much something is worth? Point out that prices of things may change, but God’s value never changes.
- ◆ Write the word “worship” on the board. We all worship someone or something. **Worship** means we give our greatest love, attention and devotion to what we value most.
 - ◇ What makes God worthy of your worship?

- ✧ Share that God's worth is not something we assign to Him—He is worthy because He is God. Today's lesson will help us see God for who He really is—the only one worthy of our worship.

Dry Paper | 5–10 Min

Before class, gather an 8x11 sheet of paper, a clear juice glass and a clear tub of water (the tub should be taller than the juice glass). Do an experiment on air and water pressure with your students. For a demonstration of this experiment, watch [Keeping Paper Tissue Dry Underwater](#).

- ◆ Hold up the piece of paper. By a show of hands, how many of you think that I can put a piece of paper under this water and keep it completely dry? How many of you think it's impossible?
- ◆ Take the paper and crumple it into a loose ball. Push it into the bottom of the juice glass so that it will not fall out when you turn the cup upside down. Take the juice glass, turn it upside down and slowly put it straight down into the water until the glass reaches the bottom of the container. Hold it under the water for five seconds, then slowly bring it straight up out of the water. Let the extra water drip off the cup, then turn the cup right side up, pull out the paper and show everyone it is dry. The paper stayed dry because of the air pressure in the cup. The air pressure and water pressure were equal, pushing against one another.
- ◆ The paper was only able to stay dry because it was protected by the air pressure within the cup. Similarly, the Israelites were only protected from the plagues and devastation of Egypt because God was shielding them from harm. God was their great shield and defender. He would show them this in an even bigger way after He led them out of Egypt.

BIBLE LESSON: GOD DELIVERS HIS PEOPLE | 10–20 Min

Summary of Exodus 12:31–42.

After God struck down the firstborn sons of the Egyptians, Pharaoh called for Moses and Aaron at night and told them to leave the land. God caused the Egyptians to give the Israelites gold, silver and clothes as they begged them to leave the land quickly. **The Israelites took their flocks and herds of animals and marched out of Egypt**—numbering 600,000 men, in addition to an uncounted number of women and children. The Israelites had lived in Egypt for exactly 430 years.

Exodus 13:17–14:4.

God led the Israelites out of Egypt as a pillar of fire (at night) and a cloud (by day), but He did not lead them on the most direct route to the land of Canaan. Instead, **God took them on an irregular route to protect them and gain greater glory.** He led them away from the Philistines' territory because the Israelites were not ready to face the threat of war. God's chosen route also made it appear as if the Israelites were lost, wandering in the desert. In this way, God set a trap for Pharaoh. **When Pharaoh heard that the Israelites were wandering, his heart was hardened. He took his entire army, planning to take his slaves back by force.**

Exodus 14:13–14.

God led them to the edge of the Red Sea. **The Israelites looked up, saw dust in the distance and realized the Egyptians were coming after them. To human eyes, it looked like the worst possible place for God to have led His people—they were completely trapped, unable to escape. They cried out to the Lord in fear.** The Israelites forgot about every sign and wonder God had just done for them; their praise toward God gave way to accusations (Exod. 14:10–12). **In God's eyes, however, it was the best possible place to**

lead His people. He would put His power and glory on display to rescue them, so that they, and the Egyptians, would know He was the Lord. Moses reassured the people of God's deliverance. All the Israelites needed to do was be still and watch God fight on their behalf (Exod. 14:14).

Summary of Exodus 14:15–19.

God told Moses to stretch his hand over the Red Sea and divide the waters. The angel of the Lord (in the pillar of cloud) moved from in front of the people to stand behind them, hindering the Egyptians from coming near the Israelites all night.

Exodus 14:21–22, 26–29.

At the same time, the Lord drove the Red Sea back by a strong east wind and made the sea into dry land, providing a way for the Israelites to escape. The entire Egyptian army pursued the Israelites through the Red Sea. In the morning, God fought for His people, throwing the Egyptians into panic and clogging their chariot wheels. Then, God told Moses, once again, to stretch his hand over the Red Sea, and God released the water so that it came down on Pharaoh's army. When the Israelites saw God's great power and how He delivered them from Pharaoh, they stood in awe of Him. They put their faith in the Lord and Moses as their leader.

Big Ideas

- ♦ **God fights for and delivers His people.** The Israelites stood still and watched as the Lord fought for them and delivered them (Exod. 14:13–14). Over and over again in the Bible, God fights on behalf of His people and has won the victory over sin, death and Satan. The biblical accounts of Elijah and the prophets of Baal, David and Goliath, Daniel in the lions' den, Nehemiah rebuilding Jerusalem and Peter's escape from prison remind us that God will have the final victory.
- ♦ **God offers one way to salvation.** God provided the Israelites only one way to be saved—to go forward on dry ground through the Red Sea. Similarly, God provides only one way to be saved from sin (Jn. 14:6)—to believe that Jesus, the Son of God, died on the cross to save us from sin and death and rose on the third day.
- ♦ **God saves us by His grace alone.** God stepped in and rescued His faithless people from death. They didn't deserve God's salvation, but He provided it anyway. Salvation is not about what we do but about what God has done for us in Jesus. [See Rom. 4:3–8.]

Optional Discussion Questions

- ♦ How did God gain glory in this account? Why was this good for the people to see and experience?
- ♦ Instead of a pillar of cloud, how does God guide and direct His people today? How might looking at God's guidance in the past increase your confidence in His future guidance?
- ♦ In what ways does knowing God guides people encourage you?
- ♦ Why do you think God's saving actions on our behalf clearly demonstrate our weakness and His strength? Is God just showing off or trying to make us feel bad? Explain.
- ♦ Why do you think the Israelites forgot so quickly all the mighty works God had done for them in Egypt? How do their fear and complaints reflect our own responses when we face hard things?

- ◆ How might God's victory for the Israelites, as well as Jesus' victory over sin and death, change the way we live each day?

REINFORCEMENT ACTIVITIES

Suggested Video | 5–10 Min

BibleProject Video: *Torah: Exodus 1–18*; Full video: 5:05.

Suggested Visual Aid | 5 Min.

Poster 4: *Exodus*

Poster 10: *Moses*

Evidence of Reliability | 5–10 Min

At the edge of the Red Sea, the Israelites were terrified, and once again, they doubted whether or not God would deliver them from Pharaoh's army. Yet, God was not asking the Israelites to blindly trust Him. What had God already done so that they would know they could depend on Him?

- ◆ As a class or in small groups, invite students to brainstorm a list of the evidence of God's reliability to the Israelites in the book of Exodus. Use questions to prompt their memories, if needed. If working in groups, have each group take turns reading an item from their list.
 - ◇ Possible answers: God blessed and multiplied them in spite of their slavery, sent Moses and Aaron to lead them, showed them miraculous signs and wonders to demonstrate His power and authority, brought the plagues yet protected His people at the same time, caused the Egyptians to give them many gifts, caused Pharaoh to release them from captivity and led them out of Egypt as the pillar of cloud and fire.
 - ◇ God demonstrated His reliability to the Israelites even before their release from slavery. He had repeatedly demonstrated that He would deliver them, so they had every reason to believe that the Lord would keep His word.
- ◆ Hand out a piece of paper to each student. We know that God is reliable, but what about us? Take two minutes to write down ways you demonstrate to others that you are a dependable person. God wants us to reflect Him by living in a way that shows others they can depend on us too.

JESUS CONNECTION



God made a way of deliverance for His people through the Red Sea. In a similar manner, God made a way of deliverance for us by sending His Son, Jesus. Through faith in Jesus we are saved from sin and death.

LIFEWISE QUALITY | 3–5 Min

RELIABILITY – Living so that others can depend on me.

Living LifeWise

God is reliable, so we can trust Him and do what's right even when we can't see a way through.

LWQ Script

What a situation looks or feels like never tells us the full story. Only a few days after leaving Egypt, God's people were standing between the Egyptian army and a body of water they couldn't cross. They thought for sure they were going to die. They cried out to God and complained to Moses. But they were looking at the wrong thing: their circumstances (instead of at God).

God is completely reliable, the one who controls everything from bugs and weather to life and death. He cares about every single part of our lives. He always keeps His word. He never fails or lets us down. He is completely faithful. Jesus' death and resurrection are the ultimate proof of His reliability. That's why we (like Israel) can trust Him, even when we can't see how our situation is going to turn out. And as we trust Him, His Spirit enables us to keep our word so that others can see His reliability in our lives.

Head, Heart, Hands Reinforcement | In-class or take-home

- ◆ **Head Questions**
 - ◇ God continued His plan to rescue the Israelites from bondage and captivity by leading them out of Egypt. How did He ensure the Israelites knew exactly when and where to go?
 - ◇ How did the miracles God performed demonstrate His reliability to the Israelites?
- ◆ **Heart Questions**
 - ◇ God's reliability is based on His authority and character. He is good and always keeps His promises. How might that idea help you trust Him even in hard or confusing situations?
 - ◇ God is reliable, but we often trust in other people or things to help us, save us or provide what we need. Whom or what might we rely on, instead of God, when we need help?
- ◆ **Hands Challenge**
 - ◇ Being reliable means that others can depend on us completely. But instead, we can be tempted to do less than our best, such as doing a chore every other day or only when reminded. Paul tells us in Ephesians 3:22, "Don't work only while being watched, in order to please men, but [work] wholeheartedly, fearing the Lord." Think of 1–2 ways you have been content with being inconsistent or undependable and commit to doing your best in that area this week.

EXTENDED LESSON RESOURCES

Bible Commentary for the Teacher

God was very intentional in the way He chose to deliver His people from the power of Pharaoh. God's deliverance showed that:

- ◆ **God provides His presence (Exod. 13:17–22).** Up to this point in the Exodus account, God had mostly worked through Moses. God would speak to Moses, and then Moses would act on His behalf. God could have continued that practice here. He could have spoken to Moses and told him where to lead the people, but He didn't. Instead, God chose to go ahead of the people Himself—in a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night. There would be no mistake that they were precisely where God wanted them to be—even though their journey would take them in unexpected directions. His presence was always on display before them.

- ◆ **God protects His people (Exodus 14:1–4).** The Israelites followed the Lord in battle formation, but they were not prepared for war: their weapons were few, and they had no military training. God guided His people away from the Philistines to protect them and set the stage for an even greater demonstration of His protection over His people. Their journey would eventually box them in between the Red Sea and the army of an angry Pharaoh. But in that moment of helplessness, God moved between them and the enemy to protect them. He held back the waters like a wall for them to pass safely through. God again demonstrated that He was their shield and ultimate Defender.
- ◆ **God accomplishes His plan (Exodus 14:13–14, 17–18, 30).** When Moses was in Egypt confronting Pharaoh, he despaired and asked God why things were worse for the Israelites instead of better (Exod. 5:21–23). God promised Moses, “I will **redeem** you with an outstretched arm and great acts of judgment” and “I will bring you to the land that I swore to give to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and I will give it to you as a possession” (Exod. 6:6, 8). God had been clear about His plan from the beginning, but neither the Israelites nor the Egyptians could see what God was doing. As the Egyptian army approached, the Israelites cried out in terror to God for help and asked Moses why he had delivered them from Egypt only to die (Exod. 14:11–13). Pharaoh knew the Israelites were no match for his army, so he chased them, anticipating an easy victory (Exod. 14:5–9). Even though both Pharaoh and the Israelites had experienced God’s signs and wonders firsthand, they stood in awe as God easily defeated the formidable Egyptian army and completely accomplished His plan.

In Defense

People often ask why they don’t see big, miraculous displays of God’s power today like the parting of the Red Sea. While there are a number of ways to respond, it is important to mention the purpose behind miracles in the Bible. For the most part, the Bible shows that miracles were intentionally and strategically done to verify a word from God, such as in the book of Acts, when the gospel was spreading to people who were hearing the message of Jesus for the first time. Miracles done by God through the apostles served as a visible demonstration that the message these men were proclaiming wasn’t their own, but God’s.

Do miracles like these happen today as the gospel continues to move forth? Christians answer this question differently. However, the important point to make is that big flashy miracles aren’t necessary to support our faith. We have many reasons to believe the Christian faith to be true. We can look at the world around us and marvel at God’s fine-tuning in bringing this masterpiece into existence. We can look at the changed lives of the disciples and those we know. Ultimately, we can look to Jesus Himself, sit under His teachings recorded in the Gospels, and begin to realize He is more compelling than any miracle we might witness.



GOD DELIVERS HIS PEOPLE

God protects His people.



JESUS CONNECTION

God made a way of deliverance for His people through the Red Sea. In a similar manner, God made a way of deliverance for us by sending His Son, Jesus. Through faith in Jesus we are saved from sin and death.



LIFEWISE QUALITY

RELIABILITY – Living so that others can depend on me.



HEAD

God continued His plan to rescue the Israelites from bondage and captivity by leading them out of Egypt. How did He ensure the Israelites knew exactly when and where to go?

How did the miracles God performed demonstrate His reliability to the Israelites?



HEART

God's reliability is based on His authority and character. He is good and always keeps His promises. How might that idea help you trust Him even in hard or confusing situations?

DO
NOT

God is reliable, but we often trust in other people or things to help us, save us or provide what we need. Whom or what might we rely on, instead of God, when we need help?

DISTRIBUTE



HANDS

Being reliable means that others can depend on us completely. But instead, we can be tempted to do less than our best, such as doing a chore every other day or only when reminded. Paul tells us in Ephesians 3:22, "Don't work only while being watched, in order to please men, but [work] wholeheartedly, fearing the Lord." Think of 1-2 ways you have been content with being inconsistent or undependable and commit to doing your best in that area this week.

FOR
REVIEW
ONLY



HEAD

A TEST IN THE WILDERNESS

God's goodness is shown through His sustaining grace toward His people.



HEART

JESUS CONNECTION

Moses struck the rock, and water flowed out for the people's salvation in the wilderness. Jesus is the Rock who was struck for our salvation, the Rock whose living water satisfies us forever.



HANDS

LIFEWISE QUALITY

CONTENTMENT – Being satisfied with what God has given and not desiring anything more.

BIBLE REVIEW

MSL 18 God Delivers His People | 1-2 Min

In the previous session, we learned that God fought for His people and rescued them from the power of Pharaoh.

- ◆ How did God appear as He led His people out of Egypt? (*God appeared as a pillar of cloud and fire.*)
- ◆ How did God protect and fight for His people? (*God came between the Egyptian army and Israel as the pillar of cloud, caused the Egyptian's chariot wheels to turn slowly, threw the Egyptian army into a panic and brought the Red Sea down on them.*)

Today, we will learn how God provided for His people on their way to the Promised Land.

SESSION STARTERS

Top Complaints | 5-10 Min

Before class, prepare a simple chart on a large piece of paper, white board or screen with one wide column on the left (labeled *Complaints*) and one narrow column on the right (labeled *Votes*).

- ◆ Let's do a quick survey to discover what students commonly complain about. I'll give you one minute to write down three things you hear other students (or you personally) complain about most often or daily. Then, we'll tally the results.
- ◆ Have one student read their three complaints. Write the items in the left-hand column and ask for a show of hands from anyone who also wrote down those complaints. Record the tally for each complaint in the right-hand column. Have students cross those items off their lists. Allow others to add complaints that haven't been mentioned one at a time, taking a vote after each complaint. When there are no new complaints to add, figure out the top three complaints.
- ◆ Do these results surprise you? We all struggle to be content with what we have or find a solution to a problem we are facing. The bigger our problems are, the more challenging it can be to find the

good in our situation. God miraculously rescued the Israelites from slavery, but as new problems arose, God's people quickly forgot His power and responded with complaints.

Survival Supplies | 5–10 Min

- ◆ Place students in groups of three or four. Ask them to imagine they, like the Israelites, are wandering in the wilderness. Using personal belongings or items in the room, each student in the group should choose something to contribute that they believe would help their group survive. Allow 3–4 minutes for groups to decide their items and why each item would help their group survive. Have each group briefly present their ideas to the class.
- ◆ Were there any essential items missing that a group would not survive without? The Israelites prepared for a long journey to the promised land. But they could only carry so many essential supplies. Before long, they ran out of some very important things and were afraid it would mean their death. God used the situation as a test to see whether or not His people would trust in Him to provide.

BIBLE LESSON: A TEST IN THE WILDERNESS | 10–20 Min

Exodus 15:22–27.

After God delivered His people from the Egyptians, He led them into the Wilderness of Shur. They journeyed for three days without finding water. When they finally found water, it was bitter, and they were unable to drink it. They complained to Moses, and God told Moses to throw a branch from a specific tree into the water. When Moses obeyed, God showed His power again by making the water sweet.

Exodus 16:2–5.

Almost two months after He rescued them from slavery, **God led the Israelites on to the Wilderness of Sin. They were tired, hot and hungry.** Even though God had already demonstrated His ability to protect and provide for His people, **the entire community grumbled against their leaders, Moses and Aaron. But they were really complaining against God Himself.** The difficulties of their journey and their fear of starvation distorted their memory of what life in Egypt was actually like. **They remembered having plenty of food but forgot how miserable slavery was and that they had cried out to God to rescue them. Now that He had faithfully saved them, they dared to insist that it would have been better if they had died when God sent the plagues on the land of Egypt (Ex. 16:3)!**

In His **grace** and faithfulness, God **promised to provide the food they desperately needed straight from Heaven. But God also wanted the Israelites' faith in Him to grow.** He gave them instructions to gather enough food for only one day at a time, with one exception. On the sixth day, they were to gather food for two days so that they could rest on the seventh day, or **Sabbath.** **God gave them these rules to test whether or not they would follow His instructions (Ex. 16:4).**

Exodus 16:6–12.

Moses rebuked the Israelites for complaining against God. Then, the glory of God appeared within a cloud as God spoke to Moses in front of the people. He promised to provide not only bread, but also meat.

Exodus 16:13–20.

That evening, quail came and covered the camp, just as God promised. The next morning, God covered the ground with white flakes that tasted like honey (Ex. 16:31). The people had never seen anything like it, so they called it “manna,” which sounds like the Hebrew phrase for “what is it?”

God gave specific instructions about the manna to test whether or not they would trust Him and obey. They were to gather two quarts (eight cups) of manna for each person every day—more than enough to satisfy their hunger. Since He would provide for them, God warned them not to keep any manna overnight, except on the sixth day, but some Israelites didn't listen. Any manna left until the next morning spoiled.

Summary of Exodus 16:21–17:2.

On the sixth day, however, God told them to gather four quarts of manna for each person and bake or boil the manna to keep for the next day. They were not to go out to gather manna on the Sabbath. Some of the people went out on the Sabbath, but there was no manna, and God repeated His instructions that they were to rest on the seventh day. God wanted them to learn to trust in Him for what they needed each day, and He instructed Aaron to keep some of the manna as a memorial for the people.

After this, God led the Israelites on to Rephidim. Once again, they complained that there was no water to drink and demanded that Moses give it to them. But Moses was powerless to provide water.

Exodus 17:3–6.

The people accused Moses of trying to harm them and complained so fiercely that Moses was afraid they would kill him. When Moses cried out to God for help, the Lord told him to strike the rock at Horeb and promised that He would stand right in front of Moses and that water would come out of the rock. Even though the people still did not trust that God would provide, God did the impossible and provided water from a rock for all the people to drink.

Big Ideas

- ♦ **God tests His people.** God tested both Abraham and the Israelites with very difficult situations so that they would learn to trust the Lord and rely upon Him more and more. James writes that God tests all of His followers because the testing of our faith produces endurance so that we may be mature and complete in our faith (Jas. 1:2–4).
- ♦ **God is trustworthy.** God saved the people from slavery, protected them from the Egyptians, made a path through the Red Sea and provided water and food for the people over and over again. No matter what the situation was, God demonstrated that He had the ability and desire to help them, and He still demonstrates this to His people today.
- ♦ **God is merciful.** The story of the Israelites reads like a broken record. Again and again, the people of Israel failed to trust God. They gave in to fear and complained. In His patience, God responded with mercy instead of wrath, withholding what they deserved—punishment—and instead graciously providing for them. Just as God showed mercy to the Israelites, He shows mercy to us. He does not punish us as our sins deserve (Ps. 103:10). We deserve death, but instead God has given us eternal life through faith in Jesus' death and resurrection (Rom. 6:23).

Discussion Questions

- ◆ Why do you think God had the Israelites gather the manna instead of God just filling up empty pots with food? How might working with God keep us from developing a sense of entitlement toward God?
- ◆ Why do you think God chose to supply His people with only one day's worth of manna at a time? Why not every other day or once a week? What does His daily provision teach us about ourselves and about God?
- ◆ People often assume that difficulties prove that God is angry with them or disapproves of them. Does this story support or contradict that idea? Explain.
- ◆ Even though no one wants to go through difficult times, what are some positive responses we can choose when they do come?
- ◆ What do we really communicate to those who provide for us (parents, teachers, God) or who hear us (friends, strangers) when we complain?

REINFORCEMENT ACTIVITIES

Suggested Video | 5–10 Min

BibleProject Video: *God's Character: Faithful*; Full video: 4:42.

Suggested Visual Aid | 5 Min.

Poster 10: *Moses*

Poster 12: *Bread of Life*

A Compass | 5–10 Min

- ◆ God's Word is like a compass. It is completely true and guides us in what we are to do so that we are moving in the right direction. When the Israelites faced serious problems, they became afraid and began to grumble against their leaders and God. Similarly, when most people have a problem, they grumble or complain to other people instead of reminding themselves of God's ability to help. But we can get God's help for our problems by checking our compass—God's Word—for answers and direction.
- ◆ Let's spend a few minutes checking our compass, the Bible, to find the right direction to head when we feel anxious. Have students look up (or print copies of) two or three of the suggested verses and read them out loud, then briefly discuss their application:
 - ◇ Philippians 4:6–7
 - ◇ Psalm 55:22
 - ◇ Isaiah 41:10
 - ◇ Proverbs 3:5–6
 - ◇ 1 Peter 5:7
- ◆ What does God's Word direct us to do when we are afraid? What does God's Word promise us when we obey these directions?



JESUS CONNECTION



Moses struck the rock, and water flowed out for the people's salvation in the wilderness. Jesus is the Rock who was struck for our salvation, the Rock whose living water satisfies us forever.



LIFEWISE QUALITY

CONTENTMENT – Being satisfied with what God has given and not desiring anything more.

Living LifeWise

Because God provides everything we need, we can choose to be content when we face challenges.

LWQ Script

Challenges are part of life. We have to choose how we will respond to them. In this story, Israel's response was the opposite of contentment. Just days after being rescued from slavery, watching God strike down the Egyptians and walking between watery walls on dry ground, their response was to complain that God wasn't doing enough. They did need food and water. But despite all they'd seen, they didn't trust He'd provide *this* too. Being content is rarely our first instinct, but it comes when we remember who God is.

God has promised to provide all we need. He's promised to satisfy us (Ps. 103:5; Is. 58:11). He sent Jesus to die for us and His Spirit to help us live His way. There is no challenge that we face, big or small, that God cannot—and will not—meet on our behalf. He is always at work, for our good and His glory, and so we can rest content in even our challenges because we know He will provide what we need.

Head, Heart, Hands Reinforcement | In-class or take-home

- ◆ **Head Questions**
 - ◇ What did the Israelites complain about?
 - ◇ How did God respond to their complaining?
- ◆ **Heart Questions**
 - ◇ The manna God provided was not just satisfying for their physical appetites; it also fed their faith. Has God ever provided everything you needed (nothing more, nothing less) at the perfect time? Explain. How did that experience build your trust in God that He will give you everything you need?
 - ◇ When was the last time you complained about a situation you were in? How does complaining reveal a sense of entitlement on our part?
- ◆ **Hands Challenge**
 - ◇ Being grateful for what God has given you is one way to exercise contentment. Find a notebook or staple some blank paper together to create a gratitude journal. Every day,

write down at least 2 new things you are grateful for that God has provided for you.
Thank Him for those blessings.

EXTENDED LESSON RESOURCES

Bible Commentary for the Teacher

Israel's wilderness journey reveals several important truths about ourselves, God the Father and Jesus Christ.

- ◆ **We doubt God (Exodus 16:2–3).** Over and over, the Israelites responded to difficulty by doubting God and disobeying Him. Pharaoh made their work more difficult by not providing straw, so they complained to Moses and doubted God, but God delivered them. When the Egyptian army chased them, they complained to Moses and doubted God. But God fought for them and won. They were thirsty in the wilderness, so they complained to Moses and doubted God. Yet, God provided water for them. They grew hungry and complained to Moses and doubted God. God provided meat and bread. Because of our sin nature, our natural reaction is to doubt, or question, God and disobey Him—even when He has shown that He is willing and able to protect and provide for us.
- ◆ **God extends mercy, grace and forgiveness (Exodus 16:3–7, 13–14).** Even though God's people complained and questioned His character, accused God of taking them into the desert to kill them through starvation and said they would rather return to slavery in Egypt, God did not respond in anger. Instead, He lovingly provided food so that the Israelites would know that He is the Lord (Ex. 16:12). God responds the same way to us. He is patient and kind to us when we disobey, in order that we will recognize His love for us and come to repentance (Ps. 86:15; Rom. 2:4; 2 Pet. 3:9).
- ◆ **God proves His trustworthiness, then tests us (Exodus 16:4, 22–30).** Even though God had already proven His great power to rescue them through the plagues and the Red Sea, the Israelites were still fearful of new challenges. Yet, God did not scold the Israelites for their lack of trust when they first ran out of water. He first demonstrated His ability to provide water and food, then held them accountable for not trusting Him when the same problem came up again (Ex. 15–16).
- ◆ **God's miracles point us to Jesus.**
 - ◇ God satisfied the Israelites' thirst physically, but one day, Jesus, the Living Water, would satisfy them eternally (Ex. 15:25, 17:6).
 - ◇ God fed the Israelites physically, but one day, Jesus, the Bread of Life (John 6:35), would feed His people spiritually (1 Cor. 10:3–4).
 - ◇ Moses struck the rock instead of striking the people and water flowed to save people. Jesus, the rock, was stricken for our salvation (Is. 53:4). Instead of striking us, God struck the Son: He died the death we deserved to die. Jesus is also the living water that provides eternal life (John 7:37–38). By believing in Jesus, we drink from this living water.



A TEST IN THE WILDERNESS

God's goodness is shown through His sustaining grace toward His people.



JESUS CONNECTION

Moses struck the rock, and water flowed out for the people's salvation in the wilderness. Jesus is the Rock who was struck for our salvation, the Rock whose living water satisfies us forever.



LIFEWISE QUALITY

CONTENTMENT – Being satisfied with what God has given and not desiring anything more.



HEAD

What did the Israelites complain about?

How did God respond to their complaining?



HEART

The manna God provided was not just satisfying for their physical appetites; it also fed their faith. Has God ever provided everything you needed (nothing more, nothing less) at the perfect time? Explain. How did that experience build your trust in God that He will give you everything you need?

When was the last time you complained about a situation you were in? How does complaining reveal a sense of entitlement on our part?



HANDS

Being grateful for what God has given you is one way to exercise contentment. Find a notebook or staple some blank paper together to create a gratitude journal. Every day, write down at least 2 new things you are grateful for that God has provided for you. Thank Him for those blessings.



HEAD

A LAW FOR GOD'S PEOPLE

Our relationship with God influences our relationship with others.



HEART

JESUS CONNECTION

The law shows us how to have a right relationship with God and others. Because of sin, it is impossible to keep the law. Jesus, the sinless Savior, is the only one who has kept the law of God perfectly. When we trust in Jesus, He gives us His righteousness, or right standing before God.



HANDS

LIFEWISE QUALITY

SUBMISSION – Choosing to be under the authority of others.

BIBLE REVIEW

MSL 19 A Test in the Wilderness | 1–2 Min

In the previous session, we learned that God provided water and food for His people as they traveled through the wilderness.

- ◆ How did the Israelites respond when they didn't have enough food and water? (*They complained and grumbled against their leaders and God.*)
- ◆ How did God choose to provide food and water? (*God miraculously provided for their needs by making bitter water sweet with a tree branch, causing quail to fly into their camp, raining down bread from Heaven each day and bringing water from a rock.*)

Today, we will learn of God's desire for His people to be His chosen and treasured people and how He planned to set them apart from all other people on the earth.

SESSION STARTERS

New Rules | 5–10 Min

- ◆ Set up some simple board or card games around the room. As students arrive, invite them to play the games. After a couple of minutes, announce that students may modify the rules in their favor. For instance, if a player with a blue game piece lands on "Go back two spaces," he or she may change the rule to: "When a blue token lands on a space that says to go back two spaces, they get to move forward two spaces instead." Allow a few more minutes of play, then call time.
 - ◇ Did you enjoy making up your own rules for these games?
 - ◇ Did you like the fact that your opponent could make up his or her own rules too? Why or why not?
 - ◇ Was it easier to play the game following the rules set by the game maker? Why?
 - ◇ Is there anyone in this world you would trust to set the standard of right and wrong for everyone? Why or why not?

- ◆ It wasn't easy to go along with other people's rules because they weren't always fair. They were for your opponent's advantage, rather than your own. Fortunately, we can trust God to set the correct standard of right and wrong, because He is always just. Today, we will learn about the Ten Commandments. God gives His people these rules for their own good, so they will know how to live in the best possible relationship with God and other people.

Uncommon Laws | 5–10 Min

- ◆ Have you ever noticed that there are some strange laws out there? Here are a few examples from around the world:
 - ◇ In Singapore, it is illegal not to flush the toilet after using it.
 - ◇ In Venice, Italy, it is illegal to feed pigeons.
 - ◇ In Ottawa and Toronto, Canada, it is illegal to climb trees.
 - ◇ In Australia, it is illegal to dress up as the action heroes Batman or Robin.
 - ◇ In Alaska, it is illegal to wake a sleeping bear to take a photo.
- ◆ Although these laws may seem weird, they probably exist for a good reason. What might go wrong if people didn't obey one of these laws? Ultimately, laws are made for the common good.
- ◆ In the same way, God's law also exists for our good. He gave us specific commands to protect us and help us to know how to worship and honor Him.

BIBLE LESSON: A LAW FOR GOD'S PEOPLE | 10–20 Min

Having delivered Israel from slavery, the Lord continued to lead His people as a pillar of cloud and fire through the wilderness until they came to Mount Sinai—the same mountain where He had called Moses to rescue the people and to which He promised to bring them to worship God (Ex. 3:12).

Exodus 19:3–6.

God gave Moses a message for His people: God wanted the Israelites to be His treasured people. God **promised that they would be holy, or set apart from all nations on the earth to serve Him. But,** if the people wanted to have this special relationship with God, **they must agree to enter into a covenant promise with Him.**

Summary of Exodus 19:7–25.

When the people heard God's request, they agreed immediately to enter into the covenant **before they knew fully what this covenant would involve. God told Moses and the people to meet with Him at Mount Sinai in three days. The people were instructed to prepare for God's coming** by washing their clothes and setting themselves apart. Moses also set limits around the mountain to protect the people. They were warned not to touch the mountain without God's permission.

On the morning of the third day, the people heard thunder and a very loud trumpet blast. They saw lightning and fire coming down on the mountain, and a thick cloud of smoke wrapped around the mountain.

Moses led the people out of their camp to the edge of the mountain. They felt the mountain shaking. The sound of the trumpet grew louder and louder. Then, God came to the top of Mount Sinai to meet with His people.

Exodus 20:1–2.

God called Moses and Aaron to come up on the mountain. He **gave His people the Ten Commandments and the law so they would** know how to function as a new nation, how to treat each other and **how to live as a people set apart from all other nations** around them. Other nations worshiped many gods, but they would worship the Lord only.

God also gave the law to reveal Himself to them directly and personally. No other nation would know Him like Israel would. And He offered them this special relationship out of love. Many years later, Moses reminded the people of this: “The Lord had His heart set on you and chose you, not because you were more numerous than all people, for you were the fewest of all peoples. But because the Lord loved you and kept the oath He swore to your ancestors, He brought you out with a strong hand and redeemed you from the place of slavery, from the power of Pharaoh king of Egypt” (Deut. 7:7–8).

Exodus 20:3–8.

In the first four commandments, God revealed how His people could demonstrate that they loved Him:

1. Do not have other gods besides me (Ex. 20:3). God has no rival. There is no one like Him. He is the only one worthy of worship. God deserves the first place in our lives, and we are called not to love or put anything before Him.

2. Do not make an idol for yourself. Do not worship or serve them (Ex. 20:4–5). God calls Himself a **jealous** God. He alone rightly deserves all our praise and worship. He is jealous when we offer praise and worship to someone or something else because He created us and we belong to Him.

3. Do not misuse the name of the Lord your God (Ex. 20:7). God’s name is to be praised, honored and celebrated instead of used recklessly or disrespectfully. When God’s name is used lightly, He is being rejected and misrepresented as something other than the awesome God that He truly is.

4. Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. You must not do any work (Ex. 20:8, 10). We are to show our dependence on God, resting from the work we normally do and worshiping Him to show that we trust Him to provide for all our needs.

Exodus 20:12–17.

In the last six commandments, God revealed how His people should show their love for God and one another:

5. Honor your father and mother (Ex. 20:12). We are to show honor and respect for the parents God has given us. This does not mean that we always agree with our parents' decisions or their way of life, but it does mean that we treat them with respect as long as we live.

6. Do not murder (Ex. 20:13). We are not to willfully take the life of another human being. Instead, we are to consider all human beings precious because they are made in God’s image. He is the Creator of all life: Life is His to give and take away. (This commandment is not used in the context of war or punishment for a crime.)

7. Do not commit adultery (Ex. 20:14). We are not to have a romantic relationship with someone other than our spouse. When we get married, we make a promise both to our spouse and to God to set ourselves apart physically, mentally and emotionally for our spouse alone.

8. Do not steal (Ex. 20:15). We are not to take what doesn't belong to us, whether tangible (physical things or money) or intangible (answers, ideas, reputation). Instead, we are to thank God for what we have and ask Him to provide what we need.

9. Do not give false testimony against your neighbor (Ex. 20:16). We should not tell a lie about someone to hurt them or cause them problems. Rather, we should protect others by speaking the truth about them, whether it benefits us or not.

10. Do not covet anything that belongs to your neighbor (Ex. 20:17). We should not set our affections or desires on something so much that we feel we cannot be happy without it. Instead, God wants us to be content with what we have and fix all our affection on Him.

God has created us to worship Him as a way of life and reflect His image as we live in relationship with one another. We are to honor life and respect others because God has created each person in His image. We are to live justly with one another because God is just. We are to love others because God first loved us (1 John 4:19).

Summarize Exodus 20:18–21 and Deuteronomy 5:22–33.

When the people saw the lightning, fire and smoke on the mountain and heard the thunder and the trumpet sound they were very afraid. But when they **listened to God give the Ten Commandments, they were afraid that they would die, because they had heard the very voice of God. They begged Moses to be their mediator—to go near to God, listen to the entire law God would give and come back and tell the people.** God agreed with this, so Moses sent the people back to their tents with Aaron, and he climbed up the mountain to speak with God.

Summarize Exodus 24:1–18.

The Ten Commandments summed up and introduced the larger law that God would give His people. God spoke all of these laws to Moses, Moses told the people all of God's words and the people agreed, saying, "All the words God has spoken, we will do" (Ex. 24:3). Moses wrote down God's laws and built an altar to the Lord, and the Israelites worshiped the Lord. **Moses read the people God's law, and they made a covenant promise that they would follow all of God's words.**

Then, **God invited Moses and Aaron, Aaron's sons Nadab and Abihu, and seventy of the leaders of the people to meet with Him.** They saw God and ate and drank in His presence and did not die. **When God called Moses and his assistant Joshua to come up the mountain, Moses told Aaron and the leaders of the people to wait for them until they returned.** Moses and Joshua went up the mountain and waited. God's cloud covered the mountain. On the seventh day, God called to Moses from within the cloud and **Moses was on the mountain for 40 days and nights.** The people saw God's glory in a consuming fire on top of the mountain. While Moses was on the mountain, **God engraved the law on two stone tablets** with His own finger (Ex. 31: 18) **and gave it to Moses.**

Big Ideas

- ♦ **God is holy.** The Israelites could not approach God whenever they felt like it. God is holy, or completely pure, perfect and set apart from sin. Because the Israelites were sinful people, they could only go near God with His permission. To do otherwise would mean death, because as a holy God, He must punish sin (Ex. 20:4–7; Rom. 6:23). Moses set limits around the mountain to remind the people that God was set apart and to protect them from death. Just like the Israelites, our sin separates us from God. God sent Jesus to die for our sins so that our sin could be wiped away and

we could be forgiven, made right with God and be brought near to Him (2 Cor. 5:21; Eph. 1:7; Eph. 2:13).

- ♦ **God is gracious.** Through the law, God set the people apart from all other nations as His treasured possession and cared for them. The Israelites didn't deserve this, but God gave them the law because He loved them and knew that if they followed His commands, life would go well for them in the land of Canaan. In one sense, these laws were designed to set the people up for success. In another sense, they set the people up for failure. The Israelites would soon learn that they could never follow all of God's law without His help. This, too, was an act of grace meant to drive the people back to God.
- ♦ **God is jealous.** God is not envious because we possess something He wants or needs. Rather, He is jealous when the love and worship that belongs to Him is given to someone or something else. God is jealous for our time and affection in a way that is always perfect, loving and right.

Optional Discussion Questions

- ♦ Why do you think God wanted His people to live differently from the surrounding nations? What might this communicate about God to others?
- ♦ The first four commandments focus on relationship with God and the final six on relationships with others. How might having a relationship with God influence relationships with other people?
- ♦ While some people still worship idol statues today, most of us do not. But anything we love or are more devoted to than God is an idol. What kinds of things do we tend to elevate or love more than God?
- ♦ What are some ways God's name is misused today? Why does God take this so seriously?
- ♦ What do you think is the difference between stealing (Commandment #8) and coveting (#10)?

REINFORCEMENT ACTIVITIES

Suggested Video | 5–10 Min

BibleProject Video: *The Law*; Full video: 5:26.

Suggested Visual Aid | 5 Min.

Poster 5: *10 Commandments*

Poster 14: *New Covenant*

The Character of God | 5–10 Min

Invite students to name and briefly explain character qualities that God demonstrates in Genesis and Exodus. Record their answers on a large piece of paper, white board or screen. Students can do this activity individually or in small groups, then discuss their answers as a class or brainstorm as a class throughout the exercise.

- ♦ As you think about all these qualities, do you think that God deserves to be the standard of right and wrong? Why or why not?
- ♦ If God is all of these things, why are we often hesitant to follow God's commands at times? What would it take to change your attitude toward God's authority and rules?



JESUS CONNECTION



The law shows us how to have a right relationship with God and others. Because of sin, it is impossible to keep the law. Jesus, the sinless Savior, is the only One who has kept the law of God perfectly. When we trust in Jesus, He gives us His righteousness, or right standing before God.



LIFEWISE QUALITY

SUBMISSION – Choosing to be under the authority of others.

Living LifeWise

Because God is our good King, it is right to submit to His rules.

LWQ Script

If you were training for the Olympics, but you ignored your coach's training program and just did whatever you wanted, what would happen? *[Allow students to answer.]*

Because He reigns over the entire universe, God's rules and principles reveal how life works best—how to live in partnership with Him. God's people said they would follow God's rules, but they didn't. They (and most people today) treated God's rules as restrictions on our fun or freedom, like God is trying to hold us back. Just like you can't win a game if you don't play by the rules, we won't find the full life God promises without submitting to the standards and boundaries He's provided.

But we can't submit to God on our own. Because of sin, we will never willingly choose to be under His authority. Rather than God giving us an impossible test that He judges us on, these "rules" were supposed to reveal that we couldn't be good enough to meet God's standard. That's why Jesus came and died. He kept God's rules perfectly (He was sinless), and when we trust in Jesus' death and resurrection, God graciously credits us with Jesus' righteousness and provides His Spirit to enable us to submit to God's rules and live in partnership with Him.

Head, Heart, Hands Reinforcement | In-class or take-home

- ◆ **Head Questions**
 - ◇ What miracles did God remind the Israelites of before giving them the Ten Commandments? How could a focus on these events help the Israelites continue to willingly submit to God's laws?
 - ◇ Why did God want the Israelites to follow the Ten Commandments?
- ◆ **Heart Questions**
 - ◇ What tends to be your motivation to obey God or other authorities (parents, coaches, teachers)? Are those good reasons? Explain.

- ✧ Submission is always a choice. The Bible says it's easier to submit to God's authority and obey Him when we know Him, love Him and revere Him. Why would knowing God, loving Him and revering Him help us submit to Him? Do you think one area is more important, or are they equal? Which one do you find to be the most difficult?

✧ Hands Challenge

- ✧ Identify different areas of your life where submission is important, such as at home, in sports or activities, in school and in your community. For each area, list a specific way in which you can demonstrate submission this week to the person or group who is in charge.

EXTENDED LESSON RESOURCES

Bible Commentary for the Teacher

The Ten Commandments and all 603 of God's laws for Israel show us what He is like:

- ✧ **God is loving (Exodus 19:3–6).** God reminded the Israelites that He delivered them, carried them and drew them to Himself with the intent of setting them apart as His treasured people. He gave them the law because He loved them.
- ✧ **God is near (Exodus 19:3–6, 20, 24:9–18).** God wanted a relationship with His people. God came to Mount Sinai to meet with the Israelites and showed His presence on the mountain. He designed the law so that they alone could enjoy a special relationship with God through the way they worshiped Him and lived within their community.
- ✧ **God cares for and protects His people (Exodus 20–23, 31, 34–39 and Leviticus).** God's laws are much more than a list of exhaustive do's and don'ts. God gave the law to care for the needs of His people, even down to the smallest details of life. God also wanted to protect them from living in ways that would only cause them pain. God taught them how to worship Him in a way that would focus their attention and affections on Him alone. He taught them to value human life as His image bearers, treat others with consideration and mercy and how to live in a right and just way.
- ✧ **God is the perfect standard for how to live and worship (Exodus 20:1–23).** God created all things. He alone is all-powerful, all-knowing and holy. He alone had the right to set the standard of what was right and wrong. He alone could tell the Israelites how to live and worship Him. God showed them His good character when He rescued them from slavery and led them through the wilderness, and He displayed it again through the law, demonstrating His love, mercy, grace, kindness, faithfulness, justice and trustworthiness. In commanding them to follow the law, God asked them to reflect His good character, in everything they did, to the world.

In Defense

Apart from God, the concept and reality of goodness would not exist. In other words, apart from having a moral lawgiver whose character is completely good, we would be unable to say with any authority that acts are either good or bad, right or wrong. All morality would be relative—good for some, maybe bad for others. We would be unable to say acts of terrorism are wrong or that torturing an infant for fun is an act of evil. Of course, the very thought of horrific things like that not being declared evil and wrong is unsettling to us, and rightly so. Why? Objective goodness does exist because God exists. Though evil may prevail for a time, as Christians we take refuge in Jesus—the one who promises that one day He will wipe away every tear, making all wrongs right, as He makes all things new again (Rev. 21:4).

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A LAW FOR GOD'S PEOPLE

Our relationship with God influences our relationship with others.

JESUS CONNECTION



The Law shows us how to have a right relationship with God and others. Because of sin, it is impossible to keep the Law. Jesus, the sinless Savior, is the only One who has kept the law of God perfectly. When we trust in Jesus, He gives us His righteousness, or right standing before God.



LIFEWISE QUALITY

SUBMISSION – Choosing to be under the authority of others.



HEAD

What miracles did God remind the Israelites of before giving them the Ten Commandments? How could a focus on these events help the Israelites continue to willingly submit to God's laws?

Why did God want the Israelites to follow the Ten Commandments?



HEART

What tends to be your motivation to obey God or other authorities (parents, coaches, teachers)? Are those good reasons? Explain.

DO
NOT

Submission is always a choice. The Bible says it's easier to submit to God's authority and obey Him when we know Him, love Him and revere Him. Why would knowing God, loving Him and revering Him help us submit to Him? Do you think one area is more important, or are they equal? Which one do you find to be the most difficult?



HANDS

Identify different areas of your life where submission is important, such as at home, in sports or activities, in school and in your community. For each area, list a specific way in which you can demonstrate submission to the person or group who is in charge.

FOR
REVIEW
ONLY



HEAD

AN IMAGE OF IDOLATRY

Idolatry happens when we worship something or someone else besides God.



HEART

JESUS CONNECTION

When the Israelites sinned, Moses interceded for them, but he was only a temporary mediator. Jesus Christ is the perfect mediator between God and sinful people, and He faithfully intercedes for His people.



HANDS

LIFEWISE QUALITY

LOYALTY – Choosing to stay committed, devoted and faithful to someone.

BIBLE REVIEW

MSL 20 A Law for God's People | 1–2 Min

In the previous session, God met with the Israelites and gave them the Ten Commandments and the law at Mount Sinai.

- ◆ What did the people hear, see and feel when God came to meet with them? (*The people heard thunder, a trumpet sound and God's voice; saw lightning, fire and smoke; felt the mountain tremble.*)
- ◆ Why did God give the people the Ten Commandments and law? (*To set them apart from other nations as God's people, protect the people, teach them how to love God and others and teach them right from wrong.*)

Today, we will learn how and why Israel broke their covenant promise to God.

SESSION STARTERS

The Waiting Game | 5–10 Min

- ◆ You will need a 1–3 minute timer for this activity. Start by asking students to wait for the timer to go off (set the amount of time that works best for your class) without talking. Complete other challenges (wait without making any sound, without moving, without opening their eyes, etc.) or do the same challenge for longer periods.
- ◆ Waiting is not easy, but being able to wait is an important skill. Waiting for something we want demonstrates self-control as well as trust in the person who promised to give us what we're waiting for. When we refuse to wait, we can cost ourselves what we desire. In today's story, God's people couldn't wait for Moses to return, and their impatience resulted in them sinning against God.

Top Two | 5–10 Min

- ♦ Provide each student with a piece of paper. One at a time, call out a category and have students write down their “top two” favorites in that category. Categories can include candy bars, sports teams, places they’ve visited, restaurants, etc. At the end, allow students to share their answers or vote for or against others’ favorites.
- ♦ We all enjoy some things more than others. God meant for us to enjoy His creations, but we were not meant to enjoy anything more than Him. If anything takes His place in our lives, it is an idol.

Today’s story illustrates just how seriously God takes our choice to replace Him with anyone or anything else.

BIBLE LESSON: AN IMAGE OF IDOLATRY | 10–20 Min

Exodus 32:1–6.

Moses and Joshua were on Mount Sinai receiving the Law for 40 days and nights (Ex. 24:18). When they did not come back right away, the people wondered if something had happened to them. The first and second commandments required the people to worship God by faith, without relying on an image. But **the people desperately wanted a symbol of God’s presence**—something they could see and touch. Moses had been that symbol, but they were afraid he was gone forever. **So, the Israelites gathered together and asked Aaron to make them an idol.**

Aaron was a leader of the people. He had proclaimed God’s Word to the Israelites and Egyptians. He had seen God’s great power and deliverance. He had even seen God’s form on the mountain and been invited to eat in God’s presence. Yet, **Aaron did not argue or refuse to do what the people asked. Instead, he agreed, telling them to provide their jewelry so he could make a golden idol.** After Aaron made the idol, **the Israelites said, “Israel, these are your gods, who brought you up from the land of Egypt” (Ex. 32:4), and declared the golden calf to be equal with God. Then, Aaron built an altar and proclaimed a feast.**

The next day, the people made sacrifices to the golden calf. They were trying to worship God through the object that they had made, but God had already made it clear that they were not to worship Him in this way. Because they selfishly attempted to worship the Lord on their own terms, **they actually stopped worshiping God and began to worship an idol in ways that did not honor God.**

Exodus 32:7–14.

God knew the Israelites had turned to idolatry and sent Moses to stop them. God is perfectly holy and just. He cannot tolerate sin. The people had disobeyed a direct command from God, showing that they would rather risk death by worshiping God their way rather than trusting God’s Word.

God loved and treasured His people, but He is jealous of the worship that belonged to Him alone. God revealed to Moses how broken and hurt He was over Israel’s disobedience. **God felt so angry that He offered to put the Israelites to death and make a nation from Moses instead.** God would have been completely just in punishing the Israelites’ sin.

Instead of agreeing to God’s proposed plan, Moses became a mediator between the Lord and His people, working to restore the broken relationship between them. Moses protested God’s offer, reminding God that His reputation among the nations and His faithfulness to His promises were on the line. God must lead the Israelites safely to the Promised Land so that all nations would see that He was all-powerful and good to His people. God must also keep the covenant He made to Abraham, to lead his

descendants back to the Promised Land. **Moses did not ask God to ignore His people's sin, but to cover it with His mercy.** He pleaded with God not to punish them in the way that they deserved.

Summary of Exodus 32:15–34:9.

Moses took the two stone tablets, went down the mountain with Joshua and saw the people dancing and worshipping the golden calf. Moses was greatly angered by the people's sin. **He broke the stone tablets at the foot of the mountain to show that the people had broken their promise to follow God's law, then destroyed the golden calf (Ex. 32:19–20).**

The sin of the Israelites was a serious offense against a holy God. Moses confronted Aaron and the people with their sin, ordering that those who had worshiped the golden calf should be killed. Then, God sent a plague to punish the people. In His mercy, God did not kill Aaron or the people (Ex. 32:23–35).

After dealing with the people's sin, Moses returned to the Lord and asked Him to forgive the sin of the people and lead them on to the land of Canaan. At first, God agreed to forgive the people but told them to go to the Promised Land without Him, saying the Israelites were so stubborn that He might destroy them along the way (Ex. 33:3). The people wept over their sin and the possibility of going without God's presence. Again, Moses stepped in to mediate between God and His people. He pleaded with God to go with them or not send them at all. **God promised Moses, "My presence will go with you, and I will give you rest" (Ex. 33:14).**

God gave Moses two new stone tablets with the Law and declared, "The Lord is a compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger and abounding in faithful love and truth, maintaining faithful love to a thousand generations, forgiving iniquity, rebellion and sin. But He will not leave the guilty unpunished" (Ex. 34:6–7b). Moses worshiped God and then went down the mountain to give God's message to the people.

Big Ideas

- ◆ **God feels emotions.** We feel emotions because we are made in God's image and He feels emotions (Ps. 78:40, 103:13; Is. 54:8, 62:5). In this story, God expressed hurt, betrayal, rejection and anger because of the people's idolatry (Ex. 32:7–9). While our emotions can lead us into sin, God's feelings are never sinful.
- ◆ **How we approach God matters.** God is holy and just. His holiness means that the Israelites could not approach Him in whatever manner they decided was acceptable. And because they disobeyed His commands about how to approach Him, His justice required that they paid the penalty (death and plague) for their sin (Rom. 6:23).
- ◆ **God is merciful.** Although God's justice demanded that the Israelites pay for their sin against Him, God did not treat them as their sins deserved by wiping out the whole nation or abandoning them in the wilderness. God also gives us mercy. Instead of punishing us for our sin, He sent His Son, Jesus, to bear that punishment in our place so that we would be made right with God.

Discussion Questions

- ◆ Why is it sometimes more difficult to trust God than a thing or person?
- ◆ How does idolatry negatively affect our relationships with others and with God?

- ◆ Are you surprised at Moses' response to God's offer on the mountain? Would you have done what he did? More than his own benefit or the people's, what did Moses see as most important?
- ◆ Moses chose to intercede (or speak on behalf of) for the people to God. Do you think God really listens to our prayers for other people or their prayers for us?

REINFORCEMENT ACTIVITIES

Suggested Video | 5–10 Min

BibleProject Video: *God's Character: Exodus 34*; Full video: 5:16.

Suggested Visual Aid | 5 Min.

Poster 6: *Idols*

Five Wishes | 5–10 Min

Remind the students about the story of *Aladdin* and how he is granted three wishes by the genie. Challenge the students to make a list, not of three wishes for themselves, but of five wishes they would grant to other people. Give them 2–3 minutes to complete their lists. Allow students to share some of their wishes with the class if they want to.

- ◆ Is it a problem to wish for physical, material or financial benefits for someone else? Did anyone wish for a spiritual benefit for someone else? That they would strengthen their relationship with God or be more like Him? Why would wanting someone to have a right relationship with God be the best thing we could wish for them?
- ◆ Just as Moses acted as a mediator, seeking to make right God's relationship with His people, we can speak to God on behalf of those we know and care about. We can certainly ask Him to bless them physically or materially, but God also wants us to ask Him to help others know and love Him more.

JESUS CONNECTION



When the Israelites sinned, Moses interceded for them, but he was only a temporary mediator. Jesus Christ is the perfect mediator between God and sinful people, and He faithfully intercedes for His people.

LIFEWISE QUALITY | 3–5 Min

LOYALTY – Choosing to stay committed, devoted and faithful to someone.

Living LifeWise

Because God remains loyal to us, we can choose to be loyal, first to Him and then to others.

LWQ Script

Loyalty is not as simple as we may think. Loyalty never trades doing what's right for just fitting in. Aaron and the people focused on fitting in. Moses stood alone on God's side. But by not trying to fit in, Moses was truly loyal—He did what was best (or right) for everyone even though it involved discipline and hard conversations. Moses remained loyal to God, and his faithfulness meant their sin could be dealt with and their relationship to God restored.

God's loyalty is unwavering because it's anchored in His character. His faithfulness, shown in Jesus' sacrifice and resurrection, means that we are now His forever. Nothing can separate us from Him. That assurance means we can choose to be loyal to God, no matter what. We can be loyal to other people—not trying to fit in, but willingly doing hard, right things—so they can know God's faithfulness, too.

Head, Heart, Hands Reinforcement | In-class or take-home

- ◆ **Head Questions**
 - ◇ While Moses was receiving the Ten Commandments from God on Mount Sinai, the Israelites broke their loyalty to God by doing what?
 - ◇ How did Moses show loyalty to the Israelites?
- ◆ **Heart Questions**
 - ◇ God had just rescued the people from slavery in Egypt in miraculous ways. What do you think made the Israelites give up on God instead of staying loyal to Him?
 - ◇ What makes it easy or hard to stay loyal to a friend? What everyday practices make it easier for you to stay loyal (committed, devoted and faithful) to your friends? What would make it easier or harder to stay loyal to God?
- ◆ **Hands Challenge**
 - ◇ Even though we can't earn it and don't deserve it, God is always loyal to us because of who He is. He selflessly loves us so much that He sent His own son to die for us. Jesus now intercedes for us like Moses did for the Israelites. God's loyalty to love us promises to never abandon those who believe in Him.
 - ◇ Create a physical reminder (a necklace, bracelet, art piece, note on your bathroom mirror, etc.) to remind you of God's loyalty. When you see it, think about who God is and ask Him to help you stay committed, devoted and faithful to Him, the One who made you and loves you unconditionally.

EXTENDED LESSON RESOURCES

Bible Commentary for the Teacher

The story of the golden calf reveals important truths about worship:

- ◆ **God created people to worship (Ecc. 3:11).** Worship is the act and attitude of showing reverence for what is most important to us. All human beings have a deep longing that nothing on this Earth can fully satisfy; only God can. As His image bearers (Gen. 1:26–27), we were created to worship God and represent Him to the world because He alone deserves worship and He alone can satisfy us (Ex. 20:3). This is why the first two commandments require God's people to worship only Him and not idols (Ex. 20:3–4) and why, one day, every person will worship Jesus Christ (Phil. 2:9–11).
- ◆ **Sin entices us to worship selfishly (Exodus 32:1).** Because we are sinful, we want to worship God on our own terms. Like Israel, we want something that feels familiar and safe, a god that looks like

us, sounds like us and wants the same things we want—comfort, security and acceptance. But God calls us to worship “in spirit and in truth” (John 4:24). We must worship in His way and with Him as our focus, rather than following our sinful, selfish desires.

- ♦ **Idol worship will never satisfy our desires (Ex. 32:4).** Like Israel’s golden calf, no idol can hear us, defend us or deliver us. It isn’t wrong to desire health, relationships, a good job, or things of that nature. But when our desire for things or comfort becomes more important than following God’s Word, we elevate them to the place of idols in our hearts. Created things were made for our enjoyment, but they will never fulfill and fully satisfy us.
- ♦ **Idol worship leads to rebellion against God (Exodus 32:7–8).** Every single idol will eventually lead us to a place of open rebellion and sin against God and His ways. This is why God takes our worship seriously and sent Moses to stop the people’s idolatry.

In Defense

The Bible describes God as permanent and unchanging (Num. 23:19; Ps. 33:11; 102:25–27; Mal 3:6; Eph. 3:11; Heb. 13:8). Yet in this story and others like it (Is. 38; Jon. 3), God seems to change His mind. Some believe this illustrates a contradiction or inconsistency in the Bible. However, this accusation about God misapplies what it means for God to be unchanging. According to the Bible, God’s purposes, promises and perfection cannot change, but God does react differently in different circumstances. When He calls judgment on sinful people and they repent, for example, He “changes His mind” or adjusts His response to their change of heart without altering His character or ultimate purpose (2 Pet. 3:9).¹

¹ Wayne Grudem, *Bible Doctrine: Essential Teachings of the Christian Faith* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1999), 74.



AN IMAGE OF IDOLATRY

Idolatry happens when we worship something or someone else besides God.



JESUS CONNECTION

When the Israelites sinned, Moses interceded for them, but he was only a temporary mediator. Jesus Christ is the perfect Mediator between God and sinful people, and He faithfully intercedes for His people.



LIFEWISE QUALITY

LOYALTY – Choosing to stay committed, devoted and faithful to someone.



HEAD

While Moses was receiving the Ten Commandments from God on Mount Sinai, the Israelites broke their loyalty to God by doing what?

How did Moses show loyalty to the Israelites?



HEART

God had just rescued the people from slavery in Egypt in miraculous ways. What do you think made the Israelites give up on God instead of staying loyal to Him?

What makes it easy or hard to stay loyal to a friend? What everyday practices make it easier for you to stay loyal (committed, devoted and faithful) to your friends? What would make it easier or harder to stay loyal to God?



HANDS

Even though we can't earn it and don't deserve it, God is always loyal to us because of who He is. He selflessly loves us so much that He sent His own son to die for us. Jesus now intercedes for us like Moses did for the Israelites. God's loyalty to love us promises to never abandon those who believe in Him.

Create a physical reminder (a necklace, bracelet, art piece, note on your bathroom mirror, etc.) to remind you of God's loyalty. When you see it, think about who God is and ask Him to help you stay committed, devoted and faithful to Him, the One who made you and loves you unconditionally.



HEAD

A PLACE FOR GOD'S PRESENCE

God desires to be near His people.



HEART

JESUS CONNECTION

God instructed the Israelites to build a tabernacle so He could dwell with them. God wants to be with His people. For this reason, God would later send His Son to "tabernacle," or dwell, with us in order to bring us into His presence.



HANDS

LIFEWISE QUALITY

WHOLEHEARTEDNESS – Complete dedication in everything I do.

BIBLE REVIEW

LWL 21 An Image of Idolatry | 1-2 Min

In the previous session, the Israelites broke God's commandment not to make or worship an idol.

- ◆ How did God respond to the Israelites' sin? (*God was hurt and angry with the people. He punished them for their sin.*)
- ◆ How did Moses respond to the Israelites' sin? (*Moses destroyed the idol, confronted the people, punished the people and worked to restore the broken relationship between God and His people.*)

Today, we will learn about the tabernacle, the tent where the Israelites worshiped God, and how they were instructed to build it.

SESSION STARTERS

Places of Worship | 5-10 Min

- ◆ Before class, write each of the words below on separate index cards. During class, write the names of the four religions listed below on the board and distribute the index cards to the students. Explain that each card names a person or structure that corresponds to the place of worship of one of the four religions. Challenge the class to take turns reading their cards and to decide together which religion it belongs to.
 - ◇ Buddhism: temple, stupa, flowers, statue of Buddha, thanka
 - ◇ Islam: mosque, minaret, mihrab, imam, dome
 - ◇ Christianity: church, steeple, cross, pulpit, stained glass
 - ◇ Judaism: synagogue, bimah, torah, cantor, star of David
- ◆ Places of worship come in many different styles, even in the same religion. After God made a covenant with His people at Mount Sinai, He gave Moses very specific instructions about the place of worship He wanted them to build to show His presence was with them.

Anything Goes | 5–10 Min

- ◆ Place students in groups of 3 or 4 students. Provide materials such as a stack of index cards, plastic straws, tape, play building bricks, recycling or other building materials. Ask them to build a place to worship God out of the materials they have been given. Allow teams to present their creations and describe the elements they included.
- ◆ Did you enjoy not having any detailed instructions? Why or why not? What would have happened if you had been given very specific instructions for the building process?
- ◆ Without any guidelines, there could be as many different styles for a place of worship as there are people to build them. Yet, the most important question is not what the worshipers think a place of worship should look like, but the one who is worthy of worship. Today, we will learn about the tabernacle, a place of worship that God wanted His people to build. God gave them extremely detailed instructions because God desired every detail of this tabernacle to reflect His character, purpose and plan.

BIBLE LESSON: A PLACE FOR GOD'S PRESENCE | 10–20 Min

Summary of Exodus 25:1–2, 8–9.

Before the Israelites traveled on to the Promised Land, God instructed Moses to build a tabernacle, or dwelling place, so He could live with His people and they could come and meet with God.

God instructed Moses to invite, but not require, anyone who was willing to contribute toward this project and supplied a list of what was needed (gold, silver and bronze metal; blue, purple and scarlet yarn and cloth; goat hair and skins; rams' skins; acacia wood; oil, spices and incense; precious stones). As former slaves, the Israelites weren't wealthy, but God had already provided everything needed for this project. Before they left Egypt, God told them to ask the Egyptians for silver, gold jewelry and clothes (Ex. 12:35–36). They obeyed, and God caused the Egyptians to give them what they asked for.

God instructed them to build this tent of meeting exactly like the pattern He gave to Moses (Ex. 25:9). It was designed so that it could be set up and taken down as they journeyed to the land of Canaan.

Summary of Exodus 25–31.

The pattern God gave to Moses on the mountain was detailed and precise. The tabernacle was to be a visual reminder of the Israelites' sin and need for God's mercy. Their sin against a holy God was a serious offense that demanded punishment, and that punishment was death (Rom. 6:23). Before Jesus died on the cross, God mercifully allowed an animal to die in the place of the sinner (Heb. 9:22). Every item in the tabernacle was part of God's plan to display this continual reminder to His people (see commentary).

God not only designed the tent and its furnishing, but the placement of the tabernacle was also intentional. **God ordered the 12 tribes of Israel to camp on all four sides of the tabernacle, so God would actually dwell in the midst of the people** (Num. 2:1–30).

Exodus 36:2–7.

Moses had called for the offering from God's people, just as God instructed. **The Israelites had experienced God's justice, mercy and forgiveness** after they broke His commands by worshiping the golden calf. **This deeper understanding of God motivated them to give cheerfully and wholeheartedly. They gave until there were more than enough supplies.** In fact, Moses had to tell them to stop giving!

Along with the necessary supplies, God provided craftsmen—Bezalel and Oholiab, as well as those working under them—whose hearts were “moved” to action (Ex. 36:2) by God to construct the tent and all the furnishings. God gave each craftsman the necessary wisdom and skill to accomplish all that His instructions required (Ex. 36:1).

Exodus 39:42–43.

As the Israelites built the tabernacle, they paid careful attention to God’s instructions. Every single item created required artfulness and attention to detail, and each person was needed, either to give supplies, help construct the tent or craft its elements. **In doing this, the people showed that their hearts were fully dedicated to God’s work. Moses examined their work as each item was completed. Every single thing was done exactly to the standards God set.**

Exodus 40:34–38.

After everything was built and inspected, God told Moses to set up the tabernacle (Ex. 40:1–33). God had continually shown His presence to the Israelites through the pillar of cloud by day and pillar of fire by night. The cloud was visible over the tent outside the Israelite camp where Moses and the Lord talked (Ex. 13:21; 33:7–11).

God now chose to dwell in the heart of the camp, above the tabernacle. **The pillar of cloud covered the tent of meeting, and God’s glory filled the tabernacle.** The word “glory” carries the idea of both complete weightiness and brightness. **His glorious presence was so overwhelming that Moses could not enter the tent of meeting. Just as the Lord led the people out of Egypt with a pillar of cloud and fire (Ex. 13:21), He began to lead His people at the tabernacle.**

Big Ideas

- ◆ **God equips and empowers His people to do His will.** Through His Spirit, God equipped and empowered two men—Bezalel and Oholiab—with the necessary skill and teaching ability to complete the work for the tabernacle. God has equipped each of us with skills, talents and abilities to do His will as well. We each have a place and purpose in God’s plan, and He will empower us to fulfill that purpose for our good and His glory.
- ◆ **God works through the willing offerings of His people.** God could have miraculously provided all the materials for the tabernacle, but instead, He invited His people to contribute, either through an offering or through their skill and labor. God still invites people to offer back the time, resources and talents that He has given to us, and when we do, He works through them to accomplish His will, fill us with joy and purpose, and bring glory to Himself.
- ◆ **God desires intentional worship.** God gave Moses exact instructions, down to the smallest detail, for how He wanted the tabernacle to look and function, the offerings and sacrifices His people were to bring and how they were to offer them. We are no longer required to present animals and food as sacrifices to God, but God greatly desires us to be intentional in the way we worship Him, doing so with great reverence and love.

Discussion Questions

- ◆ What do you think motivated the Israelites to keep giving? Do you think they gave because they wanted to (cheerfully) or because they had to (begrudgingly)? Why?

- ◆ If you were an Israelite, how would seeing God's presence in the middle of camp impact your everyday life? What if God lived in your neighborhood today?
- ◆ Do you think some abilities or professions are more important or valuable than others? Give examples. Based on this story, do you think God sees them that way?

REINFORCEMENT ACTIVITIES

Suggested Video | 5–10 Min

BibleProject Video: *Moses & Aaron*; Full video: 4:31. Or *Royal Priests of Eden*; Suggested time: start–2:54.

Suggested Visual Aid | 5 Min.

Poster 8: *Tabernacle*

Connect Three | 5–10 Min

- ◆ Divide the class into two teams. Group 1 will choose three random items in the room, and Group 2 will have one minute to call out ways those three objects are alike (e.g., they are man-made, the same color, or lightweight; far-fetched ideas are allowed). Then, allow Group 2 to choose three items for Group 1. Award a point to the team with the most connections. Play more rounds as time allows.
- ◆ Some of those connections required a lot of thought to come up with, didn't they? But connections are important. Our relationships tend to start with connections, how we are alike or what we agree on. But even when we have good connections with someone, having a good relationship takes work. We have to be intentional. The same is true for a relationship with God.
- ◆ The tabernacle was a place where God could be with His people, but they had to choose to come and worship there. In His grace, God has already provided the way for us to have a relationship with Him through Jesus' death and resurrection, but to have a relationship with God, we must accept the good news of the gospel by repenting of our sin and turning to Him.
 - ◇ Have you ever wanted to have a relationship with God? What is holding you back?
 - ◇ If you already have a relationship with God, what things can you do to grow in that relationship? (*Read your Bible, pray, worship God, etc.*)

JESUS CONNECTION



God instructed the Israelites to build a tabernacle so He could dwell with them. God wants to be with His people. For this reason, God would later send His Son to “tabernacle,” or dwell, with us in order to bring us into His presence.

LIFEWISE QUALITY | 3–5 Min

WHOLEHEARTEDNESS – Complete dedication in everything I do.

Living LifeWise

Because Jesus rose from the dead, we can join wholeheartedly in the work God is doing every day.

LWQ Script

Building the tabernacle wasn't a team-building exercise for newly freed slaves or a fun distraction. It was God's invitation to His people to offer back the talents and resources He had given to them, to live out His purposes *with Him*. Whether they were fine craftsmen or donated thread or gold, they all pitched in wholeheartedly and watched God's vision come into being.

God still invites people to join Him wholeheartedly in the work that He is doing. He calls out to us to accept Jesus' death and resurrection so that we can be part of His creative work building His kingdom. And He gives us His Spirit to help us understand His vision and how the gifts He has given to us play a unique role in His bringing that ultimate vision into being. Believing the gospel means we can live wholeheartedly *with Him* and *for Him* wherever He calls us to go.

Head, Heart, Hands Reinforcement | In-class or take-home

- ◆ **Head Questions**
 - ◇ What did the Israelites build and why?
 - ◇ Why did Moses have to tell them to stop giving?
- ◆ **Heart Questions**
 - ◇ Colossians 3:23 says, "Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters." How dedicated are you to cleaning your room with your whole heart? What about doing your homework? Practicing a sport, activity or hobby? Giving your time to help a neighbor? What keeps you from doing these (or other things) wholeheartedly?
 - ◇ Is it important to do EVERYTHING wholeheartedly? Why or why not?
- ◆ **Hands Challenge**
 - ◇ This week, pick one area from the list below that you will commit to doing more wholeheartedly and write down 2 specific ways you can put that commitment into practice.
 - Relationships (choose one sibling, friend, parent, etc.)
 - School and homework (choose one class or teacher)
 - Praying (talking) to God
 - Helping someone in your family who needs it
 - Giving any of your resources (time, money, skills) to serve others

EXTENDED LESSON RESOURCES

Bible Commentary for the Teacher

God sent Jesus, His one and only Son, to save us from sin through His death on the cross. Whoever believes in His death and resurrection will be cleansed of sin and given eternal life. God designed the tabernacle and the ways the people were to worship God as pictures of the gospel. Centuries before Jesus came to Earth, they pointed to Him.

- ◆ **The tabernacle (Heb. 8:5):** The Israelites were able to dwell near God's presence and worship Him at the tent of meeting, yet it was just a copy, or shadow, of better things to come. God

provided a glimpse of what the real tabernacle, Heaven, would be like some day. In Heaven, we will be able to worship God without any barriers or fear.

- ◆ **The courtyard fence and gate (John 10:9, 14:6):** The fence stood 7.5 feet high to show the separation that was necessary between God and the people. Jesus is the only way we can enter into a relationship with God the Father.
- ◆ **The bronze altar (John 1:29):** The altar was a hollow wooden box overlaid with bronze (7.5 ft. long, 7.5 ft. wide by 4.5 ft. high). God's people took their offerings to a priest at the bronze altar, and the sacrifice was burned as a gift to God. When God smelled these gifts, He was pleased (Lev. 1:17).
- ◆ **The bronze basin (Tit. 3:5):** The basin stood between the bronze altar and the Holy Place. The priests were required to cleanse their hands and feet with water from the basin before they went into the tent of meeting. Through repenting of our sin and trusting in Jesus, we are washed clean from sin on the inside by the power of the Holy Spirit.
- ◆ **The holy place** was the larger of two rooms inside the tent of meeting (30 ft. long, 15 ft. wide, and 15 ft. high). It was overlaid with gold, symbolizing the value of God's presence. It held three important items:
 - ◇ **The golden lampstand (John 8:12)** was made out of solid gold and weighed about 75 pounds. It held seven lamps and was the only light in the room. The priests kept the lampstand burning continually, day and night. Jesus is the light of the world. Whoever follows Him will see the way to Heaven.
 - ◇ **The table of showbread (Rev. 3:20)**, or the bread of the presence (3 ft. long, 1.5 ft. wide, 2.25 ft. high), had 12 cakes of bread laid on top as a weekly offering from the 12 tribes of Israel. Jesus offers to open the door to anyone to come in and build a relationship with Him.
 - ◇ **The altar of incense (Rom. 8:34; Heb. 7:25)** (1.5 ft. long, 1.5 ft. wide, and 3 ft. high) was placed in front of the veil. The priests continually burned incense as they prayed to the Lord. As the smoke from the incense went up in the air, it symbolized their prayers going up to God in Heaven. Jesus sits at the right hand of God praying for His followers.
- ◆ **The veil (Matt. 27:51):** The veil was a huge curtain hung between the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies as a protective barrier between sinful people and a holy God. Jesus died in our place to be our atoning sacrifice for sin so we could be forgiven. When that sacrifice was made, the veil in the temple (which replaced the tabernacle) was torn in two from top to bottom. Unhindered access to God was made possible through Jesus.
- ◆ **The high priest (Heb. 9:24–28):** Jesus is our great high priest. Instead of offering a perfect animal as a sacrifice for sin, He offered His own perfect life. He entered Heaven to meet with God and ask Him to forgive us.
- ◆ **The most holy place**, or Holy of Holies, was the most sacred place in the tabernacle, for it was here that God's presence dwelled. This small golden room measured 15 ft. long, 15 ft. wide and 15 ft. high.
 - ◇ **The ark of the covenant**, a rectangular golden box (3.75 ft long, 2.25 ft wide, 2.25 ft. high), contained the stone tablets with the Ten Commandments, a jar of manna and Moses' staff.

On top of the ark rested the **mercy seat**, a golden plate on which sat two golden angels called cherubim, with their faces looking down and their wings stretched over it. It was between the cherubim that God's presence dwelled with His people.

- ✧ **Day of Atonement.** God was near, but His people could not approach Him on their terms. They could only have access to God through a mediator. Once a year, one man—the high priest—would enter the most holy place to atone for his sin and the sins of the people.
- ◆ **The placement of the tabernacle (John 1:14):** Jesus took on flesh and “tabernacled” among us. He was the perfect fulfillment of what the tabernacle in Exodus pictured—God came down to Earth to live among His people. One day God would send the Holy Spirit to live within each person who has repented of their sin and trusted in Jesus’ sacrifice for their sin on the cross (Acts 2:2–4).

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A PLACE FOR GOD'S PRESENCE

God desires to be near His people.

JESUS CONNECTION



God instructed the Israelites to build a tabernacle so He could dwell with them. God wants to be with His people. For this reason, God would later send His Son to “tabernacle,” or dwell, with us in order to bring us into His presence.



LIFEWISE QUALITY

WHOLEHEARTEDNESS – Complete dedication in everything I do.



HEAD

What did the Israelites build and why?

Why did Moses have to tell them to stop giving?



HEART

Colossians 3:23 says, "Whatever you do, **work at it with all your heart**, as working for the Lord, not for human masters." How dedicated are you to cleaning your room with your whole heart? What about doing your homework? Practicing a sport, activity or hobby? Giving your time to help a neighbor? What keeps you from doing these (or other things) wholeheartedly?

Is it important to do EVERYTHING wholeheartedly? Why or why not?



HANDS

This week, pick one area from the list below that you will commit to doing more wholeheartedly and write down 2 specific ways you can put that commitment into practice.

- ◆ Relationships (choose one sibling, friend, parent, etc.)
- ◆ School and homework (choose one class or teacher)
- ◆ Praying (talking) to God
- ◆ Helping someone in your family who needs it
- ◆ Giving any of your resources (time, money, skills) to serve others



A PICTURE OF ATONEMENT

God provides atonement for the people's sins.



JESUS CONNECTION

Aaron was an imperfect high priest who was required to sacrifice a lamb every year. This sacrifice would make atonement for, or cover, the high priest's own sin and the sin of God's people. Jesus is the perfect High Priest who made atonement for sin once for all time with His own blood on the cross.



LIFEWISE QUALITY

MERCY – Choosing not to punish someone who deserves to be punished.

BIBLE REVIEW

LWL 22 A Place for God's Presence | 1-2 Min

In the previous session, God told the Israelites to build a tabernacle for Him.

- ◆ Why did God ask the Israelites to make a tabernacle? (*God wanted to dwell with them, God wanted to show them where and how to worship Him.*)
- ◆ How did God provide everything that was necessary for the construction of the tabernacle? (*God caused the Egyptians to give them supplies in advance, God equipped craftsmen and artists for the work.*)

Today, we will learn about the Day of Atonement, the one day a year that the high priest was invited to go into the Most Holy Place and meet with God.

SESSION STARTERS

Washed Clean | 5-10 Min

- ◆ Before class, set up a station at the front of the room with a clear pitcher filled with water, red food coloring, small cup of bleach, eyedropper and spoon.
- ◆ Invite the students to describe or define sin [anything we think, say or do that disobeys God] and name some specific sins. Every single person is born with a sinful heart, separated from God (Rom. 3:10, 23), but we sometimes think our sin is "no big deal," or at least not as bad as someone else's. But the Bible says that even one sin makes us guilty (Jas 2:10).
 - ◇ Add a single drop of food coloring to the water. Explain that, In the same way food coloring contaminates water, sin contaminates our relationship with God and with others.
 - ◇ Have you wished you could "undo" a sin? Is that even possible? Explain.

- ◆ Thankfully, God has already provided a way to remove the stain of sin from our lives. Only the blood of Jesus makes it possible for us to be forgiven. He exchanges our sins for His righteousness so we can stand pure and blameless before God.
 - ◇ Slowly pour in the bleach. Stir until the water becomes clear again.
 - ◇ Be sure to test the red water/bleach activity before using it in your session.

Changing Places | 5–10 Min

- ◆ One of the most powerful stories we tell is when someone willingly sacrifices themselves for someone else. Our typical human response is to flee, protect ourselves or stay alive, so we are shocked and amazed when someone does the opposite, willingly laying down their own safety for the good of others. We call that person a hero.
 - ◇ Can you think of stories or characters (real or fictional) where this happens? (Examples: a firefighter running into a burning building; Katniss Everdeen in *The Hunger Games*; Bing Bong, Riley's imaginary friend in *Inside Out*; Black Widow in *Avengers: Endgame*)
 - ◇ Why do we consider these actions heroic?
- ◆ Instead of asking for a human volunteer, God provided a way to cover the sins of His people through the blood of a goat, offered each year on the Day of Atonement to cover the people's sins. The sacrifice was not permanent, though—the people needed a better substitute (Heb. 9: 12–14). Ultimately, Jesus willingly came to be our substitute and lay down His life for us.

BIBLE LESSON: A PICTURE OF ATONEMENT | 10–20 Min

God's people were sinners separated from a holy God. Even so, God desired to be near His people and to live in relationship with them. But **how could a holy God live with His sinful people without judging and punishing their sin? The answer—or at least the picture of the answer—was given on the Day of Atonement. On this day, the people met with God and asked Him to show mercy by withholding their punishment for sin. God granted them mercy and cleansed His people, but it came at a cost.**

Leviticus 16:2–6.

The Day of Atonement was an elaborate ceremony that involved the entire assembly of God's people. The greatest responsibility rested on **Aaron, the high priest. Aaron was the representative that God appointed to come into His presence in the Most Holy Place on this day and ask for mercy.** For the other 364 days of the year, neither Aaron nor anyone else could go into the Most Holy Place without God's invitation; if they did, they would die. In this we see God's holiness. **Aaron and the Israelites were not to approach God casually. Their sin had formed a barrier between them and God,** shown by the veil dividing the Holy Place and the Most Holy Place.

The high priest prepared carefully before meeting with God. He laid aside his traditional garments of honor, bathed with water and wore a simple white linen tunic—the kind only a servant would wear—on the Day of Atonement. He then presented himself to his people and to God as a humble servant.

God's people gathered outside the tabernacle with their sacrifices: one bull, one ram and two male goats. **The high priest was first required to make a sin offering** by sacrificing the bull **for his own sin on the bronze altar.** After sacrificing the bull, **Aaron took some of the blood from the bull into the Most Holy Place and sprinkled it on the mercy seat, the lid of the ark of the covenant.**

Read Leviticus 16:15–19.

The high priest then left the Most Holy Place and **stood before the people** once again **to make atonement** for their sins. **Two goats were brought** to him, and the first was sacrificed for the people's sins. The goat died in place of the people.

Like before, **Aaron would take the blood** from this goat, go back into the Most Holy Place, and **sprinkle it on the mercy seat (v. 15)**. **Instead of** looking down at the items within the ark of the covenant (the Ten Commandments, jar of manna and Moses' staff) and **seeing the sin of the people**, **God would see the blood of the bull and goat on the mercy seat covering their sin**.

After this, the high priest went to the Holy Place and purified it by sprinkling blood on the golden lampstand, table of showbread and altar of incense. Then, the high priest returned to the bronze altar, purifying it in the same way.

Read Leviticus 16:20–22.

Next, **the second goat was brought forward as the scapegoat**. **Aaron placed his hands on the scapegoat and confessed all of the Israelites' sin**. **The scapegoat was led into the wilderness and set free, carrying the people's sin and shame far away from them**. Both goats displayed a picture of what atonement for sin looks like—sin is both paid for through sacrifice and completely removed.

After this, the high priest bathed again and put on the turban, robe and ephod that signified his position. He then **offered the ram as a burnt offering, for the atonement of the people** (16:24).

The Day of Atonement was to be treated as a solemn day of rest, in which the people humbled themselves before God through prayer and fasting (Lev. 16:29–30). They grieved over their sin, but also thanked God for accepting their sacrifices and withholding their punishment for sin. **While the people had reason to celebrate the mercy God had extended to them, they also knew their atonement was temporary**; they would need to gather again the next year and repeat every step of the process.

Big Ideas

- ♦ **God made a way for His people to approach Him**. God wanted to be close to His people, but He could not be near their sin and allow them to live. He showed the people how to satisfy His justice so that He could provide mercy and live among them.
- ♦ **There is a cost to atone for sin**. The people deserved to die for their sin (Rom. 6:23), and God could not hold back their punishment without the shedding of blood (Heb. 9:22). But God mercifully allowed a perfect animal to take their place. When they saw this animal die for their sins, it demonstrated the seriousness of their sin before a holy God. Yet, it also demonstrated God's mercy. The animal died so they could live.
- ♦ **God promises to remove our sin through faith in Jesus' sacrifice on the cross**. In His mercy, God held back the punishment for the people's sin, but sin must be paid for. The yearly sacrifices covered the people's sins, but the blood of animals can't remove sin completely (Heb. 10:4). Jesus lived a perfect life and offered Himself as the perfect sacrifice for sins, once and for all. He took our punishment on Himself, and because He has paid for sin completely, faith in the power of His death and resurrection allows us to be completely cleansed of sin and set apart as holy to God (Heb. 10:10–12).

Discussion Questions

- ◆ How do you think the high priest felt as he approached God on the Day of Atonement, knowing he could die? Do people today try to approach God with care and reverence? Why or why not?
- ◆ Have you ever felt unworthy to approach or talk to God? How would having Jesus Christ as your perfect high priest affect that concern?
- ◆ Sin is costly. The Israelites offered their best animals as sacrifices for their sins. We no longer have to pay for our sins with sacrifices, **but sin still costs us**. What does the cost of sin look like today?
- ◆ Based on these verses, how would you describe God's view of sin? What should our response be when we recognize our sin?
- ◆ Jesus paid for our sins with His blood. How should we live in light of Jesus' sacrifice for us?

REINFORCEMENT ACTIVITIES

Suggested Video | 5–10 Min

BibleProject Video: *Sacrifice and Atonement*; Full video: 6:00.

Suggested Visual Aid | 5 Min.

Poster 9: *Ark of the Covenant*

Poster 15: *Lord Will Provide*

Tearing the Veil | 5–10 Min

- ◆ Provide paper and coloring supplies (markers, colored pencils, etc.) for the class. Read Exodus 26:31–33 out loud. Invite students to spend a few minutes coloring their paper to represent the elaborate fabric veil that separated the Most Holy Place from the Holy Place in the tabernacle. Challenge them to fill the whole paper with their design.
- ◆ Your drawings represent a real fabric curtain that hung in the tabernacle and later in the temple to separate God's holy presence from the people. It was a picture of how our sinfulness keeps us from drawing near to God. Read Matthew 27:50–51. When Jesus died on the cross, the veil in the temple ripped in half from top to bottom. So, let's do that together (have them rip their papers from the top down). Jesus' death paid for our sins and opened the way for us to come near to God. There is now no separation between God and anyone who puts their faith in Jesus.

JESUS CONNECTION



Aaron was an imperfect high priest who was required to sacrifice a lamb every year. This sacrifice would make atonement for, or cover, the high priest's own sin and the sin of God's people. Jesus is the perfect High Priest who made atonement for sin once for all time with His own blood on the cross.

LIFEWISE QUALITY | 1–2 Min

MERCY – Choosing not to punish someone who deserves to be punished.

Living LifeWise

Because of Jesus' sacrifice, God shows mercy to us, and we can choose to show mercy to others.

LWQ Script

Some people are horrified when they hear about Israel's sacrificial system (ritual killing of animals, sprinkling of blood, etc.) and claim that Israel and its God were blood-thirsty and cruel. But God didn't institute this system to be cruel. Instead, He was demonstrating the life-and-death seriousness of sin—that none of us are good enough to approach God on our own merit. The point was to show Israel (and us) that we are in desperate need of His compassion and mercy.

Jesus was the perfect Lamb of God (John 1:29) whose death provides atonement for every human sin. In the ultimate act of mercy, God placed our sin on Jesus so that we could be forgiven instead of punished. When we experience that kind of mercy, it changes how we treat others. We no longer desire to punish those who hurt us. Instead, God empowers us to treat those who sin against us with mercy just as He has shown mercy to us.

Head, Heart, Hands Reinforcement | In-class or take-home

◆ Head Questions

- ◇ What was the purpose of observing the Day of Atonement?
- ◇ How did the high priest act as a mediator between God and the people? How has Jesus done the same thing for us?

◆ Heart Questions

- ◇ Access to God's presence was still limited—most Israelites would never set foot in the Most Holy Place. Yet God's original plan was not to dwell *near* His people, but *with* His people. Our sin built a barrier between us and God. How did God show us mercy to break down the barrier?
- ◇ We do not deserve God's mercy, but He gives it freely. Because God is merciful to us, we can show underserved mercy to others who hurt us. What could that look like in your family? Your school? In your community?

◆ Hands Challenge

- ◇ Think of someone (other than God) who has forgiven you without any penalty or punishment for what you did to them. Even if it was unintentional, if you hurt them and they forgave you without any kind of penalty, they showed you mercy. Find a way to thank that person for their merciful heart. *Examples: write them a note, call them, invite them to hang out and thank them in person, etc.*

EXTENDED LESSON RESOURCES

Bible Commentary for the Teacher

- ◆ **God must be approached with respect (Leviticus 16:2–6).** In Leviticus 10:1–2, Aaron's two sons, Nadab and Abihu, presented unauthorized fire before the Lord and were consumed by the Lord's

fire. Aaron, and the rest of the people of Israel, saw what happened to those who approached God while disobeying His instructions. After they witnessed this, the people of Israel must have wondered if there was any way to draw near to God. God showed them the way, but it was on God's terms, not the people's. God's instructions on celebrating the Day of Atonement demonstrated exactly how the people were to approach a holy God at the right time and in the right way (Lev. 16:1).

- ♦ **The Day of Atonement reminded God's people to look for the One He had promised.** God intended the Day of Atonement to remind His people of their great need for salvation and His ultimate promise to defeat sin completely (Gen. 3:15). God wanted them to be reminded every time they observed this solemn day to look forward to the time when the One they were waiting for would arrive. That promise was fulfilled when God sent His only Son, Jesus, to be our perfect sacrifice, willing substitute and high priest forever (Heb. 9:11–14, 10:11–14).
- ♦ **Jesus is our perfect high priest.** Jesus was not like any high priest before Him; He was sinless and had no need to make atonement for His own sin through the sacrifice of bulls, rams and goats. He did not offer animals' blood for our sins; instead, He laid down His own life as the perfect sacrifice we needed, once and for all. As our scapegoat, all of our sin and shame were laid on Him. Through His death and resurrection, Jesus takes away the sin of those who repent and believe in Him and gives us His righteousness, forgiveness and eternal life.

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A PICTURE OF ATONEMENT

God provides atonement for the people's sins.

JESUS CONNECTION



Aaron was an imperfect high priest who was required to sacrifice a lamb every year. This sacrifice would make atonement for, or cover, the high priest's own sin and the sin of God's people. Jesus is the perfect High Priest who made atonement for sin once for all time with His own blood on the cross.



LIFEWISE QUALITY

MERCY – Choosing not to punish someone who deserves to be punished.



HEAD

What was the purpose of observing the Day of Atonement?

How did the high priest act as a mediator between God and the people? How has Jesus done the same thing for us?



HEART

Access to God's presence was still limited—most Israelites would never set foot in the Most Holy place. Yet God's original plan was not to dwell *near* His people, but *with* His people. Our sin built a barrier between us and God. How did God show us mercy to break down the barrier?

We do not deserve God's mercy, but He gives it freely. Because God is merciful to us, we can show underserved mercy to others who hurt us. What could that look like in your family? Your school? In your community?



HANDS

Think of someone (other than God) who has forgiven you without any penalty or punishment for what you did to them. Even if it was unintentional, if you hurt them and they forgave you without any kind of penalty, they showed you mercy. Find a way to thank that person for their merciful heart. *Examples:* write them a note, call them, invite them to hang out and thank them in person, etc.



HEAD

THE REBELLION OF GOD'S PEOPLE

Rebellion against God is rooted in failing to trust God.



HEART

JESUS CONNECTION

God's people failed to trust God's provision and promises by rebelling against Him and refusing to enter the land He had given them. Jesus fully trusted and obeyed the Father when He entered the world to fulfill God's promise to provide a Savior from sin.



HANDS

LIFEWISE QUALITY

CONFIDENCE – Full trust and assurance in the reliability of a person or thing.

BIBLE REVIEW

LWL 23 A Place for God's Presence | 1-2 Min

In the previous session, God gave the Israelites instructions on how to approach Him and atone for their sin.

- ◆ What did God allow to be sacrificed for sin in place of His people? (A bull, ram and goat.)
- ◆ When was the high priest allowed to approach God? What was he required to do in preparation for this meeting? (*The Day of Atonement; cleanse his body, wear simple clothes and make a sin offering for himself.*)

Today, we will learn about the Israelites' refusal to enter the land God promised them.

SESSION STARTERS

Would You Rather? | 5-10 Min

- ◆ Play a few rounds of Would You Rather with the class. For each question, have students move to one side of the room or the other to indicate their choice. Examples can include:
 - ◇ Would you rather eat only ice cream for a week or eat no ice cream for a year?
 - ◇ Would you rather visit Barcelona, Spain, or Tokyo, Japan?
 - ◇ Would you rather win a million dollars in the lottery right now or make 10 million dollars by working for 30 years?
 - ◇ Would you rather have ten siblings or none?
- ◆ Decision-making is part of life. Some decisions are easy, but others are hard to make. When facing a decision, is it possible to know you're making a good choice? What might give you confidence in your decision? In today's story, God brings His people to the Promised Land, and they are faced with a very important decision.

One Must Go | 5–10 Min

- ♦ Explain that you will read a list of items and the class will have five minutes to decide which one must go. [Examples: *One must go: ketchup, mayo, mustard, ranch dressing; One must go: football, golf, tennis, basketball; One must go: ice cream, cake, cookies, pie.*] The goal is to see if the entire class can agree on one answer. Play multiple rounds as time allows.
- ♦ Was it hard to get everyone to agree? Why or why not? What makes someone easy to convince? What makes it hard to change someone's mind? It can be difficult trying to convince someone else to follow your lead or change their mind. Caleb and Joshua learned this lesson as they unsuccessfully tried to convince the Israelites to follow God's plan.

BIBLE LESSON: THE REBELLION OF GOD'S PEOPLE | 10–20 Min

Numbers 13:1–2.

After God gave the law and they built the tabernacle, **God led Israel to the border of the Promised Land, the land of Canaan. God told Moses to send one man from each of the 12 tribes to spy out the land. God wanted them to see His faithfulness with their own eyes;** the land was everything God promised them it would be.

Summary of Numbers 13:3–29.

Moses gave the 12 spies specific instructions. As they traveled through the land, they were to investigate the land, the people and the cities. Was the land full of good food, plants and trees? Were the people strong and numerous? Were the cities strong and well fortified?

The 12 spies investigated the land for 40 days. They returned carrying a single cluster of grapes so large that two men carried it on one pole. **They went before Moses, Aaron and the Israelites and gave a report of the land. They confirmed that the land was exceedingly good,** flowing with milk and honey. They showed the people the enormous cluster of grapes. **But they also reported that the cities were well fortified and the people were extremely strong.** They had even seen the giant descendants of Anak.

Numbers 13:30–33.

After the spies shared their report, **Caleb, one of the spies, urged the people to confidently go into the land to take possession of it.** But **10 of the spies rejected Caleb's advice.** Instead of fixing their eyes on God, **they spread their fears throughout the camp by exaggerating the challenges and giving a bad report about the land to the people.**

Numbers 14:1–4.

God's people were steps away from entering the Promised Land and enjoying God's provision, rest and protection in the land He swore to give them. But **the Israelites failed to trust in God's promises because they were blinded by fear. They wept, grumbled, questioned God's motives and began to make plans to return to the very land they had asked God to deliver them from.**

Summary of Numbers 14:5–29.

When Moses and Aaron saw the people rebel against God's plan, they fell face down on the ground before them. Joshua and Caleb, two of the spies, grieved over the people's sin and begged the Israelites not to disobey the Lord by returning to Egypt. They challenged the people to remember who God was, what He had already done for His people and that He was with them and would do

everything He promised to do. The Israelites were so upset by Joshua and Caleb's resistance to their plan that they talked about stoning them.

Suddenly, God's glory appeared at the tabernacle. Once again, God exclaimed that the Israelites deserved to die for their rebellion against Him. Once again, Moses pleaded with God to spare the people, reminding the Lord that His glory and reputation were at stake. He also reminded God of His own promise: "The Lord is slow to anger and abounding in faithful love, forgiving iniquity and rebellion, but he will not leave the guilty unpunished" (Num. 14:18a). God agreed to show them love and mercy, but there would also be consequences for their disobedience.

Numbers 14:30–35.

God declared that no Israelite over 20 years old, except Joshua and Caleb, would enter the Promised Land. They would never enjoy the fruit of the land or find rest. Instead, they would be forced to wander in the wilderness for 40 years, one year for every day that they spied out the land of Canaan, until every last person of the older generation died.

God gave the Israelites exactly what they wanted. They said they would rather go back to slavery or die in the desert than enter the land of Canaan. They preferred to die there rather than trust God's faithfulness (Num. 14:2–3). God's judgment was that they would do just that. Yet, God spared Caleb and Joshua from judgment because of their confidence and obedience to Him.

Summary of Numbers 20:1–14.

It might seem strange that Moses and Aaron were not included in God's promise to Joshua and Caleb. Although Moses and Aaron did not rebel against God as the rest of the people did on the edge of the Promised Land, they disobeyed later. Numbers 20 tells us that as the people wandered in the wilderness, they found themselves without water again. The Israelites grumbled and complained again, and God gave instructions for Moses to go with Aaron and all the people and tell a rock to give them water (Num. 20:8). Moses and Aaron did not follow God's directions. They were angry with the people and struck the rock twice. God told them because they had not trusted in God and demonstrated His holiness, they would not be allowed to bring the people into the promised land (Num. 20:12).

Big Ideas

- ♦ **God is patient.** This was not the first time the Israelites refused to trust God. They had already rebelled many times. Although God was angered by their rebellion, He continued to patiently provide opportunities for His people to turn away from sin and follow Him. It is not God's desire for anyone to perish, but through faith, to have eternal life (John 3:16; 2 Pet. 3:9).
- ♦ **God disciplines His people when they sin.** God is just, so He had to punish the people's sin, but even God's discipline is for our good. He knew that His people would not be able to trust and obey Him without learning from their mistakes. When God forced them to wander in the wilderness, He disciplined them as a good father disciplines his children, out of love (Heb. 12:6). God knew they could never have the best life possible without trusting and following Him.
- ♦ **God rewards our faith.** Caleb and Joshua believed that God would keep His promises. They were so confident in God's faithfulness and power that they stood up to the entire Israelite people on their own. God rewarded them for their faith (Heb. 11:6). They would be the only two Israelites from the older generation to enter the Promised Land and enjoy God's abundant provision and rest.

Discussion Questions

- ♦ What mistakes did the Israelites make in this story? What lessons can we learn from their choices?
- ♦ Joshua and Caleb focused on what God had done for them instead of giving in to their feelings about the present difficulties. What difference could that kind of focus make for you in hard situations?
- ♦ What were the Israelites fearful of if they followed God's plan? How can fear sometimes keep us from following God's plan, too?
- ♦ Do you think fear and trust are mutually exclusive or can they exist together? Did Caleb and Joshua, or the other 10 spies, show one or the other or both?
- ♦ Caleb and Joshua tried to encourage the people by recounting God's faithfulness. How have you seen God keep His promises in the Bible or in your own life?

REINFORCEMENT ACTIVITIES

Suggested Video | 5–10 Min

BibleProject Video: *Numbers (Torah)*: Full video: 5:12 or, for shorter option: start–3:23.

Suggested Visual Aid | 5 Min.

Poster 10: *Moses*

My Personal Shield | 5–10 Min

- ♦ Draw a shield shape on a large piece of paper or white board. Read out loud Psalm 28:7 — “The Lord is my strength and my shield; my heart trusts in Him, and I am helped.” Invite the students to name different characteristics of God (loving, faithful, all-powerful, etc.) and write them on the shield.
- ♦ The psalm writer pictured God as a shield of protection that he could hide behind. He confidently trusted in God to help and defend him because of who God is. We can trust God to take care of and protect us for the same reason. Look again at the qualities we listed on our shield. Can you think of a Bible story or a time in your own life when God displayed one of those qualities?

JESUS CONNECTION



God's people failed to trust God's provision and promises by rebelling against Him and refusing to enter the land He had given them. Jesus fully trusted and obeyed the Father when He entered the world to fulfill God's promise to provide a Savior from sin.

LIFEWISE QUALITY | 3–5 Min

CONFIDENCE – Full trust and assurance in the reliability of a person or thing.

Living LifeWise

God always keeps His promises, so we can confidently face every challenge.

LWQ Script

Despite all that God did to rescue them from Egypt, all the ways He protected and provided for them, His literal presence that traveled with them and His repeated promises to give them the land, Israel would not go in when they heard the spies' report. They saw the view of 10 men as more reliable than the character of God, the promises of God and their practical experience with God. So their confidence deflated, and their fear took over.

We might roll our eyes at Israel, but we are no different. Every challenge we face is an opportunity to place our confidence in God's character and promises or be defeated by fear. He has never failed. He has provided all we need in Jesus' death and resurrection, and there is no challenge He will not walk us through and redeem for His glory and our good. Challenges are never easy, but when God leads us to them, His Spirit can help us choose to face them with confidence.

Head, Heart, Hands Reinforcement | In-class or take-home

◆ Head Questions

- ◇ What, specifically, caused the Israelites' confidence in God to fail?
- ◇ How did God respond to the Israelites' refusal to enter the land?

◆ Heart Questions

- ◇ The Bible is full of God's promises, and He is faithful to keep them, no matter what. God promised to bring Israel into the Promised Land, so Caleb and Joshua trusted that God would help Israel defeat and conquer the land. What part of God's character or promises do you need to remember that will help you fully trust Him to bring about what He has planned for you?
- ◇ When have you had to trust someone you knew? What about someone you did not know? How can knowing God better help us have faith (show confidence) in Him?

◆ Hands Challenge

- ◇ On a scale of 1–10, with 1 being no confidence and 10 being ultimate confidence, how would you rate your trust in God and His plans?
- ◇ If you would like that number to become higher, write down one person you will commit to approaching and asking for their help to do that (LifeWise teacher, friend, pastor, parent, etc.). If you are satisfied with where you are on that scale, thank God for all He has done for you. Then, write down the names of two people you could encourage by sharing the amazing things God has done for you.

EXTENDED LESSON RESOURCES

Bible Commentary for the Teacher

It's easy to think that our personal sin will only affect ourselves, but the Israelites' rebellion against God reveals the far-reaching damage that sin can cause.

- ◆ **Our sin grieves God (Psalm 78:40).** God is holy and righteous in all that He does, but our rebellion and rejection is hurtful to Him. Just as loss and bad news makes us sad, our sin causes God to feel deep sorrow (Eph. 4:30) because of His deep love for us.¹
- ◆ **Our sin damages God's reputation (Num. 14:11–19).** All sin reveals what we really believe about God's character and promises. In refusing to enter the land, the people showed that they did not trust in God's faithfulness and power, and that small view of God would encourage other nations to think their own gods were stronger than Jehovah. In the same way, our sin can cause those around us to see God as something He is not. That is why we are called to carefully obey all that God commands (Deut. 8:1). However, the opposite is also true—when we repent of our sin and He is revealed in our actions and faith, the truth of who He really is becomes more visible to those around us and they can be encouraged to turn to Christ in faith.
- ◆ **Our sin hurts those around us (Numbers 13:31–14:4).** The 10 spies chose to rebel against God's plan, but it didn't stop with them. They led the entire nation into rebellion and, ultimately, judgment. Sin always brings consequences. When we sin—even sin that's done in secret—we are not the only ones affected. Our sin will affect those around us, directly or indirectly, whether we see it or not.
- ◆ **Our sin affects the way we view those in authority over us (Numbers 14:2,4,10).** Moses, Aaron, Joshua and Caleb weren't perfect leaders, but they confidently urged the people to trust in God's reliable character. The Israelites first rejected the truth of their words, saying that they had been led out into the wilderness to die by the sword in Canaan (Num. 14:3). They rejected Moses and Aaron's God-given authority and planned to choose a new leader. When Caleb and Joshua urged them to trust God, the people intended to silence them by stoning them to death (14:10). At that point, God's presence appeared to defend the leaders He had chosen because the people's rebellion was ultimately against God's authority, not Moses and Aaron's.

¹ Greg Morse, "The Love in His Grief: How the Spirit Responds to our Sin," [desiringgod.org](https://www.desiringgod.org), 18 April 2022, <https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/the-love-in-his-grief>.



THE REBELLION OF GOD'S PEOPLE

Rebellion against God is rooted in failing to trust God.

JESUS CONNECTION



God's people failed to trust God's provision and promises by rebelling against Him and refusing to enter the land He had given them. Jesus fully trusted and obeyed the Father when He entered the world to fulfill God's promise to provide a Savior from sin.



LIFEWISE QUALITY

CONFIDENCE – Full trust and assurance in the reliability of a person or thing.



HEAD

What, specifically, caused the Israelites' confidence in God to fail?

How did God respond to the Israelites' refusal to enter the land?



HEART

The Bible is full of God's promises, and He is faithful to keep them, no matter what. God promised to bring Israel into the Promised Land, so Caleb & Joshua trusted that God would help Israel defeat and conquer the land. What part of God's character or promises do you need to remember that will help you fully trust Him to bring about what He has planned for you?

When have you had to trust someone you knew? What about someone you did not know? How can knowing God better help us have faith (show confidence) in Him?



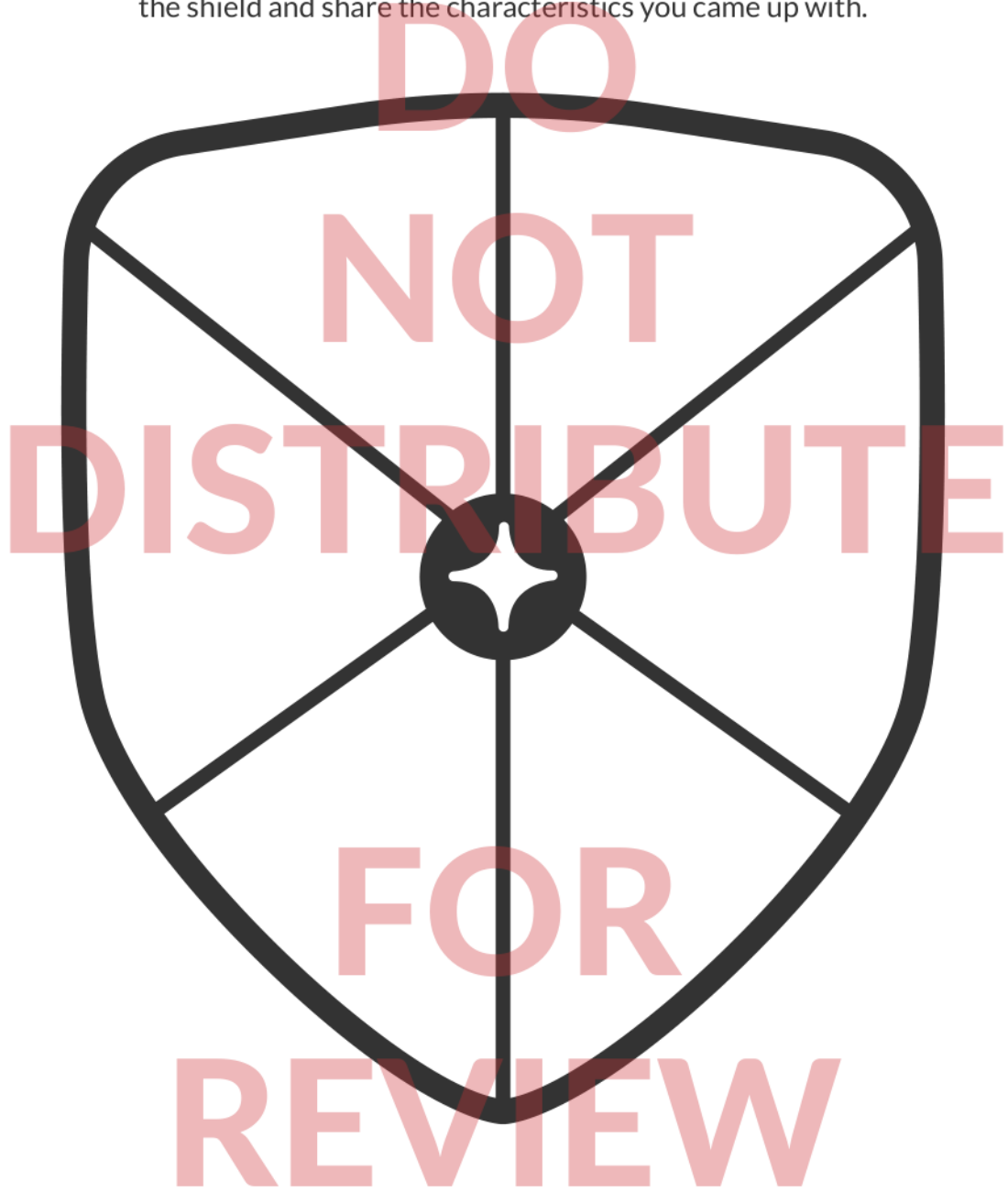
HANDS

On a scale of 1-10, with 1 being no confidence and 10 being ultimate confidence, how would you rate your trust in God and His plans?

If you would like that number to become higher, write down one person you will commit to approaching and asking for their help to do that (LifeWise teacher, friend, pastor, parent, etc.). If you are satisfied with where you are on that scale, thank God for all He has done for you. Then, write down the names of two people you could encourage by sharing the amazing things God has done for you.

MY PERSONAL SHIELD

On the shield below, write different characteristics of God.
(Examples: loving, faithful, all-powerful, etc.) Fill in each space of
the shield and share the characteristics you came up with.



Name

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HEAD

THE PROMISE OF GOD'S PRESENCE

God warns of the consequences of unfaithfulness to Him.



HEART

JESUS CONNECTION

Despite the people's ongoing sinful rebellion, God promised to be with them and provided them with words of life. Jesus is the Word of God who paid the penalty of our sin so that we might have life and relationship with God.



HANDS

LIFEWISE QUALITY

COMMITMENT – Doing what I say I'll do.

BIBLE REVIEW

MSL 24 The Rebellion of God's People | 1–2 Min

In the previous session, God led the Israelites to the Promised Land, but they refused to enter it.

- ♦ What did God instruct Moses to have 12 men do so they could see God's faithfulness? (*Spy out the land.*)
- ♦ Why were the people afraid to enter the Promised Land? (*The people there were strong, and the cities were fortified and hard to enter.*)

Today, we will learn how Moses prepared the Israelites to enter the Promised Land after 40 years of wandering.

SESSION STARTERS

What's my Goal? | 5–10 Min

- ♦ This is a version of Two Truths and a Lie. Have students write out three goals: one they have actually set for themselves and two they've made up. Allow students to read their three goals out loud, and challenge the rest of the class to guess which one is the real goal they have for themselves.
- ♦ Some of the goals you made up were fake because you realize that realistically, you don't have the time, energy, resources or skill to meet them. In today's story, Moses lays out what following God requires for the people. He asks them to think through what it will cost them to commit to the covenant relationship the Lord desires with them and make it their life's greatest ambition or goal.

BIBLE LESSON: THE PROMISE OF GOD'S PRESENCE | 10–20 Min

The Israelites wandered in the wilderness for 40 years, experiencing God's discipline. As God promised, every one of the generations who refused to enter the land died, except Joshua and Caleb. When Moses' brother, Aaron, died, his authority as high priest passed to his son Eleazer (Num. 20:24–28).

God again brought the people to the edge of Canaan, and Moses prepared them to enter the Promised Land. He reminded them of God's laws and His faithfulness toward the people. He reminded the people of their sinfulness and rebellion against God and the consequences they experienced because of it. Moses also encouraged the people to remain confident in the Lord and obey Him in everything so that their lives in the Promised Land would be good.

Deuteronomy 31:14–18.

Moses was not permitted to enter the Promised Land with God's people because he disobeyed the Lord when he struck the rock twice to produce water (Num. 20:1–12). **So, when Moses was 120 years old, God instructed him to pass on his title and role as leader to Joshua** and to be part of **commissioning** his successor. **God called Moses and Joshua to the tent of meeting and displayed His presence** to them and the people **in the form of the pillar of cloud (v. 14–15).**

God's primary reason for displaying His presence was to appoint Joshua as Moses' successor, but He also had another important **revelation** to make. **God told Moses what His people would do after they had settled in the Promised Land. He declared that after Moses' death, the Israelites would serve idols instead of God. They would abandon Him and break their covenant, and many troubles would come upon them.**

God also told Moses that the people would face the consequences of their idolatry as they experienced God's loving discipline. God would respond to His people's unfaithfulness by withdrawing from them. The people would no longer have God going before them to fight their battles. Neither would He protect and provide for them.

Deuteronomy 31:19–22.

God could have ended the meeting after telling Moses about the future, but He didn't. **God** wanted His people not only to hear this message, but also to take it to heart and remember it. So, He **instructed Moses to write a song. This song was to be sung generation after generation to serve as a warning and reminder of what would happen if the people abandoned God and turned to idols.** Yet, even within these sobering lyrics, God gave His people hope. **God promised that He would not abandon them. He would purify the land and the people** (Deut. 32:36, 43). Ultimately, He would honor His covenant with the people, even when they did not.

Summary of Deuteronomy 32:48–33:34–12.

After God finished speaking with Moses and the people, He invited Moses to climb to the top of Mount Nebo and see the Promised Land with his own eyes before he died. Moses blessed the 12 tribes of Israel and climbed to the top of the mountain. The Lord showed Moses the entire land. Although Moses was 120 years old, his eyes saw the land clearly (34:7).

Then, Moses left Mount Nebo and died in the land of Moab. God Himself buried Moses there (34:6). Deuteronomy 34:10–12 affirms Moses' ministry, declaring, "No prophet has arisen again in Israel like Moses, whom the Lord knew face to face. He was unparalleled for all the signs and wonders the Lord sent him to do against the land of Egypt—to Pharaoh, to all his officials and to all his land—and for all the mighty acts of power and terrifying deeds that Moses performed in the sight of all Israel."

Big Ideas

- ♦ **God knows all things.** He has perfect knowledge of all things—past, present and future. Where we know some things and can predict what will happen at times, God knows all things. His knowledge

is complete, as the One who brought this world, including time, into existence. Thus, God knew exactly what would become of the Israelites once they settled into the land of promise.

- ◆ **God is intentional.** In teaching His people a song, God provided a powerful means of remembering the covenant they had made with Him that would be passed down for generations. He set them up for success in every way possible to help them remain committed to their relationship with Him and honor the covenant they had made.
- ◆ **God is kind.** Moses' disobedience kept him from entering the Promised Land with the people. Even though this punishment was deserved, God was kind to Moses. God sustained him physically so he could see clearly and be strong enough to climb to the top of Mount Nebo (34:7). God allowed Moses to see the Promised Land with his own eyes before he died.

Discussion Questions

- ◆ Why do you think God wanted His message communicated through song? Why would a song be better than just a speech, especially for future generations?
- ◆ Do you think faith in someone (God or another person) can be "borrowed," or based only on what someone else says or knows about them? What difference might it make if someone's faith in God is personal or borrowed?
- ◆ List some of God's warnings to Israel as they entered the Promised Land. Which of these warnings do you think God could also give to us today? Why?
- ◆ Why do good authorities give us warnings, reminders or promises? Have you ever benefited from following a warning from a parent/teacher or from God or suffered because you didn't?
- ◆ How do you think of God's warnings and promises—as strict expectations from a harsh Master, as old-fashioned rules that don't matter much today or as opportunities to experience God's abundant life by living His way?

REINFORCEMENT ACTIVITIES

Suggested Video | 5–10 Min

BibleProject Video: *Deuteronomy (Torah)*; Full video: 5:52.

Suggested Visual Aid | 5 Min.

Poster 10: *Moses*

A New Leader | 5–10 Min

- ◆ Have the class imagine that they just heard that the principal whom everyone loves is retiring at the end of the year. Invite students to answer the following questions out loud. Consider writing their answers on the board or in a journal.
 - ◇ How would that news make you feel?
 - ◇ What worries or concerns might you have about the new principal?
 - ◇ Would it help to have someone who knows the new principal personally vouch for them? Why or why not?
- ◆ In Deuteronomy 31, the people of Israel are about to enter the promised land, when God announces that Joshua, not Moses, will lead them in. They may have had questions and concerns

similar to what you shared. When we face a major change in our circumstances or the adults who we rely on as leaders, we can sometimes worry or get upset. But God is constant and perfectly faithful. No matter what changes in our lives or new challenges we face, He is there to protect us, love us and lead us through.

JESUS CONNECTION



Despite the people's ongoing sinful rebellion, God promised to be with them and provided them with words of life. Jesus is the Word of God who paid the penalty of our sin so that we might have life and relationship with God.

LIFEWISE QUALITY | 3–5 Min

COMMITMENT – Doing what I say I'll do.

Living LifeWise

Because God is our good King, we can choose to be fully committed to following Him.

LWQ Script

In the book of Deuteronomy, God calls a new generation of Israel to follow Him into the Promised Land. He repeats the covenant blessings and curses and invites them to commit to Him completely. Even though they didn't keep that commitment to follow Him as their true King, God regularly used His priests and prophets to remind them of their commitment to Him.

God invites us to make a commitment to follow Him, too. Through the death and resurrection of Jesus, God has opened the door to anyone who will come and serve Him as their Lord and King. Even after we come to know Jesus, we will continue to struggle with sin, but His Spirit helps us to live out our commitment to honor and obey God more fully as we learn to be more like Jesus.

[Consider sharing a gospel presentation with the class, allowing them to hear and ask questions about what it means to make a commitment to God or to make such a commitment themselves.]

Head, Heart, Hands Reinforcement | In-class or take-home

◆ Head Questions

- ◆ What did God say the people would do after they settled in the land of Canaan? What promise does God make Joshua, despite this?
- ◆ What two things does Moses encourage the Israelites to do in order to help them remain committed to God?

◆ Heart Questions

- ◆ When Moses reminded the people of God's covenant, they said, "Yes! We'll do it all." But they continued to fall short of keeping their commitment. Have you ever said you would do something (clean your room, complete your homework on time, go to church, help a

grandparent, etc.) and fallen short of keeping that commitment? Why are you unable to keep your commitments at times?

- ❖ God told Moses before he even died that the people would not stay committed to Him. God is not surprised by our sins or failures, either. Jesus came to die so that our sins could be covered. How does it encourage you that God knows you aren't perfect and has already provided the perfect answer to your failures?

- ◆ **Hands Challenge**

- ❖ As we depend on God, He will help us follow through on all the things we promise to do. Name one commitment you have made that you are struggling to keep. Ask God to help you be strong and courageous, and remember that He is with you always as you work to fulfill your commitment. Ask someone to keep you accountable. Have that person check in with you to make sure you are doing what you said you will do.

EXTENDED LESSON RESOURCES

Bible Commentary for the Teacher

God's prophecy about the Israelites' unfaithfulness to God gives us an even bigger understanding of who He is:

- ◆ **God is both loving and truthful (Deuteronomy 31:19–22).** Though we often think it's better to hide or tone down the truth so we don't hurt someone's feelings, the Bible reminds us to "speak the truth in love" (Eph. 4:15). Moses' song was a loving warning and truthful reminder for the people. Because God loved the people, He loved them enough to warn them so that they could avoid the punishment altogether.
- ◆ **God is faithful when we are not.**
 - ❖ **Deuteronomy 31:14–18** – Throughout the Bible, God compares a covenant relationship with Him to a marriage. God designed marriage to be a covenant relationship where both the man and the woman are to live exclusively and faithfully with one another. When either spouse is unfaithful, the relationship is damaged and cannot be everything God intended it to be. Similarly, because of the Israelites' unfaithfulness—not God's—they would not experience the fullness of what God intended. God's purpose in withdrawing from His people when they broke their covenant with Him was not to leave them, but to help them become aware of their sin and choose to return to Him.
 - ❖ **Deuteronomy 23:44–27** – In Deuteronomy 8:3, Moses had told Israel that "man does not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord." As Moses' life came to an end, he again challenged the people to commit themselves fully to God's Word. "Take to heart all these words I am giving as a warning to you today ... For they are not meaningless words to you but they are your life, and by them you will live long in the land you are crossing the Jordan to possess" (Deut. 32:46–47). Israel would ultimately give in to temptation and ignore Moses' warnings. They would fail to live upon the Word of God and live on their own fears and desires instead. But Jesus succeeded where Israel failed. When He was tempted in the wilderness (Mt. 4:1–11), He quoted Deuteronomy 8:3 to the devil, showing us what it looks like to live upon the Word of God. Unlike Israel (or us), He stood resolute and unshaken in His confidence in the Word of the Lord.

In Defense

In this account we find an important theme that is repeated throughout the Bible: God wants to dwell among us! The Creator of the universe, the holy and all-powerful God, wants to be involved in the day-to-day aspects of our lives. This fundamental Christian theme is radically different from the other religions of the world. Other religions urge us to work our way up to God, while Christianity teaches that God comes down to dwell among us. Other religions speak of earning enough credits to somehow please God and be rewarded by Him, whereas Christianity says that we can receive God's gift of friendship and righteousness through the reconciling work of His Son, Jesus Christ, which results in life-long communion with Him that extends to all eternity.

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THE PROMISE OF GOD'S PRESENCE

God warns of the consequences of unfaithfulness to Him.



JESUS CONNECTION

Despite the people's ongoing sinful rebellion, God promised to be with them and provided them with words of life. Jesus is the Word of God who paid the penalty of our sin so that we might have life and relationship with God.



LIFEWISE QUALITY

COMMITMENT – Doing what I say I'll do.



HEAD

What did God say the people would do after they settled in the land of Canaan? What promise does God make Joshua, despite this?

What two things does Moses encourage the Israelites to do in order to help them remain committed to God?



HEART

When Moses reminded the people of God's covenant, they said, "Yes! We'll do it all." But they continued to fall short of keeping their commitment. Have you ever said you would do something (clean your room, complete your homework on time, go to church, help a grandparent, etc.) and fell short of keeping that commitment? Why are you unable to keep your commitments at times?

God told Moses before he even died that the people would not stay committed to Him. God is not surprised by our sins or failures either. Jesus came to die so that our sins could be covered. How does it encourage you that God knows you aren't perfect and has already provided the perfect answer to your failures?



HANDS

As we depend on God, He will help us follow through on all the things we promise to do. Name one commitment you have made that you are struggling to keep. Ask God to help you be strong and courageous, and remember that He is with you always as you work to fulfill your commitment. Ask someone to keep you accountable. Have that person check in with you to make sure you are doing what you said you will do.



HEAD

THE PROMISE OF VICTORY

God responds to whoever calls on His mercy.



HEART

JESUS CONNECTION

Rahab recognized God's future victory and asked the spies to spare her from the coming destruction. When Jericho fell, Rahab received mercy and was included as one of God's chosen people. Whoever trusts in Jesus and asks Him for mercy is spared from the judgment of sin and welcomed into God's family.



HANDS

LIFEWISE QUALITY

BOLDNESS – Choosing to do the right thing, even if you are afraid.

BIBLE REVIEW

MSL 25 The Promise of God's Presence | 1–2 Min

In the previous session, God transferred the leadership from Moses to Joshua and warned the people of the consequences of disobeying God's Word.

- ◆ How did God confirm that Joshua was chosen to be the next leader? (*He appeared at the tabernacle as the pillar of cloud.*)
- ◆ Why did God ask Moses to teach the Israelites a song? (*To warn and remind them through many generations about the consequences of their sin and unfaithfulness to God.*)

Today, we will learn how God faithfully led Joshua and the Israelites into the Promised Land.

SESSION STARTERS

Knock Down the Walls | 5–10 Min

- ◆ Before class, gather red plastic cups and ping pong balls. Divide the class into two teams. Provide each team a stack of plastic cups and challenge them to build a wall they think the other team cannot knock down. Have teams build their walls on opposite ends of the same table, or move multiple desks or smaller tables together to make a long space. When the walls are complete, give each team one minute to try to knock out the other team's wall by bouncing ping pong balls. If neither team's wall falls, give another minute to both teams. The first team to knock down the other team's wall wins.
- ◆ What made your plastic cup walls easier or harder to knock down? In our story today, God's people must somehow defeat the city of Jericho. Jericho's wall was famous for being impossible to knock down, but when God told His people that He would knock the wall down for them, they believed Him and boldly obeyed His strange-sounding plan of attack.

BIBLE LESSON: THE PROMISE OF VICTORY | 10–20 Min

Summary of Joshua 1:1–2:7.

After Moses' death, God told Joshua and the Israelites to enter the Promised Land. God promised Joshua that He would be with him just as He had been with Moses. He urged Joshua to be strong and courageous and obey God's Word. The Lord promised that no man would be able to stand against Joshua (Josh. 1:5–7).

Joshua told the Israelites to prepare to cross the Jordan River in three days and take possession of the land of Canaan. He sent two spies to investigate the land and city of Jericho. They entered the city and stayed at the house of a woman named Rahab. The king of Jericho learned that two foreigners had entered Rahab's house and sent soldiers to arrest the spies. Rahab hid the men on the roof of her house under stalks of flax and told the soldiers that the spies had already left the city. The king's soldiers immediately left the city to pursue the spies.

Joshua 2:8–13.

Rahab's faith in God set her apart from the people of Jericho. The Israelites had seen God in the pillar of cloud and fire, witnessed His power and received His Word. But Rahab had not experienced any of it. She had only heard about it second-hand, yet she believed that God was the ultimate authority. Rahab demonstrated the kind of faith in God that the children of Israel had struggled to walk in for generations.

Because of her faith, Rahab risked her life to conceal the spies. She testified to the spies that she had heard of God's mighty acts and knew that God had already given the land to the Israelites. She believed no one could withstand the Lord's power. Rahab confessed the Lord as the God of Heaven and Earth. And she pleaded for God to show mercy to her and her family.

Summary of Joshua 2:14–4:24, 6:1–6:14.

As Israel's representatives, the spies vowed to protect Rahab and her family and told her to hang a scarlet cord from her window to identify her home. Because of Rahab, the spies left Jericho unharmed, returned to Joshua and the other Israelites and reported what they had seen and heard.

Early the next morning, the people journeyed to the Jordan River. The river was flooded (Josh. 3:15), but God gave Joshua instructions on how the people would walk safely across. He commanded the priests to carry the ark of the covenant and stand in the middle of the riverbed until the Israelites had crossed. The people obeyed God, and the priests walked to the Jordan River with the ark of the covenant.

As soon as their feet touched the river, the water stopped flowing, piling up far away from the people (Josh. 3:16), and Israel crossed the Jordan River on dry ground, just as they had passed through the Red Sea. After all the people had entered the Promised Land safely, God commanded that one man from every tribe should take a large stone from the riverbed and pile them up at their camp that night to serve as a memorial so that God's people would always remember what He had done for them.

The people of Jericho saw the Israelites were coming and were terrified. They retreated into the city and shut the gates tightly. God told Joshua to attack the city and gave him the battle plan: the priests and soldiers were to march for six days, circling the city once each day. Seven priests would blow rams' horns, followed by four priests carrying the ark of the covenant. The soldiers walked in front and behind the priests, quietly guarding them. On the seventh day, the people were to march around Jericho seven times, blow their rams horns and shout, and the city walls would fall. That was the plan. No fighting, no siege, no military tactics.

Read Joshua 6:15–17; 20–21.

The Israelites followed God's instructions. For six days, they marched around the vast city of Jericho. On the seventh day, Joshua reminded the people to spare Rahab and her family as they attacked the city. Then, Joshua gave the command, they shouted and God brought Jericho's impenetrable walls down flat, just as He promised. The Israelites entered the city and destroyed it entirely.

Summarize Joshua 6:22–25.

Joshua told the spies to go into the city and bring Rahab and her family out safely. Rahab boldly risked everything because of her faith in God's power, and the Lord rewarded her for it. Rahab and her family's lives were spared and welcomed as part of God's chosen people. A former enemy was now included as God's chosen treasure. God had shown her great kindness (2:12).

God led the Israelites into the land of Canaan and gave them victory over their enemies and the land as their own possession. God told them that if they followed His laws carefully, they would live full lives in the land. Joshua and the people renewed their covenant with the Lord and promised to serve Him faithfully (Josh. 24:16–22).

Big Ideas

- ♦ **Faith in God is based on evidence.** True faith isn't blind. It isn't something we "promise" God when we want something. Faith is always a decision to believe because of the evidence we've seen. God's people didn't say they believed God's plan would work just so they could stop wandering in the wilderness. They'd seen evidence of God's power over and over again. Rahab didn't believe in God as her Plan B for getting safely out of Jericho. She knew the stories of all that God had done for the Israelites and recognized His power and character. God did everything He had promised to do for Israel, so they (and the people in the land) had every reason to believe that God would fulfill His promises regarding the Promised Land right now.
- ♦ **God fought the battle for His people.** Forty years earlier, the Israelites refused to enter Canaan because they feared the strength of the people and cities. But this time, they marched around Jericho boldly, trusting in God's great power and faithfulness to keep His promises. The people had no need to find a way into the city. God himself brought the walls down, and God continued to fight Israel's battles until they destroyed all their enemies.
- ♦ **God includes all who believe as part of His family.** God spared Rahab and included her as a part of His people because of her faith. Not only this, but God honored Rahab through her future descendants. She was the grandmother of King David, the greatest king of Israel, and was ultimately included in the direct family line of Jesus. Similarly to Rahab, we are spared from the punishment of our sin in God's mercy, and in His grace, we are brought into His family—we become His children and part of His church. We, who were once enemies, are now His righteous children (Rom. 5:10).

Discussion Questions

- ♦ What surprises you about Rahab's story? What do you think convinced her to trust in Israel's God when the rest of Jericho did not?
- ♦ How do we know if a relationship (with God or another person) is growing or not? Is it just a matter of how long we've known them or are there other ingredients?

- ◆ Who in this story boldly trusted God and His plan? Do you think it was easy for them to trust? Why did they trust Him anyway?
- ◆ Have you (or someone you know) ever trusted in God and seen Him come through in a powerful way? How did you feel when you saw God work on your behalf?
- ◆ What does the word *grace* mean? How is God's grace on display in this story?

REINFORCEMENT ACTIVITIES

Suggested Video | 5–10 Min

BibleProject Video: *Joshua*; Full video: 8:45. For a shorter option: start–4:18.

Suggested Visual Aid | 5 Min.

Poster 16: *God's Compassion*

Cheering for the Underdogs | 5–10 Min

- ◆ Do you like to watch the Olympics? Let students share what they look forward to or remember about the Olympics. We like to cheer for the underdogs who upset the reigning champs or the athletes who fight through injuries to win (or just finish). We're so invested in these moments that it's like we're living the moment right along with them.
- ◆ Split the classroom in half and give them blocks, legos or something they can build the walls of Jericho with. Challenge each team to build the walls of Jericho in 3 minutes or less. Right before the timer starts, instruct one team to only use their nondominant hand. Once students get started, give the underdogs (the team using their nondominant hand) another 3 minutes. Look at each structure when complete and talk through how this activity relates to Joshua and the Israelites.
- ◆ The Bible contains true stories of real-life people experiencing real-life events. In Joshua 6, the underdog Israelites march into the Promised Land to face off against Jericho, a city with a wall so thick and strong no army had ever broken through it, with a battle plan that involved a lot of walking and a promise that God would fight on their behalf. Ultimately, how did what they thought or felt affect the outcome God promised? No matter how the Israelites felt, they trusted God and boldly followed His plan. Similarly, how we think and feel is valid, we can also trust God to help us and boldly follow His plan, no matter how challenging our circumstances may be.

JESUS CONNECTION



Rahab recognized God's future victory and asked the spies to spare her from the coming destruction. When Jericho fell, Rahab received mercy and was included as one of God's chosen people. Whoever trusts in Jesus and asks Him for mercy is spared from the judgment of sin and welcomed into God's family.

LIFEWISE QUALITY | 3–5 Min

BOLDNESS – Choosing to do the right thing, even if you are afraid.

Living LifeWise

Remembering God's power and provision for us helps us to live boldly in difficult situations.

LWQ Script

Boldness comes from knowing who God is. Based on stories about the God of Israel, Rahab boldly risked everything to protect the spies and petition them for God's protection. Following God's orders, Israel boldly stepped out against an enemy they had no chance of defeating on their own. In difficult situations, God's power and His promise to provide encourage His people to live boldly.

God is still the same powerful, promise-keeping God. Rahab didn't deserve to receive God's grace and mercy, but He gave it to her anyway. We don't deserve God's grace and mercy either, but He sent Jesus to die for us anyway. He has more than enough power to handle anything we face (Eph. 3:20). He provides for every need. Based on who He is and what He's promised, we can live boldly for Him every day.

Head, Heart, Hands Reinforcement | In-class or take-home

◆ Head Questions

- ◆ Name 2 specific ways Rahab showed boldness in today's lesson.
- ◆ What were some possible risks the Israelite troops could have feared as they marched and shouted around Jericho's walls?

◆ Heart Questions

- ◆ What gave Rahab the courage to be fearless and act despite the possible risks?
- ◆ Like Rahab and the people of Israel discovered, bold things are usually also scary things. Why do you think fear and boldness often go together? Do you think we can totally eliminate fear in these situations?

◆ Hands Challenge

- ◆ God will call us to live boldly. He might prompt us to talk about Him with someone or do the right thing when others are doing wrong. What have you been avoiding because you are afraid or because of the possible risks associated with it? Write down the fears and/or risks. Talk to God about each one and ask Him to give you boldness to do what He is prompting you to do.

EXTENDED LESSON RESOURCES

Bible Commentary for the Teacher

Rahab's understanding of God went beyond hearing about God secondhand.

- ◆ **Rahab knew God personally (Joshua 2:9).** When Rahab said she knew the Lord, she used a very strong verb in the Hebrew language: *yada*. It means "to know" and carries with it the idea of knowing intimately through observation or experience. Its first use in the Bible is when the serpent said to Eve, "God knows that when you eat it your eyes will be opened and you will be like God, *knowing* good and evil," (Gen. 3:5, italics denotes the use of *yada*). It was also used when God told Moses, "I know you by name, and you have also found favor with me" (Ex. 33:12).

- ♦ **Rahab displayed true faith (Hebrews 11:31).** Hebrews 11:1 defines faith as “the reality of what is hoped for, the proof of what is not seen.” Faith and hope are intertwined, and we see both in Rahab’s conversation with the spies. Her hope and faith were not in herself, her city or her people. It was in God alone, because He is all-powerful. Because of this faith, she boldly asked for deliverance from the only One who could save her.
- ♦ **Rahab was made righteous through faith, by grace (Jas. 2:24–25).** Rahab did not know God’s laws, nor did she obey them when she lived in Jericho. But when she demonstrated her faith in Him, God graciously placed her in a right relationship with Him. He rescued her, not because she had earned His favor, but because she believed in Him (Gen. 15:6).

In Defense

To some, it seems harsh or unfair that Israel was to drive out the people groups from the Promised Land. However, it is important to remember that Israel’s conquering of this land was a form of judgment by God in light of the Canaanite people’s sins. According to one biblical scholar, “The evidence for profound moral corruption was abundant. God considered them ripe for divine judgment, which would be carried out in keeping with God’s saving purposes in history.”¹ In Genesis, God even told Abraham that “the iniquity of the Amorites [a Canaanite people group] has not yet reached its full measure” (15:16). God did judge the people for their sin, but He also demonstrated great patience. He waited more than 400 years before finally judging them for their unrepentant sins.

¹ Paul Copan, *Is God a Moral Monster?* (Baker Books, 2011), 175-176.



THE PROMISE OF VICTORY

God responds to whoever calls on His mercy.

JESUS CONNECTION



Rahab recognized God's future victory and asked the spies to spare her from the coming destruction. When Jericho fell, Rahab received mercy and was included as one of God's chosen people. Whoever trusts in Jesus and asks Him for mercy is spared from the judgment of sin and welcomed into God's family.



LIFEWISE QUALITY

BOLDNESS – Choosing to do the right thing, even if you are afraid.



HEAD

Name 2 specific ways Rahab showed boldness in today's lesson.

What were some possible risks the Israelite troops could have feared as they marched and shouted around Jericho's walls?



HEART

What gave Rahab the courage to be fearless and act despite the possible risks?

DO
NOT

Like Rahab and the people of Israel discovered, bold things are usually also scary things. Why do you think fear and boldness often go together? Do you think we can totally eliminate fear in these situations?

DISTRIBUTE



HANDS

God will call us to live boldly. He might prompt us to talk about Him with someone or do the right thing when others are doing wrong. What have you been avoiding because you are afraid or because of the possible risks associated with it? Write down the fears and/or risks. Talk to God about each one and ask Him to give you boldness to do what He is prompting you to do.

FOR
REVIEW
ONLY



HEAD

THE PICTURES OF GOD'S AUTHORITY

God's grace often comes in unexpected ways.



HEART

JESUS CONNECTION

The miracles Elijah performed revealed that he was a prophet of the one true God and that the Lord's words were true. In a greater way, the miracles Jesus performed revealed that He is the Son of God, the true Word of God (John 20:30-31).



HANDS

LIFEWISE QUALITY

TRUSTWORTHINESS – Being able to be relied upon.

BIBLE REVIEW

MSL 26 The Promise of Victory | 1-2 Min

In the previous session, God led the people into the Promised Land and gave them victory over their enemies.

- ◆ How did Rahab show that she had faith in God? (*She confessed God as the powerful Creator of Heaven and Earth and hid two of God's people from the King's soldiers.*)
- ◆ What did God tell the people to do to get into the city of Jericho? (*March around the city one time each day for six days, then march around the city seven times on the seventh day, blow their rams' horns and shout.*)

Today, we will learn about the prophet Elijah. God performed powerful miracles through Elijah to show that He was the one true God.

SESSION STARTERS

Guess the Number | 5-10 Min

- ◆ Gather five pens, pencils or small sticks. Stand or sit with the sticks in front of you and the students around you so they can see you and the sticks clearly. Tell them you're going to think of a number between one and five; it's their job to guess the number.
 - ◇ Arrange the sticks in front of you however you wish—as a square, a W, two rows and three columns, etc. The sticks are a distraction (but don't tell the students!).
 - ◇ When you're "ready," extend the fingers of one hand to indicate the number you're thinking of. They should be visible, but not obvious (against your leg or your crossed arms, for example). Let a student guess the number, then tell them the correct answer. Repeat with a new number and new shape for the sticks. As students figure it out, tell them not to tell until everyone has figured it out on their own.

- ♦ As you realized, the sticks were a distraction. I never actually said they had anything to do with the number; you just assumed they did. We often make assumptions about how God works, too. Just because we don't often see miracles, we assume He can't or won't do a miracle. Or, as in today's story, we expect Him to provide all the food Elijah needed, but instead, He consistently provided just enough food for each day.

Would You Rather | 5–10 Min

- ♦ Play Would You Rather by having the students stand and sit to indicate their choice or move to a side of the room. Ask these three questions:
 - ❖ Would you rather receive a huge amount of your favorite food at once, or receive a small daily allotment of it for the next five years?
 - ❖ Would you rather live with friends in a poor village with no running water or electricity or live with your enemies in a place with power and water?
 - ❖ Would you rather live a calm life with no magnificent events, good or bad, or live a life with big joys but heavy sorrows, yet with the promise it will all work out in the end?
- ♦ All three of these questions relate to the life of Elijah, whom we'll learn about today. God called Elijah to be His prophet, provided for him and protected him from enemies. Elijah's life was full of both God's powerful miracles and great difficulties.

BIBLE LESSON: THE PICTURES OF GOD'S AUTHORITY | 10–20 Min

Summary Bridge from Joshua to Kings.

Although both God and Joshua gave the Israelites careful instructions to obey the Lord's laws fully, they failed to do this (Judges 1). God told them that, because they did not obey Him, He would not drive out the rest of the people from the land and they would trouble Israel and cause them to stumble into sin (Josh. 2:1–3). After Joshua died at the age of 110, the Israelites turned away from the Lord and served false gods, and everything God warned them about happened. An enemy nation would oppress them until they became so miserable that they begged God for deliverance. God would send a leader, called a judge, to deliver them, and they would obey God once more. But over time, they would turn back to idolatry. This cycle of sin lasted for 400 years before God established a king over the people.

The kingdom of Israel was ruled by Saul, then David, then Solomon. At the end of his life, Solomon began to worship false gods, so God split the kingdom into two kingdoms: the Northern Kingdom, called Israel, and the Southern Kingdom, called Judah. David's descendants led the Southern Kingdom of Judah. But many of the kings in both Israel and Judah chose to worship idols and led the people to follow their example.

Ahab, the most evil king of the Northern Kingdom of Israel, and his wife Jezebel (1 Kings 13:30–33) led the people of Israel to worship Baal, the false god of rain and fertility, and built an altar for him. During this dark time, God sent the prophet Elijah to call Ahab and the people to repent and turn back to the Lord.

1 Kings 17:1–4.

Elijah's name means "My God is Yahweh," an appropriate name for this prophet; while most Israelites served the false god Baal, Elijah served the Lord. **Many of the people believed that Baal controlled the rain, so God sent Elijah to prove that the Lord was the one true God. Elijah confronted King Ahab with a message from God, proclaiming a drought.** The drought was a promise fulfilled by God. According to God's law, drought was the punishment for idolatry (Deut. 11:16–17; 28:23–24). **God's people were to trust God alone for rain. If they turned to another god, then Yahweh would withhold rain.** Not only

would there be no rain, but neither would there be dew so that God's judgment would be clearly demonstrated.

Summary of 1 Kings 17:5–9.

God told Elijah to go east of the Jordan River and hide from King Ahab there. God provided for Elijah's needs every day. Elijah drank from the Cherith brook and was fed by a raven every morning and evening, **showing that God is sovereign over not only the rain but over all of creation as well** (Ps. 104).

Without rain, the Cherith brook eventually dried up. God sent Elijah outside of Israel to the town of Zarephath (in Jezebel's homeland), where the people worshiped Baal. Here, **God promised to use an unnamed widow to provide for Elijah.** Not only could Baal not stop the drought, but God's provision to Elijah extended right into Baal's territory.

1 Kings 17:10–16.

When Elijah approached this particular widow, he first asked her for some water, a difficult request during a drought. **After she agreed, he also asked her for a bit of bread.** Even though she wasn't an Israelite, she answered in the name of Elijah's God: "As the LORD your God lives." **The widow told him that she didn't have enough food for both Elijah and herself and her son. In fact, this was their last meal. The widow and her son had nothing left to hope in and believed they would starve to death.**

Elijah tested the widow's faith by asking her to provide for him first, then for herself and her son. He assured her that there would be enough for her and her son and promised that God would provide the flour and oil needed to see them through the drought. **The widow trusted in Elijah's promise and acted accordingly, and God provided for them daily, just as He had provided for Elijah.**

1 Kings 17:17–24.

God's miraculous provision kept Elijah, the widow and her son alive. But some time later, **tragedy struck: the widow's son became ill and died.** The widow blamed both her own sin and Elijah for this tragedy. Elijah took the boy in his arms, laid him on his bed and cried out to God in sadness. Then, **Elijah stretched himself over the child three times, crying out to God to raise the child from the dead. The Lord heard Elijah's prayer and brought the child back to life.** After the boy was raised, Elijah took the child and brought him back to his mother. **After witnessing God's power to raise the dead, the widow affirmed her trust in Elijah's word and confessed her faith in the living God.**

Summary of 1 Kings 18:1–46.

After three and a half years (1 Kings 18:1; Jas. 5:17), God sent Elijah back to King Ahab to rebuke him for disobeying God's commands. Elijah told Ahab to meet him on Mount Carmel with the 850 **false prophets** and proposed a test: The prophets of Baal and Elijah would both build an altar, place a sacrifice on it and call on their god. The god who sent fire from Heaven to burn up the sacrifice would prove himself to be the one true God.

The prophets of Baal called out from morning until evening, but Baal did not answer. Elijah waited until evening. When he prepared his sacrifice, he dug a trench and ordered water to be poured on the sacrifice three times, until the trench was filled. Then, **Elijah called on the Lord, asking Him to send fire.** God responded, sending fire that consumed everything: the sacrifice, wood, stone altar and water. When the people of Israel saw God's power, they confessed, "The Lord, He is God" (1 Kings 18:39).

Elijah called the people of Israel to kill the prophets of Baal to rid the land of idol worship, and they obeyed. After this, God sent rain and the drought came to an end.

Big Ideas

- ◆ **God shows sovereignty over all creation (Job 12:7–10).** God sent a raven—a scavenger bird—to bring Elijah food twice a day. He created more oil and flour for Elijah and the widow. He sent such powerful fire from Heaven that it consumed everything it touched. The entire world is subject to God's power and control because He created it all and holds it all together by His powerful Word (Heb. 1:3).
- ◆ **God has power over life and death.** Elijah asked God to bring the widow's son back to life, and He did, yet this boy was raised to life only to die again some day. This story gives us a glimpse of God's resurrection power. Because Jesus died and was raised to live forever, we know that there is a greater resurrection for us too. God has promised to raise all who believe in Him from death to eternal life one day (1 Cor. 6:14).
- ◆ **God brings hope to hopeless situations.** God protected and provided for both Elijah and 100 other prophets while Jezebel sought to destroy them. God gave daily food and life back to the widow and her son, when she thought there was no alternative but death. God showed them that He is trustworthy and restored their hope in His ability to handle any situation, no matter how difficult.

Discussion Questions

- ◆ How have you seen God provide for your daily necessities, especially in a difficult season of life?
- ◆ What things or people attract our loyalty today (i.e., sports teams, celebrities, brand names)? Is there benefit to being loyal to those things? Are they more or less trustworthy than God?
- ◆ What do we mean when we talk about *idolatry*? Does it seem unreasonable to you that God would be so upset about some statues that He withheld rain and dew for three years? Why or why not?
- ◆ Make a short list of interests or activities that the students fill their days with. What we do or choose not to do tells us what we trust in for success or safety. What do these activities show that we trust in?
- ◆ Elijah was a prophet, a man God called to speak for Him. Do you think his level of trust in God is something we can all have, or is it just for "special" religious people (pastors, LifeWise teachers, etc.)?

REINFORCEMENT ACTIVITIES

Suggested Video | 5–10 Min

BibleProject video: 1 & 2 Kings; Full video: 8:51. For a shorter option: start–6:03.

Suggested Visual Aid | 5 Min.

Poster 6: *Idols*

Poster 7: *Judges Cycle*

Poster 11: *Divided Kingdom*

Do You Trust Me? | 5–10 Min

- ◆ Before class, gather a plastic sandwich bag, water and several sharpened pencils. Fill the plastic sandwich bag about two-thirds full of water.
- ◆ Invite a student volunteer to the front and ask, “Do you trust me?” Explain that you’re going to hold the bag filled with water over their head and poke it with a pencil, but they won’t get wet. Ask again, “Do you trust me?” Hold the bag over their head and poke the first pencil through the bag so it sticks out on both sides. Show them that no water leaks out. Poke all the pencils through—still no leaks.
 - ◇ What did you expect would happen when I poked the bag?
 - ◇ Can you guess why it didn’t leak? *[Explanation: the bag is a polymer, a material made of a chain of repeating structures, so when you poke the pencil through, the chain just reforms around the pencil, preventing leaks.]*
 - ◇ How hard is it for you to trust someone (or God) when it looks like something bad might happen?
- ◆ It can be hard for us to trust other people or God, but trust is never based on how a situation looks or feels. Trust happens when we know the one who’s asking for trust is worthy of trust. I knew the polymer in the bag wouldn’t let the water leak out. In the same way, we can trust God because, even when life is hard, He is still able to take care of us and our needs because of His power and character.



JESUS CONNECTION



The miracles Elijah performed revealed that he was a prophet of the one true God and that the Lord’s words were true. In a greater way, the miracles Jesus performed revealed that He is the Son of God, the true Word of God (John 20:30–31).



LIFEWISE QUALITY | 3–5 Min

TRUSTWORTHINESS – Being able to be relied upon.

Living LifeWise

By relying on our all-powerful God to provide everything we need, we can be truly trustworthy.

LWQ Script

We become more trustworthy when we rely on God instead of trying to do it all on our own. Elijah didn’t work hard to feed the widow; he relied on God to provide what God had promised. Elijah knew that his own resources would never be enough, but that in God he had access to a never-ending supply.

God is all-powerful, but we are not enough. We can’t do enough, try enough, work enough or be perfect enough to support other people or take care of every need. But because of Jesus’ sacrifice, God will fill us

up—with His Spirit, His power, His resources and His grace. Instead of running ourselves ragged and living on empty, trying to be trustworthy in our own strength, we can rely on God to provide freely all we need and out of His power, we can live so that others can depend on us.

Head, Heart, Hands Reinforcement | In-class or take-home

- ◆ **Head Questions**
 - ◇ What was the first miracle the widow experienced that grew her trust in God and Elijah?
 - ◇ Summarize what the widow said to Elijah after she witnessed the miracle with her son.
- ◆ **Heart Questions**
 - ◇ What has God done to show He is trustworthy? Why does knowing who God is and what He has done help us to trust Him?
 - ◇ Did Elijah know why God allowed the little boy to get sick and die? Why do you think he was able to trust God even when he didn't understand God's plan?
- ◆ **Hands Challenge**
 - ◇ We tend to rely on things or people rather than God when we need something or when things go wrong. Make a short list of some of the things or people we turn to. For each person or thing on your list, write one reason why they are less trustworthy than God. Ask God to help you remember to rely on Him more than anything or anyone else.

EXTENDED LESSON RESOURCES

Bible Commentary for the Teacher

The stories of Elijah's life demonstrate clearly who God is and how God acts on behalf of His people.

- ◆ **God speaks to His people.**
 - ◇ **He calls them to repentance and warns them of judgment (1 Kings 17:1–3).** God sent the prophet Elijah to announce God's coming judgment on the sins of Ahab and Israel. The closing words of Elijah's prophecy left some hope that if the king and the people repented, the situation might change. But they did not, and the situation became even worse.
 - ◇ **God called Elijah to pray for His will to be done (1 Kings 18:41–45).** God told Elijah that He would send rain before He sent him back to confront Ahab a second time (1 Kings 18:1). Yet, Elijah prayed until the rain came. The rains stopped and began again because Elijah prayed in faith (Jas. 5:17–18).
- ◆ **God displays His sovereignty and power.**
 - ◇ **He is sovereign everywhere (1 Kings 17:9).** Zarephath was located in Phoenicia, the heart and home of Baal worship and Jezebel's homeland. The drought gripped even the home country of Baal, the rain-giver. God's power and sovereignty is not limited to one place or group of people but extends to all places.
 - ◇ **God has power over life and death (1 Kings 17:21).** In Luke 7:11–17, we read of a fascinating story of Jesus, which contains strong echoes of Elijah raising the widow's son to life. While Elijah cried out for God's help in prayer, however, Jesus simply told him to get up (Luke 7:14). God's power to raise the dead was demonstrated once for all in the resurrection of Jesus (Rom. 1:4). He has swallowed up death in victory (1 Cor. 15:54–57) and gives life to spiritually dead people (Eph. 2:1–10) as we await the glorious, final resurrection when the dead in Christ will rise one day in the future (1 Thess. 4:16–18).

- ✧ **He alone is powerful and sovereign (1 Kings 18: 20–35).** Elijah faced King Ahab, the 450 prophets of Baal and 400 prophets of Asherah and the people of Israel, yet he showed great confidence. He knew that the Lord is the one true God, even taunting the prophets of Baal to challenge this false god in front of the king and the people. To emphasize God's power, he ordered that the Lord's sacrifice and altar be soaked in water; it was impossible that this sacrifice could be burned up without God's supernatural power.
- ◆ **God shows compassion.**
 - ✧ **God cares for all people (1 Kings 17:14–16).** God didn't just care for the rich king or the religious prophet. He cared for a poor widow who was not even part of His chosen people. Before they even believed in Him, He provided for her and her son daily and delivered them from death.
 - ✧ **He protects His people (1 Kings 18:4; 19:10).** God used Obadiah to keep one hundred of His prophets safe from Jezebel and kept Elijah safe when Jezebel wanted to kill him (1 Kings 18:4; 19:10).
 - ✧ **He comforted and encouraged Elijah (1 Kings 19:1–21).** Although Elijah had just experienced God's victory, Jezebel's threats on his life left him feeling frightened, helpless and alone. As he ran away to hide, God sent an angel to strengthen him. When Elijah arrived at Mount Horeb (the same mountain where God gave the law to Moses), God strengthened Elijah with His presence. God listened to Elijah's fears and encouraged him by showing that Elijah's circumstances were about to change. He asked him to appoint Jehu as new king over Israel and Elisha to assist Elijah as a prophet of the Lord.

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LESSON TITLE

God's grace often comes in unexpected ways.



JESUS CONNECTION

The miracles Elijah performed revealed that he was a prophet of the one true God and that the Lord's words were true. In a greater way, the miracles Jesus performed revealed that He is the Son of God, the true Word of God (John 20:30-31).



LIFEWISE QUALITY

TRUSTWORTHINESS – Being able to be relied upon.



HEAD

What was the first miracle the widow experienced that grew her trust in God and Elijah?

Summarize what the widow said to Elijah after she witnessed the miracle with her son.



HEART

What has God done to show He is trustworthy? Why does knowing who God is and what He has done help us to trust Him?

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Did Elijah know why God allowed the little boy to get sick and die? Why do you think he was able to trust God even when he didn't understand God's plan?

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HANDS

We tend to rely on things or people rather than God when we need something or when things go wrong. Make a short list of some of the things or people we turn to. For each person or thing on your list, write one reason why they are less trustworthy than God. Ask God to help you remember to rely on Him more than anything or anyone else.

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HEAD

THE GIFTS OF GOD'S POWER

God empowers His people to carry out His mission.



HEART

JESUS CONNECTION

When Elisha became God's prophet after Elijah, he asked for the same spirit that was in Elijah to be given to him. God granted Elisha's request and revealed His presence through a miracle. Years later when Jesus prepared His followers to begin their ministry, He instructed them to wait for the Holy Spirit, who came upon them and confirmed His presence in miraculous ways.



HANDS

LIFEWISE QUALITY

WHOLEHEARTEDNESS – Complete dedication in everything I do.

BIBLE REVIEW

MSL 27 The Pictures of Authority | 1–2 Min

In the previous lesson, God showed the people that He was the one true God by withholding rain for over three years.

- ◆ How did God provide for Elijah during the drought? (*God sent a raven to feed Elijah twice a day, and then sent Elijah to a widow at Zarephath and provided oil and flour until the rain came.*)
- ◆ How did God show the people of Israel that He was the one true God? (*He withheld rain for over three years, sent fire from Heaven to burn up the sacrifice and sent rain after the people confessed Him as God.*)

Today, we will learn about the prophet Elisha. God called Elisha to assist Elijah in his ministry to the people of Israel.

SESSION STARTERS

All In | 5–10 Min

- ◆ Form three or four small groups. Choose one person from each group who will be that group's candidate for class council. Challenge each group to come up with 3–5 slogans, ideas or reasons they could use to convince the rest of the class to vote for their candidate. Have each group present their candidate and their ideas to the class. If there is time, take a mock vote and see which candidate would win.
- ◆ When we vote for someone, we can't cast half-votes. We have to throw our whole support to one person. What makes us want to go all in for a person or a cause? Is going all in a good or bad thing?

Why? In today's lesson, we'll meet Elisha, who was fully committed to being God's prophet after Elijah.

What's Missing? | 5–10 Min

- ♦ Set 10–15 small objects on a tray or table at the front of the room and cover with a cloth. Give the students one minute to look at the tray before covering it again. Have them turn away or cover their eyes and remove one item from the tray. Give them 30 more seconds to look at the tray and guess which item is missing. Play multiple rounds as time allows.
- ♦ We've all lost things (remote controls, our keys or phone or a person in a crowded room). How does it feel not to be able to find something that is important to you? In today's story, we'll learn about the day that Elisha first met Elijah and became his assistant. We'll also learn about their last day together and how Elisha took Elijah's place as God's prophet.

BIBLE STORY: THE GIFTS OF GOD'S POWER | 10–20 Min

Summarize 1 Kings 19:1–20.

After Elijah destroyed the false prophets of Baal, King Ahab's wife, Jezebel, who worshiped Baal, learned what happened and threatened to have Elijah killed. Elijah was so afraid that he ran into the wilderness and then to Mount Sinai (around 250 miles away). God spoke to Elijah there and told him to appoint Jehu as the new king over Israel and Elisha to assist Elijah as a prophet of the Lord. God assured Elijah that his circumstances were about to change for the better.

1 Kings 19:19–21.

Elisha was a wealthy farmer (v. 19) whose name means "God saves." Elijah found Elisha plowing a field and put his cloak on Elisha, anointing him to serve the Lord as a prophet (1 Kings 19:16) and showing a transfer of God's miraculous power from Elijah to Elisha.

Elisha immediately took steps to follow God's call. Elisha said goodbye to his family and destroyed his oxen and the yoke, his only way of making a living. He publicly proclaimed that he would follow God's call by inviting people to eat the cooked meat from his oxen. Then, Elisha left and became Elijah's assistant.

Summary of 2 Kings 2:1–5.

Some time later, God told Elijah that He would take him to Heaven in a whirlwind. Elijah went from place to place (Bethel, Jericho, the Jordan), trying to leave Elisha at each one. In all three towns, there was a community of prophets who served the Lord. The prophets all affirmed that Elijah would be taken from Elisha on that very day, but Elisha would not allow Elijah to leave him behind.

2 Kings 2:6–12a.

Elijah and Elisha traveled to the Jordan River, and Elijah parted the water with his cloak as 50 prophets watched from a distance. Elijah and Elisha went across the Jordan on dry land. Once they crossed, Elisha asked for a double portion of Elijah's spirit. Elisha wasn't just asking for a double portion of power, but to live as though he was Elijah's firstborn son and multiply Elijah's work for God. Elijah promised that Elisha would have this double portion if he saw Elijah when he was taken to Heaven. Suddenly, chariots and horses of fire separated Elijah from Elisha and God took Elijah to Heaven in a whirlwind.

2 Kings 2:12b–15.

Elisha tore his clothes in two to show signs of grief over losing his mentor and commitment to continuing Elijah's ministry. Only Elijah's cloak remained. **Elisha** took the cloak back to the Jordan River and **asked where Elijah's God was**—the God who caused drought, brought fire from the sky, raised the dead and took Elijah to Heaven. He wanted to know if the Lord was still present.

When Elisha struck the river with Elijah's cloak and it parted, he saw that the Lord was still with him, even though Elijah was not. The 50 prophets who witnessed Elijah and Elisha cross the Jordan River saw Elisha part the river. They understood that God's powerful spirit now rested on Elisha. **God's Spirit would give Elisha the zeal to finish what Elijah started: ridding His people of idol worship.**

Big Ideas

- ♦ **God wants us to be fully committed to following Him.** When Elijah found Elisha, Elisha destroyed anything that might keep him from following God's call to be a prophet. He also refused to leave Elijah—even when Elijah told him to stay behind—because God had appointed him to assist Elijah. Elisha's call to follow Elijah is similar to Jesus' call to His followers: "If anyone wants to follow after me, let him deny himself, take up his cross daily and follow me" (Lk. 9:23). Following God's plan comes at a cost. To take up one's cross means to identify with and be willing to experience the suffering of Jesus.
- ♦ **God uses His people to mentor and train others.** God called Elijah to be His prophet and begin cleansing the land of idolatry, and Elijah did everything God asked of him. Before Elijah was taken to Heaven, God instructed Elijah to mentor Elisha into his ministry. Because of the training he received from Elijah, Elisha was prepared when he was called to finish God's plan. In the same way, Jesus lived with and trained His disciples so that they would be equipped to spread His gospel after His resurrection, and God calls us to share and mentor others so they can know God, too.
- ♦ **God authenticated Elijah's and Elisha's ministry with miracles.** Throughout the Bible, God confirmed that a message came from Him by empowering the messengers to perform miracles. God gave Elijah and Elisha the same message for His people: repent from worshiping idols and worship God alone. To verify that God had sent them and that their message was true, God also gave them the power to perform miracles, many of which are recorded in Scripture. This pattern can also be seen in Moses and the prophets in the Old Testament and Jesus and the apostles in the New Testament.

Discussion Questions

- ♦ In what ways was Elisha's commitment to Elijah wholehearted? In what ways was Elisha's commitment to God wholehearted?
- ♦ What can keep us from following God wholeheartedly?
- ♦ After Elijah was taken into Heaven, Elisha parted the Jordan river as a "test" to see if God's power truly rested on him. Why was it important that God's power had been given to him? How would living out God's call have been different if Elisha did not have God's power resting on him?
- ♦ Elijah had been Elisha's mentor. A mentor is someone with more experience and wisdom who can guide us as we grow and mature. Think of some examples of mentors in today's culture. What kind of person makes a good mentor?

- ♦ Many people wholeheartedly follow social media influencers or celebrities. What does that look like? Is it wise or beneficial to follow other people that way? How would you know if you are more wholeheartedly committed to a famous person than to God?

REINFORCEMENT ACTIVITIES

Suggested Video | 5–10 Min

BibleProject Video: *Meod/Strength*; Full video: 4:13.

Tennis Ball Distractions | 5–10 Min

- ♦ Before class, gather 3–4 tennis balls. Write GOD in a permanent marker on one of the balls. Invite a student to try bouncing the ball marked GOD on the floor or tabletop. One by one, add the remaining tennis balls and see how many the student can bounce at the same time without failing to bounce the GOD ball. Allow other students to try as time permits.
 - ◇ Why was it easiest to bounce only the first ball?
 - ◇ Why is it harder to bounce more than one?
- ♦ It's easy to stay focused on something when there's nothing else to pay attention to. But it's much harder to keep that focus going when we are distracted by other things. We all have many things that are important to us, but not all of those things are equally important. It's easy to let lots of little things distract us from the most important things, and that is especially true when it comes to following God wholeheartedly. What things do you think distract us from what is most important? How can we keep our focus on the main thing (God) even when we're busy?



JESUS CONNECTION



When Elisha became God's prophet after Elijah, he asked for the same spirit that was in Elijah to be given to him. God granted Elisha's request and revealed His presence through a miracle. Years later when Jesus prepared His followers to begin their ministry, He instructed them to wait for the Holy Spirit, who came upon them and confirmed His presence in miraculous ways.



LIFEWISE QUALITY | 3–5 Min

WHOLEHEARTEDNESS – Complete dedication in everything I do.

Living LifeWise

Because of Jesus' death and resurrection, we can choose to live wholeheartedly for Him.

LWQ Script

To be wholehearted, we have to recognize what is most important and pursue it. Someone who is wholehearted has only one central priority. He won't be split between two (or more) things that compete

for rule over his life. For Elisha, God was that ultimate value. From day one, Elisha gave up everything that might compete with his service to God. But living wholeheartedly isn't easy.

We all have many good things that seek to pull our attention from God. But God is our good and perfect King. He designed us to live in wholehearted connection with Him. Because Jesus died and rose again, we can live out that design. His Spirit will help us live wholeheartedly, convicting us about what we love or live for more than God and giving up anything that competes with God in our lives.

Head, Heart, Hands Reinforcement | In-class or take-home

◆ Head Questions

- ◇ What did Elisha give up in order to demonstrate he would wholeheartedly follow Elijah?
- ◇ When Elijah told Elisha to stay while he went to the Jordan river, how did Elisha continue to show his dedication to Elijah?

◆ Heart Questions

- ◇ Which of these tasks and activities do you do or would do wholeheartedly?
 - Homework
 - Plan a surprise party for your friend
 - Serve in the preschool ministry at church
 - Mow the lawn
 - Practice your sport or instrument
- ◇ Why are some of those activities easier to do with all your heart than others?
- ◇ Elisha didn't know exactly what was in store for him when he immediately followed Elijah. Do you think knowing the outcome makes it easier to go all in on something? Explain.

◆ Hands Challenge

- ◇ Elisha followed Elijah with his whole heart because he wanted to serve God. Think of one thing you could give up in order to be more wholehearted in following God. (*Examples: social media, an unhealthy relationship, video games, etc.*). Commit to letting go of one of your distractions and use the extra time and space to learn more about who God is and how to follow Him.

EXTENDED LESSON RESOURCES

Bible Commentary for the Teacher

The life of Elijah and Elisha both point us back and forward to God's deliverance of His people:

- ◆ **Elijah's ministry points us back to Moses.** Both prophets fasted for 40 days: Moses as he received God's law and Elijah as he traveled to the Mountain of God (Ex. 24:18; 1 Kings 18:8). Both men saw God's glory on Mount Sinai and did mighty miracles to demonstrate God's power and authority (i.e., providing food, parting a body of water). Both left behind disciples to take up the work after calling Israel to covenant faithfulness.
- ◆ **Elisha's work points us back to Joshua.** Both Joshua and Elisha continued the work of their mentor, and both had names that mean "God saves." God parted the Jordan River for both men so they could destroy Canaanite idol worship, which God also called Joshua to do as he entered the Promised Land. Like Joshua, Elisha was wholeheartedly committed to following God's call.
- ◆ **Elijah points us forward to John the Baptist.** John wore the same clothes made of camel hair that Elijah did. John the Baptist also cried out for God's people to repent from their sins and turn to

God. He also anointed his successor, Jesus, at the Jordan River through baptism. God continued to send messengers to call Israel to faithfulness and to unfold His plan for the salvation of His people.

- ♦ **Elisha points us forward to Jesus.** Elisha asked for a double portion of Elijah's power, representing the blessing given to a firstborn son (Gen. 27). Jesus is God the Son and is called the firstborn of creation (Rom. 8:29; Col 1:15, 18; Rev. 1:5). Elisha and Jesus performed many similar miracles (healing a leper, raising a dead boy back to life and providing food) to validate their role as God's messenger. And Elisha's name means "God saves," pointing to Jesus whose atoning sacrifice on the cross provides salvation for all humanity.

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THE GIFTS OF GOD'S POWER

God empowers His people to carry out His mission.

JESUS CONNECTION



When Elisha became God's prophet after Elijah, he asked for the same spirit that was in Elijah to be given to him. God granted Elisha's request and revealed His presence through a miracle. Years later when Jesus prepared His followers to begin their ministry, He instructed them to wait for the Holy Spirit, who came upon them and confirmed His presence in miraculous ways.



LIFEWISE QUALITY

WHOLEHEARTEDNESS – Complete dedication in everything I do.



HEAD

What did Elisha give up in order to demonstrate he would wholeheartedly follow Elijah?

When Elijah told Elisha to stay while he went to the Jordan river, how did Elisha continue to show his dedication to Elijah?



HEART

Which of these tasks and activities do you do or would do wholeheartedly?

- ◆ Homework
- ◆ Plan a surprise party for your friend
- ◆ Serve in the preschool ministry at church
- ◆ Mow the lawn
- ◆ Practice your sport or instrument

Why are some of those activities easier to do with all your heart than others?

Elisha didn't know exactly what was in store for him when he immediately followed Elijah. Do you think knowing the outcome makes it easier to go all in on something? Explain.



HANDS

Elisha followed Elijah with his whole heart because he wanted to serve God. Think of one thing you could give up in order to be more wholehearted in following God. (*Examples:* social media, an unhealthy relationship, video games, etc.). Commit to letting go of one of your distractions and use the extra time and space to learn more about who God is and how to follow Him.



HEAD

THE VISION OF GOD'S STRENGTH

Only God can open our eyes to see spiritual realities.



HEART

JESUS CONNECTION

Elisha prayed for the eyes of others to be opened so they could see God at work around them. Likewise, Jesus came to give sight to the blind—physically and spiritually—so that they could see that He is Immanuel, God with us.



HANDS

LIFEWISE QUALITY

KINDNESS – Being considerate, generous and compassionate towards others.

BIBLE REVIEW

MSL 28 The Gifts of God's Power | 1–2 Min

In the previous lesson, God appointed the prophet Elisha to learn from Elijah and continue his ministry.

- ◆ How did Elijah show he was fully committed to following God? (*He killed and burned his oxen and yoke and said goodbye to his family.*)
- ◆ How did God demonstrate that both Elijah and Elisha were His messengers? (*He gave them the ability to do miracles.*)

Today, we will learn about how God used Elisha to deliver the Israelites from the king of Aram and his army.

SESSION STARTERS

Blind Man's Bluff | 5–10 Min

- ◆ This game requires a large open area or outside space. Split the class into two or more teams. Provide a different small ball (golf ball, ping pong ball, tennis ball) for each team, and have each team choose one volunteer to find their team's ball and bring it back to them. Place the student volunteers in a group at the center of the space and blindfold them. Place each team's ball somewhere on the floor. When you say go, the volunteers may begin looking. The only guide they can have is to listen to their teammates giving them instructions on where to go. Whoever gets the ball to their team first wins.
- ◆ After the game, allow students to share what made the game difficult or what would've made it easier. In today's lesson, blindness is a repeated theme. God has the power to cause blindness and open people's eyes, both to physical reality and spiritual truth.

Kindness Ninja Warrior| 5–10 Min

- ♦ Before class, gather one shoe with laces, plastic tableware, a stack of books and 10–12 sheets of paper crumpled into balls. Set up an “obstacle course” with each of the items as a station. The shoe should be untied. The books should be spread around on the table or floor, the plastic dinnerware dumped out and the paper balls scattered. Challenge students to clean up all the messes as fast as they can. The fastest time to complete all four stations wins. Allow other students to mess it up again each time, if desired. Play as many rounds as time allows.
- ♦ None of today’s stations should have been very hard to do. But how likely would it be for you to do those same actions if it wasn’t a race? Would you tie someone’s shoe so they wouldn’t trip? Would you clean up the dinner dishes without being asked? Do you walk by trash or piles of books or toys without even thinking about putting them away? We aren’t always intentional about being kind or going out of our way to help someone else. But in today’s lesson, we will see how God is actively being kind all the time, even to His enemies.

BIBLE LESSON: THE VISION OF GOD’S STRENGTH | 10–20 Min

2 Kings 6:8–16.

Ben-hadad, the king of Aram, was determined to attack Israel’s army, yet God caused his plan to fail several times. God sent messages to Jehoram, King of Israel, through Elisha to warn him of Aram’s plans. Ben-hadad was angry that Jehoram knew about his plans and accused his people of spying for Israel. When Ben-hadad found out that Elisha was warning Jehoram, he made plans to capture Elisha.

The Aramean army marched to the city of Dothan at night. When Elisha’s servant woke up and saw that they were surrounded, he immediately despaired. He was focused on what his eyes could see physically. Rather than looking at this impossible situation, **Elisha focused on God’s power and ability to save them** from the Arameans, **assuring his servant, “Don’t be afraid, for those who are with us outnumber those who are with them”** (2 Kings 6:16).

2 Kings 6:17–20.

Elisha saw what his assistant could not see and he prayed that God would allow his servant to see it too. God opened the eyes of his servant to see God’s army, horses and chariots of fire surrounding Elisha, so that he might embrace the reality of God’s protection.

Although **Elisha** prayed for God to open his servant’s eyes, he **also prayed that God would close the eyes of the Aramean soldiers. God struck the Arameans with blindness.** In a humorous turn of events, Elisha assured the enemy that they would find the person they were looking for—which ironically was himself—and then took them on a 10-mile journey to Samaria. **After they reached Samaria, Elisha prayed that God would open their eyes, and they realized that they had been led straight to Israel’s army.**

2 Kings 6:21–23.

When Jehoram saw the Arameans, he was ready to attack them but humbly asked Elisha what should be done. Elisha compared them with captives taken in a battle and instructed the king to feed them and send them home. Jehoram did as Elisha said—he prepared a great feast for his enemies. God humbled the Arameans greatly that day, and Ben-hadad did not return to attack Israel for some time.

Big Ideas

- ◆ **“God resists the proud but gives grace to the humble” (Jas 4:6).** Ben-hadad was determined to attack Israel, even though he knew God was with Elisha and Israel. Ben-hadad proudly believed his plans could not fail, but he opposed the King of all the earth and his plans were brought to nothing (Ps. 2:1–4). In contrast, Jehoram showed humility in taking Elisha’s advice and placing a feast before his enemies when he would rather kill them. God graciously fought for Israel and won the battle without a single casualty.
- ◆ **Without God, we are spiritually blind.** Elisha’s servant could only see the physical danger in front of him. It took God’s power to open his eyes to the unseen spiritual reality of God’s army. The power of sin and Satan keeps us blind to the truth of God’s good character, plan and Word (2 Cor. 4:3–4; Acts 28:26–27). We cannot understand or accept Jesus’ identity, work and teachings without God’s intervention (1 Cor. 2:14).
- ◆ **God can take away our spiritual blindness and open our eyes to the truth.** Ben-hadad was spiritually blinded by pride in himself and his plans, so God turned the king’s plan on its head. He blinded the Aramean army so they would be easily trapped by Elisha, the man they had actually come to capture. The soldiers remained blind until God removed their physical blindness so they could see that they were captured. And the Lord graciously dealt with their spiritual blindness through Elisha’s kindness to them. This kindness was meant to open Ben-hadad’s eyes to the truth that God was the one true God.

Discussion Questions

- ◆ What was your first reaction to the story of God opening the eyes of Elisha’s servant? Did you find it funny? Awesome? Another reaction?
- ◆ What do we mean when we say that something “opened my eyes”? Is that a good or bad thing? Do you think God is still willing to “open our eyes” to what He’s doing?
- ◆ What can we learn about God’s character based on His treatment of Israel’s enemies?
- ◆ What does Ben-hadad’s refusal to submit to God despite God’s kindness reveal about the king’s heart and character?

REINFORCEMENT ACTIVITIES

Suggested Video | 5–10 Min

BibleProject Video: *Ahava/Love*; Full video: 3:50.

Suggested Visual Aid | 5 Min.

Poster 11: *Divided Kingdom*

Kindness Drawings | 5–10 Min

- ◆ Allow students to work in pairs or individually. Give each student or pair a piece of paper and provide markers, crayons or colored pencils for them to use. Have the students draw a line down the middle of the paper. On one side of the paper, they will draw a scene from today’s story where kindness was shown. On the other side of the paper, have them think of and draw a picture of what kindness can look like today (at home or school, etc.) Give them a few minutes to complete their drawings. Allow any who would like to share their drawings to present them to the class.

- ♦ God showed many people kindness in our story today—from servants to kings to enemy armies—and He still calls us to show kindness as well (Eph. 4:32). What does it mean to show kindness to someone else? What keeps us from showing kindness? How can knowing God loves to show kindness encourage us to be kind, even when we don't feel like it?

JESUS CONNECTION



Elisha prayed for the eyes of others to be opened so they could see God at work around them. Likewise, Jesus came to give sight to the blind—physically and spiritually—so that they could see that He is Immanuel, God with us.

LIFEWISE QUALITY | 3–5 Min

KINDNESS – Being considerate, generous and compassionate towards others.

Living LifeWise

Because God is kind to us, we can choose to treat all people with kindness.

LWQ Script

We know that kindness is good. We even enjoy doing random acts of kindness. But often, we treat kindness as a reward for those who are for us or are like us (family or friends) or who at least aren't against us (like random strangers). But God's kindness isn't limited that way. He was kind to a lowly servant, to His prophet, to the king of Israel, and even to His people's enemies.

God's kindness looks like generosity, abundance and real concern for every individual. It is visible all through the Bible, but especially on the cross, where Jesus Himself gave His life for us, and the resurrection, where life overwhelmed death completely in Him. Like Elisha reminded the king of Israel, that's the same way God wants us to treat others, too. His Spirit will move and enable us to respond kindly, even to our enemies, so that His kindness reaches even more people.

Head, Heart, Hands Reinforcement | In-class or take-home

- ♦ **Head Questions**
 - ◇ How did God protect Elisha when the Aramean king sent his army to capture him?
 - ◇ After the Aramean army was captured and brought to the king of Israel, the king asked Elisha if he should kill them. How did Elisha respond?
- ♦ **Heart Questions**
 - ◇ We see God's kindness toward Israel's enemies in this passage. Since God is kind to people who do not deserve it, we can also be kind to our enemies. What is one way you could show kindness to someone who is in one of your classes and continually tries to get you in trouble? How would they react if you did this?
 - ◇ Do you consider kindness to be powerful or weak? Explain.

♦ Hands Challenge

- ♦ Many times, God shows us kindness when we do not expect it. He will provide what we need, protect us, heal us or give us unexpected blessings. Think of a person in your school, family or community who showed you kindness when you did not deserve or expect it. Write them a letter thanking them for what they did for you. Let them know how it made you feel and what kind of impact it had on you to do the same for others. Send or deliver the letter.

EXTENDED LESSON RESOURCES

Bible Commentary for the Teacher

The account of Elisha and the Aramean army shows us the blessing that confidence in God brings and the consequences that sin brings.

- ♦ **God is stronger than anything we face (2 Kings 6:8–17).** God revealed Ben-hadad's plans to Elisha, who, in turn, warned Jehoram. If Elisha knew all the king's plans, he may have known of the army coming to arrest him. But he was not disturbed and remained calmly in Dothan. Elisha knew that God's army was not only more in number, but also more powerful than the Aramean forces. The Lord's army was there not to fight for the whole of Israel but specifically for Elisha and his servant. Elisha understood the truth "if God is for us, who can be against us?" (Rom. 8:31).¹
- ♦ **Sin keeps us from remembering God's grace (2 Kings 6:21–24).** There is no contradiction between this account and what follows it. Since God's lessons fell on hardened hearts, it was inevitable that war would be resumed. However, the miraculous capture and release of the Aramean army produced a brief period of peace between the weakened Israelites and the powerful Arameans.
- ♦ **Sin hardens us to God's grace.** Despite all the evidence of God's grace to Aram, Ben-hadad hardened his heart against God. God humbled this king, fed his army, spared their lives and extended mercy, yet Ben-hadad refused to bow his knee to the Lord. In the very next account (2 Kings 6:24–7:15), Ben-hadad again attacked Israel, and God defeated his army and provided the spoils to His people without a battle. This serves as a great warning to all: do not harden your heart against God.

In Defense

Some worldviews claim that the physical world is all there is—nothing immaterial or spiritual exists. The Christian worldview teaches the opposite. In addition to the physical world of matter, there also exists a spiritual reality containing immaterial beings that are just as real and present as the physical world. It doesn't take much to recognize the truth of these two different planes to reality; there are plenty of things that we know to be immaterial in essence. Our thoughts are one example. Our physical brains are a part of this process, but the thoughts and ideas we have aren't physical. They cannot be seen, measured or studied in any physical way. This is the kind of world God created, consisting of both physical and immaterial. God Himself exists as Spirit (John 4:24).

¹Musa Gotom, "1 and 2 Kings," Africa Bible Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2006), 449.

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THE VISION OF GOD'S STRENGTH

Only God can open our eyes to see spiritual realities.

JESUS CONNECTION



Elisha prayed for the eyes of others to be opened so they could see God at work around them. Likewise, Jesus came to give sight to the blind—physically and spiritually—so that they could see that He is Immanuel—God with us.



LIFEWISE QUALITY

KINDNESS – Being considerate, generous and compassionate towards others.



HEAD

How did God protect Elisha when the Aramean king sent his army to capture him?

After the Aramean army was captured and brought to the king of Israel, the king asked Elisha if he should kill them. How did Elisha respond?



HEART

We see God's kindness toward Israel's enemies in this passage. Since God is kind to people who do not deserve it, we can also be kind to our enemies. What is one way you could show kindness to someone who is in one of your classes and continually tries to get you in trouble? How would they react if you did this?

Do you consider kindness to be powerful or weak? Explain.



HANDS

Many times, God shows us kindness when we do not expect it. He will provide what we need, protect us, heal us or give us unexpected blessings. Think of a person in your school, family or community who showed you kindness when you did not deserve or expect it. Write them a letter thanking them for what they did for you. Let them know how it made you feel and what kind of impact it had on you to do the same for others. Send or deliver the letter.



HEAD

A REBELLIOUS PEOPLE RECEIVE MERCY

God's grace can extend to even those we consider enemies.



HEART

JESUS CONNECTION

Jonah was a prophet who rejected God's call, ran from his enemies and eventually obeyed grudgingly. Jesus followed God's call, loved His enemies and obeyed joyfully (Hebrews 12:2). While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.



HANDS

LIFEWISE QUALITY

COMPASSION – Recognizing the suffering of others and taking action to help.

BIBLE REVIEW

MSL 29 The Vision of God's Strength | 1–2 Min

In the previous lesson, God delivered Israel from the king of Aram.

- ◆ How did God protect Elisha and Israel? (*He warned them of the Arameans' plans, sent His army to protect Elisha and blinded the Aramean soldiers.*)
- ◆ How did God show kindness to the Arameans? (*He ordered Jehoram to provide food for them and send them home to Aram without punishment.*)

Today, we will learn about God calling the prophet Jonah to warn the people of Nineveh to repent from their sin.

SESSION STARTERS

The Walking Worm | 5–10 Min

- ◆ Before class, preview the video link on how to make an [origami walking worm](#) and gather the necessary supplies (strips of paper, scissors, markers, straws). During class, demonstrate how to make the worm so the students can make their own. Leave time for them to try to make their worms "walk."
- ◆ Most people know the story of Jonah and the whale, but did you know that, at the end of his story, Jonah also meets a worm? We often think Jonah's story is about being careful to obey God, and that is important, but God used the worm to teach Jonah about compassion. Let's find out more.

Doing the Opposite | 5–10 Min

- ◆ Have the students stand at their seats, leaving space to move around. Call out a series of commands (squat down, take two steps left, raise your right hand, etc.), but challenge the students to do the opposite of what you say. Any student who forgets to do the opposite is out. Play until only one student remains. Play more rounds as time allows.

- ♦ Have you ever done the opposite of what your parent or teacher said to do? What tends to happen when we respond that way? In today's story, we'll meet an unusual prophet who did the opposite of what God told him to do and wanted the opposite of what God wanted. His name is Jonah.

BIBLE LESSON: A REBELLIOUS PEOPLE RECEIVE MERCY | 10–20 Min

Jonah 1:1–4.

When God called Jonah to warn the people of Nineveh, he ran from God. Jonah boarded a ship sailing in the opposite direction. He would rather leave his home and sail to the edge of the known world than give his enemies a chance to escape God's punishment. The Assyrians were known as merciless and evil, and Jonah refused to allow them to experience God's mercy.

Jonah could not see that his condition before God was the same as the Assyrians. Both Jonah and the Assyrians were sinners who had offended a holy God. Even though both had rebelled against God, God pursued them out of love. God sent a storm after Jonah to open his eyes.

Summary of Jonah 1:5–16.

In the midst of the storm, Jonah lay fast asleep, completely unaware of the violent storm threatening the lives of the entire crew. In contrast, the sailors' eyes were wide open. Although they did not even know God, they were positive this storm had a supernatural cause. After questioning Jonah and learning that Jonah had rebelled against God, they became very afraid.

Jonah told them to throw him into the sea, and the storm would end, but the sailors feared that they might be further punished by Jonah's God. They rowed hard in an attempt to get the ship back to land, but the storm grew worse. They finally prayed that God would not consider them guilty for listening to Jonah's instructions and threw him into the sea. As soon as they threw Jonah overboard, the storm ended, and the sea became calm. When the sailors saw this, they feared God and worshiped him.

Jonah 1:17.

Jonah deserved to die for rebelling against God, and God could have allowed him to die in the sea. But, God showed mercy and commanded a fish to swallow Jonah. For three days, Jonah lived in foul, slimy darkness alone with his sin. God disciplined Jonah because He loved him. Jonah thanked God for saving him and repented of his sin.

Jonah 2:10–3:5, 10.

God gave Jonah a second chance. He commanded the fish to spit Jonah onto dry land and told him to go to Nineveh and give them God's message. God and His command had not changed; instead, God wanted Jonah's heart to change.

Jonah went throughout Nineveh and announced that God would punish the people in 40 days unless they repent of sin. The people of Nineveh believed God's message. The king even dressed in sackcloth, the clothes used for mourning, and commanded his people to do the same. He proclaimed a fast for all people and animals and urged the people to repent of their sins (Jonah 3:6–8). When God saw the people's repentance, He showed mercy and withheld the punishment that He had threatened to bring on them.

Summary of Jonah 4:1–7.

Personally experiencing God's forgiveness and mercy should have opened Jonah's eyes, but it didn't.

Jonah obeyed God by delivering God's message to the people of Nineveh, but his heart was still hardened by unforgiveness. Jonah finally told God his reason for running away, confessing, "I knew that you are a gracious and compassionate God, slow to anger, abounding in faithful love, and one who relents from sending disaster" (Jonah 4:2b). Jonah knew it was just like God to show mercy and spare the Ninevites. **Jonah was so upset that the Ninevites had repented from sin that he told God he would rather die than live.**

God asked Jonah if it was right for him to be angry, but Jonah said nothing. Instead, he **left the city, made a shelter and waited patiently outside Nineveh to see if God would punish the people** at the end of the 40 days. God wanted more from Jonah than just obedience. He wanted Jonah's heart to be emptied of sin and filled with God's love. So **the Lord pursued Jonah and taught him about His kind of love using a plant.**

The Lord caused a plant to grow up and shade Jonah from the heat, and Jonah was thankful for the plant. The next day, God sent a worm to eat the plant and the plant withered. When the sun rose, God sent a hot wind and the sun beat down on Jonah so that he felt faint and prayed that he might die.

Jonah 4:8–11.

God confronted Jonah with the ugly truth: Jonah cared more about a plant that he did not grow than 120,000 people who were unaware of their sin. God insisted that these lost people were more important. The account of Jonah leaves us with unresolved tension: We don't know if Jonah chose to repent and turn from unforgiveness or whether he continued in his sin.

Big Ideas

- ♦ **We cannot change God's plan.** Jonah knew that God would show mercy to the Ninevites if they repented, so he refused to go along with God's plan. He thought if he disappeared, God's plan would not be accomplished. God pursued Jonah and accomplished His plan anyway. Nothing can stop God's perfect plan (Ps. 33:11).
- ♦ **God is slow to anger and quick to forgive (Jonah 4:2).** In Exodus 34:6–7, God told Moses exactly who He is, and Jonah recites God's own description back to Him here. And God did exactly as Jonah expected. Although both Jonah and Nineveh rightly deserved immediate destruction for their sin, God withheld His judgment, giving both of them time to repent.
- ♦ **God pursues rebellious sinners.** The account of Jonah demonstrates God's unwavering pursuit of both Jonah and the Ninevites. Even the sailors on the ship feared God after seeing His great power and worshiped Him. God does not wait for us to find our way out of sin and reach Him. He pursued Jonah back then and still pursues us by sending His only Son to us (Luke 19:10; 1 Tim 1:15).

Discussion Questions

- ♦ Jonah believed that he had good reasons for his disobedience. Have you ever thought there was a good reason for doing something wrong? Is it ever okay to justify our sin?
- ♦ Have you ever failed at something and been given a second chance? How did this change your perspective on the one who gave you another chance or on yourself?

- ◆ Do you think it was difficult for Jonah to find himself in need of the same repentance God sought from the Ninevites? Why or why not?
- ◆ What does this story teach us about God's response to sin? Why should God's character displayed here comfort us?
- ◆ By running away, Jonah revealed that his heart and priorities were not aligned with God's. What areas of our lives would show whether or not our hearts and priorities align with God's? How would you know if they did or didn't?

REINFORCEMENT ACTIVITIES

Suggested Video | 5–10 Min

BibleProject Video: *Jonah*; Full Video: 9:00.

Suggested Visual Aid | 5 Min.

Poster 13: *Prophets*

Poster 16: *God's Compassion*

Never Gonna Give You Up | 5–10 Min

- ◆ Form groups of two or three students and provide paper and pencil for each group. Have them divide the paper in half. At the top of the paper, they should write, "I'm giving up on you" on one half and "I'll never give up on you" on the other half. Ask them to brainstorm 3–5 situations (from real life or a movie/book) where someone might say each phrase. Allow them to read their lists out loud if they are willing.
- ◆ Discuss with the class:
 - ◇ Why do people give up on each other? What might move someone not to give up?
 - ◇ Based on Jonah's story, does God give up on us? How do you know?
 - ◇ How far was God willing to go to pursue the Ninevites and Jonah? How far is He willing to go to pursue us?
 - ◇ Is God's willingness to pursue us, instead of giving up, encouraging to you? Why?

JESUS CONNECTION



Jonah was a prophet who rejected God's call, ran from his enemies and eventually obeyed grudgingly. Jesus followed God's call, loved His enemies and obeyed joyfully (Hebrews 12:2). While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

LIFEWISE QUALITY | 3–5 Min

COMPASSION – Recognizing the suffering of others and taking action to help.

Living LifeWise

Because God loves us, we can choose to respond to others with compassion.

LWQ Script

God had a right to be angry over Nineveh's sin, but in His compassion, He sent Jonah to them. God was displeased by Jonah's sin, but He mercifully sent the fish to swallow him. Jonah, on the other hand, held rigidly to his anger, toward both God and Nineveh, and as a result, he showed compassion to no one except himself.

God alone has the right to be angry over sin, but He graciously withholds judgment, offering everyone a chance to repent. We see this in Jonah's story and Jesus, who looked down from the cross at those who falsely accused Him and asked God to forgive them (Luke 23:34). The Holy Spirit works in our hearts so that, because of God's love and forgiveness, we can willingly put away anger and choose compassion for others, just as Jesus did.

Head, Heart, Hands Reinforcement | In-class or take-home

- ◆ **Head Questions**
 - ◇ List everyone to whom God demonstrated compassion in the story of Jonah.
 - ◇ How did Jonah show a lack of compassion to those same people?
- ◆ **Heart Questions**
 - ◇ God is merciful and shows compassion even when we don't deserve it. Is compassion easy for you to share or do you tend to want to reserve it for those you think "deserve" it?
 - ◇ Why might recognizing God's compassion for us make it easier to show compassion to others?
- ◆ **Hands Challenge**
 - ◇ Compassion means seeing suffering and doing what you can to help. But suffering isn't always big and obvious. Think about the people in your family, school or community who might be hurting in small ways and brainstorm ways you can help them. Commit to acting on those ideas this week.

EXTENDED LESSON RESOURCES

Bible Commentary for the Teacher

- ◆ **God forgives all sin, no matter how great (Jonah 3:10).** Nineveh was known for its vicious and violent ways. The Assyrians had killed many Israelites and were the Israelites' sworn enemy. But Jonah also sinned by rebelling against God's direct command. His "small" sin required repentance, just like Nineveh's "big" sins. No one can claim that they aren't *that bad*. Instead, we all need God's forgiveness, and because of Jesus, we can be forgiven of all our sins.
- ◆ **God is sovereign over creation (Jonah 4:8–11).** When Jonah fled, God hurled a storm upon the sea that tossed the ship so that it could no longer sail. While Jonah was sinking in the ocean, God caused a fish to swim over to Jonah and swallow him. He wasn't chewed or digested but remained alive for three days and nights until God commanded the fish to vomit him on a beach. God raised up a plant and provided shade for Jonah, sent the worm to kill the plant and caused a hot wind to blow on Jonah. All of creation is subject to God's power and authority (Is. 45:7–9; Job 42:2).

- ◆ **God is more concerned with our character than our reputation (Jonah 4:4, 6–11).** Jonah knew that obeying God might be dangerous to his well-being and his reputation as the prophet of Israel. What would the Israelites say if they knew Jonah went to extend grace to a people who had killed their fathers and children? God, however, was not concerned about any of this. God was much more interested in Jonah's lack of compassion for lost people.
- ◆ **God foretold future deliverance through Jonah (Luke 11:29–32).** God appointed another messenger to come to God's enemies and preach repentance. Someone better than Jonah came and declared God's message of repentance and forgiveness. Jesus followed God's plan completely, though it cost Him His life. He was also swallowed up for three days and three nights, not by a fish, but by death. Then, He rose again in victory and freely gives forgiveness of sins to all who repent and believe.

In Defense

Lots of people, upon reading or hearing the book of Jonah, debate the likelihood of the particular details of the story—mainly of Jonah being swallowed by a great fish and being kept alive during that time. Some believe the story of Jonah is actually a true, historic account of the prophet, while others claim it is an allegory or parable used to illustrate biblical truth. While we can't solve the debate here, we should consider two important ideas. First, we can't reject the historic nature of these events solely on the grounds that miracles don't happen. There are many reasons to believe in the existence of miracles in light of the Christian worldview and the historic record preserved in the Bible. To say these things *can't* take place is a much stronger claim than saying they *didn't* take place, although either claim still requires a tremendous amount of support to uphold. Second, Jesus believed that Jonah was a historic figure who lived out these historic events (Matt. 12:39–41). It is Jesus who makes the connection between the physical experience of Jonah inside the fish and His own imminent experience of being inside the tomb for three days and nights. Many argue that such a connection only makes sense if Jonah's experience was real history.

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A REBELLIOUS PEOPLE RECEIVE MERCY

God's grace can extend to even those we consider enemies.



JESUS CONNECTION

Jonah was a prophet who rejected God's call, ran from his enemies and eventually obeyed grudgingly. Jesus followed God's call, loved His enemies, and obeyed joyfully (Hebrews 12:2). While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.



LIFEWISE QUALITY

COMPASSION – Recognizing the suffering of others and taking action to help.



HEAD

List everyone to whom God demonstrated compassion in the story of Jonah.

How did Jonah show a lack of compassion to those same people?



HEART

God is merciful and shows compassion even when we don't deserve it. Is compassion easy for you to share or do you tend to want to reserve it for those you think "deserve" it?

Why might recognizing God's compassion for us make it easier to show compassion to others?



HANDS

Compassion means seeing suffering and doing what you can to help. But suffering isn't always big and obvious. Think about the people in your family, school or community who might be hurting in small ways and brainstorm ways you can help them. Commit to acting on those ideas this week.



HEAD

AN UNFAITHFUL PEOPLE RECEIVE LOVE

God faithfully pursues His people even when they are unfaithful.



HEART

JESUS CONNECTION

Hosea's relationship with Gomer reminds us of God's relationship with the people of Israel and with us. Even though God's people are unfaithful and love many other things more than Him, God still loves us. It was because of God's love that He sent Jesus to die on the cross for our sin and bring us back to Him.



HANDS

LIFEWISE QUALITY

LOVE – Choosing to support and care for others whether or not they deserve it.

BIBLE REVIEW

MSL 30 A Rebellious People Receive Mercy | 1–2 Min

In the previous lesson, God sent Jonah to tell the people of Nineveh to repent of their sin.

- ◆ Why did Jonah refuse to go to Nineveh at first? (*The Ninevites were his enemy, and he did not want God to spare them from punishment.*)
- ◆ How did the Ninevites show true repentance? (*They stopped sinning and mourned over their sin by putting on sackcloth and fasting from food.*)

Today, we will learn about God calling the prophet Hosea to tell the people of Israel that they had been unfaithful to their covenant with Him.

SESSION STARTERS

Following Directions | 5–10 Min

- ◆ Before class, write out challenges or tasks on six index cards marked #1–#6. Challenges should get more difficult as the numbers increase. Examples might include:
 1. Name one book of the Bible
 2. Do five jumping jacks
 3. Share a favorite movie or video game
 4. Briefly retell one story we've learned so far in LifeWise
 5. Share one unusual fact about yourself
 6. Name 15 words that start with the same letter in 30 seconds
- ◆ You can have more than one task for each number if you like. You will also need a numbered cube. During class, allow students to take turns rolling the cube and completing the challenge or task on the corresponding card until everyone has had a turn.

- ◆ Every time you rolled the cube, you had to follow the directions on your card. Some of you had much harder directions than others, didn't you? This was just a game, obviously, but what if someone asked you to follow directions that you knew would be hard? Would you do it? Today, we're going to talk about Hosea, a prophet who got some very hard directions from God.

What is Love? | 5–10 Min

- ◆ On the board or a large piece of paper, write the word LOVE in large letters. Form small groups of two or three students and give them three minutes to think of all the words or phrases they can think of to describe, define or represent love. When time is up, allow the students to share their lists. Write them around the word LOVE on the board (or paper) as they do.
- ◆ We usually describe love in terms of emotions, romantic gestures or relationships, but it can be very hard to define. How would you define love? God has a much bigger view of love and what it looks like than ours. In today's story, we'll see how God used Hosea's relationship with his wife to help us understand how God loves His people.

BIBLE LESSON: AN UNFAITHFUL PEOPLE RECEIVE LOVE | 10–20 Min

[The story of Hosea is a beautiful picture of God's love for rebellious sinners. We are aware that some details in the biblical account are too mature for middle school audiences, so the story script expresses the main ideas of the story in a way that is appropriate for all students. Even so, we recommend you prayerfully read through the script and Bible passages in advance and share this story in accordance with the level of maturity of your classes.]

In the Old Testament, God's prophets stood before the people and delivered God's authoritative messages. The message of prophets always involved asking the people of God to repent from idolatry. Sometimes, **God asked the prophets to demonstrate the message in unusual ways so His people could visualize it.** But God asked even more of Hosea. **God's plan for Hosea involved using one of the most personal parts of his life as an example to God's people: his marriage.**

Summary of Hosea 1:2–2:15.

When we think about the idea of marrying someone, we only plan to marry if we really love someone and that person loves us just as much. But **God called Hosea to do the opposite.** He asked him **to marry a woman who would not love him and act out a picture of God's relationship with Israel through his own life and marriage.**

Hosea obeyed God. He found Gomer, married her, brought her into his home and had two sons and a daughter with her. Hosea loved his wife, fed, cared and provided for her and their children. Then Gomer did the unthinkable: she walked out on him. She left Hosea and her children and lived as if she were not married to him, choosing to be in relationships with other men.

God told Hosea to proclaim a message to Israel: Hosea's relationship with Gomer was broken, just like Israel's relationship with God was broken. God chose Israel as His people and loved, cared for and provided for them. He brought them into the Promised Land, watched over them and greatly multiplied them as a people. Israel promised to love and worship God alone but abandoned God and began to serve false gods. In breaking their covenant with God, they broke His heart. God felt angry and hurt at what they had done.

Hosea 2:16–23.

God gave Hosea another message for Israel. Even though Israel had left God and been unfaithful to Him by worshiping false gods, one day, they would again know that the Lord was the one true God.

God loved Israel and would do whatever it took to bring Israel back as his own people and make a covenant with them forever; this “betrothal” or promise of a covenant relationship with them was only able to be accomplished because of God’s righteousness, justice, steadfast love and mercy.

Read Hosea 3:1–5.

When God told Hosea to declare this message, He was preparing Hosea to do something even more difficult. **The Lord commanded Hosea to go after Gomer, show her love and bring her back home,** even though she had been in a relationship with another man. **When Hosea found Gomer, she had been reduced to the position of a slave. Hosea bought Gomer** for 15 shekels of silver and five bushels of barley, or about 30 shekels of silver, the price for a slave (Ex. 21:32), **and took her back as his wife.**

Like Gomer, we too were slaves when God came after us. We have all gone after things that we thought would satisfy and give us pleasure and meaning and found out that we enslaved ourselves to sin. **When we were sinful, unlovely, unworthy and in rebellion against God, He came, sought us out and paid the ultimate price to free us from slavery to sin: the life of His one and only Son.**

When Hosea returned home with Gomer, he reminded her that they were to remain faithful in their marriage to one another, loving no one else. Hosea desired her to set herself apart for him alone. He wanted all of her affection; he wanted her committed to him and him alone and he promised to act the same toward her. **God asks for the same kind of love from us. He wants us to love Him more than anything else and set ourselves apart to serve Him through the way we think and live.**

Read Hosea 14:1–4.

God used the message of Hosea’s life to show Israel that they were stumbling into sin and needed to repent and return to the Lord. God offered to turn from His anger and offer them His love, compassion and healing. He promised them that if they returned and followed God’s ways, they would grow and prosper as His people.

Big Ideas

- ♦ **God loves us unconditionally.** Hosea’s pursuit of Gomer reflected God’s pursuit of Israel; the love that God had for Israel was not just a feeling of affection, but a continual choice that resulted in action. God’s love is a never stopping, never giving up kind of love. In the very beginning, God did not choose to love anyone because He saw something good in us. Rather, He loved because it is in His very nature to love (1 Jn. 4:16). He loved us when we were rebellious sinners and enemies of God (Rom. 5:7–8; Jas. 4:4) and will continue to love us no matter what we do. God demonstrated covenant love through the story of Hosea: a love that was promised forever and a commitment to do whatever it cost for that love to continue.
- ♦ **We are slaves to sin.** Despite Hosea’s love for Gomer, she was enslaved to sin. She rejected him and ran after other things that she thought would satisfy her instead of what she needed most. There was no way that Gomer could break free from sin’s hold on her. Like Gomer, we are also slaves to sin (Jn. 8:34; Rom. 6:6). Only faith in Jesus’ death and resurrection can free us from sin’s hold on us (Jn. 8:36).

- ◆ God has **redeemed** us from slavery to sin. When Hosea pursued Gomer and found her enslaved, he had to pay the price to buy and free her from slavery. Similarly, God has paid the price to set us free from slavery to sin. He has redeemed us, or bought us out of slavery, through Jesus' blood, shed on the cross as the payment for our sins (1 Pet. 1:18–19; Eph. 1:7).

Discussion Questions

- ◆ Based on music or social media trends, how do we define love in our culture? How is that different from the picture of God's love we see in Scripture?
- ◆ After everything they had been through, Hosea told Gomer he still wanted her as his wife (Hos. 3:1–5). Do you think it would be easy or hard for Gomer to believe Hosea loved her? Is it easy or hard to let ourselves be loved deeply when we fail? Explain.
- ◆ Hosea's pursuit of an unfaithful Gomer is a picture of God's pursuit of us. What does His relentless pursuit reveal about His character, especially in light of our unfaithfulness?
- ◆ Why is it important to show love through actions and not just words? How has God demonstrated His love with actions and not just words alone?

REINFORCEMENT ACTIVITIES

Suggested Video | 5–10 Min

BibleProject Video: *Loyal Love*; Full video: 4:42.

Suggested Visual Aid | 5 Min.

Poster 6: *Idols*

Sacrificial Love | 5–10 Min

- ◆ Hosea's name means "salvation," and his story points forward to Jesus. Using a T-chart on the board or a large piece of paper, invite the students to brainstorm ways in which Hosea resembles or symbolizes Jesus and His work.
- ◆ Variation: Read the verses below out loud to the class or have the students read them. For each one, compare how the ideas in the verse are evident in Hosea's story, in Jesus' story and in ours.
 - ◇ John 15:12–13: This is my command: Love one another as I have loved you. No one has greater love than this: to lay down his life for his friends.
 - ◇ Romans 5:8: For rarely will someone die for a just person—though for a good person perhaps someone might even dare to die. But God proves His own love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.
 - ◇ 1 John 4:10, 19: Love consists in this: not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the atoning sacrifice for our sins. We love because he first loved us.



JESUS CONNECTION



Hosea's relationship with Gomer reminds us of God's relationship with the people of Israel and with us. Even though God's people are unfaithful and love many other things more than Him, God still loves us. It was because of God's love that He sent Jesus to die on the cross for our sin and bring us back to Him.



LIFEWISE QUALITY | 3–5 Min

LOVE – Choosing to support and care for others whether or not they deserve it.

Living LifeWise

Because Jesus died on the cross for us, we can accept God's love for us and share that love with others.

LWQ Script

Love is costly. God told Hosea to love his wife no matter the cost to show Israel that He loved them no matter the cost. Jesus was willing to pay the ultimate price—death on the cross—in order to demonstrate His love for us and to redeem us from slavery to sin.

It is hard sometimes to receive that kind of love. We focus on our unworthiness or that we aren't able to love perfectly and continuously like God has loved us, so we work hard to earn the place that God is freely offering us in Jesus. But when we accept God's love and the sacrifice He made so we can be part of His family, His Spirit fills us up with joy and peace and gratitude and helps us share that love with others.

Head, Heart, Hands Reinforcement | In-class or take-home

◆ Head Questions

- ◆ What action did Hosea take to show his love for Gomer?
- ◆ God told Hosea to continue to go after and love Gomer when she left him and was unfaithful. Hosea had to pay to get her back since she had fallen into slavery. Hosea supported and cared for Gomer no matter what. Compare the relationship between Hosea and Gomer to God and Israel. How are they similar?

◆ Heart Questions

- ◆ What does Hosea's story teach us about loving other people? How far are you willing to go to show unconditional love to someone else?
- ◆ God's love is affectionate and caring, but it is also a *choosing* love. His devoted love involves willing pursuit and necessary sacrifice for the sake of the one being loved. When we experience God's deep love, how might it change how we respond to Him and to others?

◆ Hands Challenge

- ✧ Romans 8:38–39 says, “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.”
- ✧ That means there is nothing you have done, should have done or that's been done to you that can keep God from loving YOU! Even when you run away or are unfaithful to God, He will run after you because He loves you and wants to be in a committed relationship with you.
- ✧ Create something (a song, poem, piece of art, letter, game, presentation, collage, etc.) to express Romans 8:38–39. Be creative. Take a picture of it to show or bring it in to share with your LifeWise class. Then, either give it to someone who needs to know they are dearly loved by God or keep it to remind you of this unshakeable truth.

EXTENDED LESSON RESOURCES

Bible Commentary for the Teacher

The story of Hosea reveals how different God's definition of love is from our limited understanding of it.

- ✧ **God's love involves sacrifice (Hosea 1–3).** Deep down, we tend to believe that love should make our lives easy and pain-free. But God asked Hosea to offer up the closest personal relationship Hosea could have and to open himself up to hurt, betrayal, embarrassment and a host of other emotions that no one wants to go through. God asked Hosea to give of himself for the spiritual good of his people. Although God asked Hosea to sacrifice something very personal, God required no less of Himself. He willingly gave His one and only Son to die on the cross, paying the price for the sin.
- ✧ **God has redeemed us for a purpose (Hosea 3:3).** Many people assume that God's love for us means He overlooks our sinful or selfish behavior, but this couldn't be farther from the truth. Hosea did not redeem Gomer from slavery so that she could do whatever she pleased. He freed her so that she could live in a right and loving relationship with him. God has done the same for us. Through Jesus, God paid the price and bought us out of slavery, not so that we could be our own master, but so that we could choose to be united to Him. Disciples of Jesus are considered dead to sin and alive to God (Rom. 6:11). They are no longer slaves to sin, but slaves to righteousness (Rom. 6:19).
- ✧ **God's love is anchored in His faithfulness.** Just as Gomer was faithless and prone to wander, our sinful hearts will reject God and His offer of a loving relationship. But God's love for us is permanent and eternal. Just as Hosea took the initiative to seek Gomer, redeem her and love her no matter how often she wandered, rejected Hosea and abandoned her vows, God pursues us, restores us and invites us back into loving relationship with Him. He has promised to love us forever, and our relationship with Him is never dependent on us, but on His faithfulness alone.

**AN UNFAITHFUL PEOPLE RECEIVE LOVE**

God faithfully pursues His people even when they are unfaithful.

JESUS CONNECTION

Hosea's relationship with Gomer reminds us of God's relationship with the people of Israel and with us. Even though God's people are unfaithful and love many other things more than Him, God still loves us. It was because of God's love that He sent Jesus to die on the cross for our sin and bring us back to Him.

**LIFEWISE QUALITY**

LOVE – Choosing to support and care for others whether or not they deserve it.

**HEAD**

What action did Hosea take to show his love for Gomer?

God told Hosea to continue to go after and love Gomer when she left him and was unfaithful. Hosea had to pay to get her back since she had fallen into slavery. Hosea supported and cared for Gomer no matter what. Compare the relationship between Hosea and Gomer to God and Israel. How are they similar?



HEART

What does Hosea's story teach us about loving other people? How far are you willing to go to show unconditional love to someone else?

God's love is affectionate and caring, but it is also a *choosing* love. His devoted love involves willing pursuit and necessary sacrifice for the sake of the one being loved. When we experience God's deep love, how might it change how we respond to Him and to others?



HANDS

Romans 8:38–39 says, “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.”

That means there is nothing you have done, should have done or that's been done to you that can keep God from loving YOU! Even when you run away or are unfaithful to God, He will run after you because He loves you and wants to be in a committed relationship with you.

Create something (a song, a poem, a piece of art, a letter, a game, a presentation, collage, etc.) to express Romans 8:38–39. Be creative. Take a picture of it to show or bring it in to share with your LifeWise class. Then, either give it to someone who needs to know they are dearly loved by God or keep it to remind you of this unshakeable truth.

**HEAD****AN IDOLATROUS PEOPLE RECEIVE JUDGMENT**

God's loving discipline is meant to lead us to repentance.

**HEART****JESUS CONNECTION**

The people of Israel sinned against God and worshiped idols. God warned them to turn from their evil ways and obey Him, but they refused and were disciplined by Him. Israel's rebellion reminds us of our idolatry and need for Jesus who perfectly obeyed God and was punished in our place.

**HANDS****LIFEWISE QUALITY**

PATIENCE – Being willing to wait.

BIBLE REVIEW**MSL 31 An Unfaithful People Receives Love | 1–2 Min**

In the previous lesson, God told His people, through Hosea, that they had been unfaithful to Him.

- ♦ What did God tell Hosea to do to show the people how unfaithful they had been? (*God told him to marry a woman who would not love Hosea.*)
- ♦ What did God ask Hosea to do to show His love for Israel after they rejected God and served false Gods? (*God told Hosea to pursue Gomer, redeem her from slavery, bring her home and show love to her.*)

Today, we will learn about God judging the people of Israel for their unfaithfulness toward Him.

SESSION STARTERS**Settling for Less | 5–10 Min**

- ♦ Have you ever seen something that you really wanted, maybe waited or saved your money for a long time to order it, only to be very disappointed when it came? Maybe it was smaller than you thought it would be or it broke within minutes of playing with it. [*If possible, consider sharing a time when this happened to you.*] Has that ever happened to you? [*Let students share.*]
- ♦ No one wants to get a less-than version of what they expected to get, like a glass of mud when you're really thirsty. Would anyone willingly settle for a lesser option when they could have something better? The Israelites chose to worship false gods, settling for a pitiful replacement for God instead of God Himself, the One who had rescued them, provided for them and made a permanent covenant with them. God gave them many warnings and lovingly provided for His people, but eventually His patience with them ran out.

How Long? | 5–10 Min

- ♦ For this experiment, you'll need three jars of similar size and some marbles. One jar should be filled with water, one with corn syrup and the last with honey. During class, ask the students to predict how long it will take for a marble to fall to the bottom of each jar. Have a volunteer drop each marble into the jar and use your phone to time its fall.
- ♦ Are you surprised at how long it took for the marble to get to the bottom of each jar? Why do you think it took longer in the corn syrup and honey? *[Answer: viscosity, the liquid's resistance (or how fast a liquid will change its shape). A high viscosity liquid is thicker and moves slower, so the marble drops more slowly in it. Heating up the liquid would make the marble go faster.]*
- ♦ One marble took a lot longer to fall than the others. If we're looking forward to something, it's hard to be patient. And the longer we have to wait, the harder it can become. God waited for hundreds of years for the Israelites to turn back to Him, but they never did for long. Today, we'll learn what happened when God's patience with His people finally ran out.

BIBLE LESSON: AN IDOLATROUS PEOPLE RECEIVE JUDGMENT | 10–20 Min

After King Solomon died, God divided His people into two kingdoms. God gave the Northern Kingdom of Israel (11 tribes and half the tribe of Benjamin) to Jeroboam and the Southern Kingdom of Judah (one tribe and half the tribe of Benjamin) to Rehoboam, King Solomon's son. Jeroboam was afraid that if the people worshiped God at the temple in Judah, they would shift their allegiance, so he made two golden calves and encouraged the people to worship them instead (1 Kings 12:26–33). Despite God's repeated calls through His prophets to turn from false gods, from that time on, the people of Israel worshiped idols.

Summary of 2 Kings 17:1–6.

The nation of Israel had received many wonderful promises from God. He promised them the land of Canaan as their own. He promised to be their God, give them His continual presence and dwell with them. He promised to protect them and make them prosper. But those weren't the only types of promises God made. He had also said that if they forgot Him, went after false gods and became like the other nations, there would be consequences—He would remove them from the land and they would fall under harsh rule by other nations. **As Scripture reveals, God always keeps His promises—whether blessing or judgment.**

Shalmaneser, King of Assyria, threatened to attack the kingdom of Israel. Hoshea, the king of Israel, promised to pay Shalmaneser money if he would not attack Israel and became a vassal to the king of Assyria. Secretly, Hoshea attempted to gain help from the King of Egypt. When Shalmaneser found out what Hoshea had done, he threw him in prison and invaded the land of Israel. He attacked the capital city of Samaria for three years before destroying it. Shalmaneser exiled the people of Israel from their land and forced them to live in Assyria.

2 Kings 17:6–12.

God did not bring judgment on His people without reason. Despite all that God had done for His people, they did not trust that God's laws would give them the fullest life possible. God's people disregarded His Word and did what they thought was best in their own eyes. Instead of being satisfied with God and His ways, they pursued evil, thinking it would satisfy them.

They worshiped so many false gods that idols were found everywhere in the land of Israel. The people of Israel built structures throughout the land to worship false gods “from watchtower to fortified city” (2

Kings 17:9) and “on every high hill and under every green tree” (2 Kings 17:10). **Their complete devotion to false gods aroused God’s anger and jealousy.**

2 Kings 17:13–17.

God brought judgment on His people after warning them again and again. They worshiped false gods: the golden calves, Asherah, Baal and the sun, moon and stars. And with the worship of these false gods came evil practices. The people did the unthinkable, even destroying their own children to serve their idols. **This greatly angered God.**

The Lord allowed His people to live in the Promised Land for more than 200 years. **God sent His prophets repeatedly to warn the people to turn from false gods and worship Him alone. He waited patiently for them to turn from their evil ways, but they refused. God’s people did not believe He would punish them;** they misunderstood His patience as permission.

2 Kings 17:18–20.

Finally, as God had promised, He removed the people of Israel from the land. The people of Judah were sinning against God in the same way as the people of Israel. Judah was just as deserving of judgment from the Lord, but God also patiently withheld discipline from them for a time. He remembered His promise to King David that someone from his family line would always sit on the throne, and some of Judah’s kings led His people to repent and return to God, though never for very long.

As the people of Judah watched Israel bear the consequences from the Lord for their idolatry, it should have served as a wake-up call to them, opening their eyes to their sin and bringing them to repentance. But **Judah, like Israel, was blinded by her idolatry. And although He patiently waited for more than 100 years, God’s judgment eventually fell upon Judah as well. They would also be exiled from the land, this time at the hand of the Babylonians.**

Big Ideas

- ♦ **God’s response to sin is wrath.** God is perfect and holy, just as His plan for His people is perfect and holy. God’s wrath is “His fervent determination to punish sin” because He “stands in opposition to all that is evil.”¹ God’s anger is how He feels about sin, but it always leads to wrath, not vengeance. Wrath is not a feeling, but God’s decision to unleash His judgment against sin. God’s wrath fell on Israel because of their idolatry and unfaithfulness to their covenant with Him, and His wrath will one day sweep away all who have refused to repent of their sins (Rom. 1:18; 2:5–6).
- ♦ **God wants us to repent from sin.** In His patience, God sent the prophets to tell His people to repent, destroy their idols and return to the Lord to avoid His wrath. God warned them again and again for hundreds of years. But God’s people refused to change their hearts, minds and actions. God’s Word warns us that we also must repent and turn away from sin and trust in Him. Jesus promises that anyone who believes in Him will not be judged for their sin, but saved from it and given eternal life (Jn. 3:16–18), and He still patiently withholds judgment so that all may come to repentance (2 Pet. 3:9).

¹ Kristin Schmucker, The Attributes of God (The Daily Grace Company, 2022), 117.

- ◆ **God will judge sin.** The Lord is slow to anger (Ps. 145:8), but this does not mean He will ignore sin. In fact, His holy and just nature demands that He judge sin. When His people refused to repent, God punished them exactly as He warned He would when He first made a covenant with the Israelites. God has also set a day of future judgment to hold all people accountable for sin (Heb. 9:27). God offers to rescue sinners from this judgment through His Son. Jesus died on the cross to bear the punishment for our sins in our place. If we confess our sins and turn to God in repentance, we will be saved from sin and God's wrath (Rom. 10:9; 1 Jn. 1:8–9).

Discussion Questions

- ◆ What is discipline? Do you think someone can grow and mature without discipline?
- ◆ We often think of discipline only as punishment. How does God use discipline to show His grace and love?
- ◆ Read Hebrews 11:24–26. Why do you think the author describes sin as a fleeting pleasure? Why can't sin give us everlasting joy and happiness? Why does it leave us feeling shame and guilt?
- ◆ If you make the same mistakes or apologize over and over again, do you feel as if you are taking advantage of God's or other people's patience? Why or why not?
- ◆ How can we protect ourselves from being deceived into believing that we can find ultimate happiness apart from God?

REINFORCEMENT ACTIVITIES

Suggested Video | 5–10 Min

BibleProject Video: *Slow to Anger*; Full video: 4:52.

Suggested Visual Aid | 5 Min.

Poster 11: *Divided Kingdom*

Psalms 51 | 5–10 Min

- ◆ Repentance is a change of mind. It means noticing our thinking about an action and changing our thinking to align with what God says about it. This is what God's prophets asked Israel to do for hundreds of years, but they would not change their minds about their idol worship, so God judged them as He had promised.
- ◆ But what does repentance look or sound like? God provides an example for us in King David. When David sinned, God sent a prophet named Nathan to confront him. And unlike Israel, David did repent. We can read his words of repentance in Psalm 51.
 - ◇ Display the text of Psalm 51:1–5, 10–12. What do you notice about David's words? How does his response compare or contrast with how the Israelites responded to God's call to repent?
 - ◇ Using David's words, what are some principles or attitudes that we can use when we need to repent, either toward God or toward others?



JESUS CONNECTION



The people of Israel sinned against God and worshiped idols. God warned them to turn from their evil ways and obey Him, but they refused and were disciplined by Him. Israel's rebellion reminds us of our idolatry and need for Jesus who perfectly obeyed God and was punished in our place.



LIFEWISE QUALITY | 3–5 Min

PATIENCE – Being willing to wait.

Living LifeWise

God is our good king, so we can wait patiently for Him to act.

LWQ Script

God rules over every detail of life and history, and He works everything out according to His plan. But He is also patient. He waited for 400 years before He led Abraham's family to the promised land and hundreds more before giving them a king. Moses reminded the people that, if they disobeyed God, He would remove them from the land, but He gave them hundreds of years of warning before He did.

God's timeline can always be trusted, even though we will often have to wait. He waited until just the right moment (Gal. 4:4) to send Jesus to die for our sins, and He's promised that everything works for our good to make us more like Jesus (Rom. 8:28–29). Because He is fully in control of all things and because Jesus has already provided for our deepest needs, we can choose to wait patiently for Him whether we are longing for good things or enduring hard ones.

Head, Heart, Hands Reinforcement | In-class or take-home

- ◆ **Head Questions**
 - ◇ What emotional reaction did God have in response to His people's disobedience?
 - ◇ God waited hundreds of years to punish Israel for their sin. According to 2 Peter 3:9, why did God wait so long?
- ◆ **Heart Questions**
 - ◇ God is good and merciful. He is patient and kind even when we continue to make choices He knows will hurt us or Him. How does knowing those characteristics about Him affect the choices you make? Or does it?
 - ◇ God wanted the Israelites to turn from their wicked ways, but He was patient with them. How can you show patience and kindness to others, even when they frustrate you or make mistakes? How do you think others would react if they saw you being patient in those ways during a frustrating situation?
- ◆ **Hands Challenge**

- ✧ Patience is hard to learn and even harder to do. Often, we simply rush toward whatever outcome or result we want. But we can be patient with ourselves and others because we know God cares for us and is at work in our lives. He will help us develop patience to wait for Him in hard situations and in everyday life.
- ✧ Read the scenarios below. Choose the one that is most difficult for you to show patience in. Write 2 action steps you can take to practice patience in that area.
 - Waiting on an item you ordered that you really want
 - Understanding why your friend hurt you again
 - Waiting for God to answer your prayer
 - Not yelling at your sibling when you are angry
 - Waiting your turn for something
 - Practicing a skill (a sport, playing an instrument, learning a language, art, etc.)

EXTENDED LESSON RESOURCES

Bible Commentary for the Teacher

God graciously called for His people to repent of their sin and turn back to God, but the majority of His people responded in unbelief:

- ✧ **Many ignored God's message (2 Kings 17:14).** When God divided the kingdom of Israel in two, Jeroboam set up idols. The prophet Ahijah told the wife of Jeroboam, king of Israel, that his sin would lead to Israel's exile (1 Kings 14:9, 14–16). Over the next 200 years, Israel made no effort to repent and turn away from worshiping false gods. Instead, God's warnings were simply ignored.
- ✧ **Many were offended by God's message (2 Kings 17:15).** Many stories in the Old Testament describe the Israelites' anger when the prophets spoke of God's judgment over their sin. The prophets were threatened, imprisoned and killed because their message revealed the sinful hearts and actions of the people they were trying to reach. God lovingly and graciously reminded the people that they had no hope apart from God's salvation, but His words were offensive to stubborn and prideful hearts who believed they could save themselves. Even now, the gospel continues to be offensive to those who attempt to find their own way to Heaven. The Apostle Paul describes God's message as foolishness to those who do not believe (1 Cor. 1:18) and as the aroma of life to those who believe but the smell of death to those who do not (2 Cor. 2:15–17).

When God's people responded in continual unbelief, God fulfilled His message:

- ✧ **God held Israel doubly accountable (2 Kings 17:7–13).** Unlike other nations, God had revealed Himself to Israel in a very personal and special way. He showed His power when He rescued Israel from Egypt and His goodness and steadfast love as He led them into the Promised Land and gave them victory over their enemies. He gave them His law so they would know how to avoid sin and maintain a close relationship to Him. Because they were God's chosen people, Israel was held to a higher standard. Knowing God and the law, they chose to reject God and His ways, so they bore more responsibility for their sin than someone who had never heard (Luke 12:48). God also holds us responsible because we have His written Word and evidence of the truth of Jesus' death and resurrection. The consequences for sin are much greater if God reveals His Word, His Son and His love for us and we choose to reject it than if we have never heard of it at all.
- ✧ **God gave Israel consequences for their sin (2 Kings 17:18).** In Moses' final address, God had warned the people of Israel about the consequences of sin, idolatry and unfaithfulness (Deut. 28–30). But the people chose to be unfaithful to the Lord. By worshiping idols, Israel lived as if

they didn't need God, so He allowed them to experience what they said they wanted and "removed them from His presence" (2 Kings 17:18). He withdrew His favor, provision and protection from their enemies. In fact, He sent Assyria to punish the Israelites and remove them from the land. Sin always has consequences, but God also offers grace. Sin keeps us from a close relationship with God, but Jesus went to the cross to take our punishment for sin so that we could be reconciled and restored to a right relationship with Him. God guarantees that we will never be removed from His presence by placing the Holy Spirit within all those who trust in Jesus.

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**AN IDOLATROUS PEOPLE RECEIVE JUDGMENT**

God's loving discipline is meant to lead us to repentance.

JESUS CONNECTION

The people of Israel sinned against God and worshiped idols. God warned them to turn from their evil ways and obey Him, but they refused and were disciplined by Him. Israel's rebellion reminds us of our idolatry and need for Jesus who perfectly obeyed God and was punished in our place.

**LIFEWISE QUALITY**

PATIENCE – Being willing to wait.

**HEAD**

What emotional reaction did God have in response to His people's disobedience?

God waited hundreds of years to punish Israel for their sin. According to 2 Peter 3:9, why did God wait so long?



HEART

God is good and merciful. He is patient and kind even when we continue to make choices He knows will hurt us or Him. How does knowing those characteristics about Him affect the choices you make? Or does it?

God wanted the Israelites to turn from their wicked ways, but He was patient with them. How can you show patience and kindness to others, even when they frustrate you or make mistakes? How do you think others would react if they saw you being patient in those ways during a frustrating situation?



HANDS

Patience is hard to learn and even harder to do. Often, we simply rush toward whatever outcome or result we want. But we can be patient with ourselves and others because we know God cares for us and is at work in our lives. He will help us develop patience to wait for Him in hard situations and in everyday life.

Read the scenarios below. Choose the one that is most difficult for you to show patience in. Write 2 action steps you can take to practice patience in that area.

- ◆ Waiting on an item you ordered that you really want
- ◆ Understanding why your friend hurt you again
- ◆ Waiting for God to answer your prayer
- ◆ Not yelling at your sibling when you are angry
- ◆ Waiting your turn for something
- ◆ Practicing a skill (a sport, playing an instrument, learning a language, art, etc.)



HEAD

GOD PROMISES A SUFFERING SERVANT

Jesus is the Suffering Servant who was rejected and struck down on our behalf.



HEART

JESUS CONNECTION

God gave Isaiah a message to deliver to His people. God promised to send a faithful Servant who would be rejected and despised and yet accomplished salvation through His suffering. The New Testament shows that this prophecy is fulfilled in Jesus and His work.



HANDS

LIFEWISE QUALITY

SACRIFICE – Giving of myself to help someone else.

BIBLE REVIEW

MSL 32 An Idolatrous People Receive Judgment | 1–2 Min

In the previous lesson, God judged the people of Israel for their unfaithfulness toward Him.

- ◆ How were the people unfaithful to God? (*They rejected the Lord, built places to worship false gods and set up idols.*)
- ◆ Whom did God send to punish the people for their sin? (*The nation of Assyria.*)

Today, we will learn about God's promise to send a servant who would free God's people through His own sacrifice.

SESSION STARTERS

Bible Taboo | 5–10 Min

- ◆ Play a version of the board game Taboo. Before class, create 8–12 cards for the game. Write the name of a Bible character at the top of an index card and list three related words students cannot say. [Examples: Noah—ark, rainbow, flood; Elijah—widow, raven, bread; Moses—burning, Egypt, Ten Commandments; etc.]
- ◆ Divide into two teams. One player from Team A will choose a card and have 30 seconds to get Team A to guess the name without saying any of the listed words (or variations of them). A player from Team B should also look at the card to judge if any taboo words are said. If time runs out or one of the taboo words is used, the team loses that card, and play passes to the other team. Alternate between teams until all the cards have been used. The team with the most cards wins.
- ◆ It can be very hard to think of alternative words to use so your team can get the card, but we have to deal with substitutes all the time. What are some examples of when we use substitutes (teachers, recipes, athletes switching places in a game, etc.)? Why are substitutes a good thing? Today, we will learn about God's plan to provide us with a perfect substitute—Jesus.

BIBLE LESSON: GOD PROMISES A SUFFERING SERVANT | 10–20 Min

God called the prophet Isaiah to speak to the people and call them to repent of their sin and turn back to God. Isaiah warned that they would be judged for their sins. But God also gave Isaiah a message filled with hope for His people. Isaiah prophesied about a coming Servant in four passages (called “songs”) in Isaiah 42:1–9, 49:1–13, 50:4–9, and here. In this final song, God reveals that this servant will provide for all people through His sacrifice.

Isaiah 52:13–53:3.

Like a spoiler, Isaiah begins his description of God’s servant by highlighting his ultimate success. He acts wisely and will be raised, lifted up and exalted. But Isaiah’s message quickly changes to a solemn tone. Before the victory will come humiliation and suffering.

This servant did not look like an ultimate victor. He did not appear handsome or great but as an ordinary man. Although God’s servant was worthy of praise, He was despised and rejected by men. He was familiar with suffering and sickness. Isaiah prophesied that this servant would be disfigured beyond recognition in order to “sprinkle” many nations, or make them clean (v. 15).

Jesus came into the world to be the Messiah, or “anointed one.” Rather than having wealth and fame, like a “root out of dry ground” (Is. 53:2), Jesus was born into humble circumstances in a poor human family and lived a sinless life. During His ministry, He was rejected by many and was crucified on our behalf—a painful, torturous form of execution that disfigured the one being punished.

Isaiah 53:4–9.

Isaiah also prophesied that God’s servant would be wounded in many ways. He would be “pierced” and “crushed,” or severely wounded (v. 5). He would be “oppressed,” or treated with great cruelty by an authority (v. 7–8). Not only this, but He would be “afflicted,” or overcome with a great physical, mental and emotional burden (v. 7). The servant was compared to “a lamb led to the slaughter,” or an innocent person who would be killed in an inhumane way (v. 7). He was also described as a silent lamb about to be “sheared,” or stripped of wool (v. 7). This servant would be stripped of dignity and respect. He would even be “struck” and “cut off from the land of the living” or killed (v. 8), yet he would do it all to fulfill his purpose—to take our own sin upon himself. Isaiah predicted that, although many people would think that God’s servant deserved this punishment, this man was innocent (v. 9).

God sent Jesus as His exalted servant to save the world from sin. However, this salvation was not purchased in the way anyone would have expected. Instead of coming in power and instantly destroying all His enemies, Jesus won the victory over sin, Satan and death through suffering and sacrifice: He endured sickness and pain and was rejected, abandoned, mocked, beaten, flogged and crucified.

Isaiah uses imagery of sheep to describe the servant and God’s people. Jesus is compared with a perfect lamb who chose to be our willing substitute for sin by sacrificing Himself for us. God compares us to wayward sheep (v. 6) that have wandered away from our master, and Jesus called Himself the good shepherd who would lay down His life for the sheep (John 10:11). Because we have rebelled against God, Jesus’ death was the necessary price to bring us back to God (1 Pet. 1:18).

God the Father pierced and crushed Jesus for our sin so that we might be healed by His wounds and enjoy peace with God. Jesus stood in our place and faced the consequence of sin (2 Cor. 5:21) on our behalf. God the Father placed the weight of our sin upon Christ. He was “struck” and “cut off from the land of living” because the wages of our sin is death (Is. 53:8; Rom. 6:23).

Isaiah 53:10–12.

Isaiah concludes where he began—with the servant's victory. **Jesus' suffering and death were not accidental but orchestrated by God. Not only was it God's will, but He was pleased to sacrifice His Son on our behalf. The Lord knew that the good produced by Jesus' willing substitution far outweighed His agony and pain.**

Jesus willingly became an offering for sin (John 10:17–18), and God the Father rewarded Him. Because He was victorious over sin and death, Jesus is exalted over all the earth with a name that is above every name (Phil. 2:9–11). In addition to receiving the glory that He clearly earned, through Him we receive atonement and forgiveness that we do not deserve.

Big Ideas

- ♦ **God's plan for salvation was not what the people expected.** The people looked forward to God's salvation, expecting a powerful leader who would free them from their physical enemies and establish God's kingdom on earth right away. They saw a suffering servant as someone powerless to help them and overlooked the power and victory that God can bring through suffering. We often overlook this very thing. Instead of being willing to identify with Jesus through suffering, we want Him to demonstrate His miraculous power to provide what we think is best for us, instead of trusting Him to do what is best for us in unexpected ways.
- ♦ **Jesus could not gain victory without suffering.** The Bible is very clear. The punishment for sin is death (Rom. 6:23) and “without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness” (Heb. 9:22). The temple sacrifices were a symbolic act, but they could not, on their own, forgive sin (Heb. 10:4). Jesus alone was sinless, our perfect lamb, so only Jesus' sacrifice was sufficient to pay the penalty for sin. God could not just ignore or overlook our sin; instead, Jesus had to die, the innocent for the guilty, in order to gain our victory.

Discussion Questions

- ♦ How might this prophecy about the Suffering Servant challenge our views about victory and success? How can Jesus' suffering help us to view our own suffering in this life?
- ♦ Isaiah 53:6 describes sin as turning “to our own way.” How do people go their own way today?
- ♦ How do we minimize the seriousness of sin? What does Isaiah's description of Jesus' death reveal about God's view of sin?
- ♦ How does Jesus' life as the Suffering Servant display sacrifice? What might sacrifice and serving others look like in our lives today?
- ♦ How does the fact that these prophecies were recorded hundreds of years before the birth of Christ strengthen your faith in the reliability of Scripture?

REINFORCEMENT ACTIVITIES

Suggested Video | 5–10 Min

BibleProject Video: *Gospel of the Kingdom*; Full video: 4:46.

God's Good Outcomes | 5–10 Min

- ◆ We generally prefer to avoid suffering and sacrifice, but Jesus is the example we are called to imitate. He willingly accepted the suffering and sacrifice of the cross so that God could bring about the good outcome He desired: forgiveness for sin. God can bring good out of any situation when we are willing to live as Jesus did and give of ourselves for others.
- ◆ Form small groups (3–4 students) and have each group come up with 1–2 situations where someone has to sacrifice for someone else. Give them a few minutes to brainstorm and then have each group share their ideas with the class. Invite the groups to discuss what the sacrifice was in each situation and what good God might bring from that situation. *[Note: guide students to think about God changing us inside as much as His bringing about physical outcomes.]*

JESUS CONNECTION



God gave Isaiah a message to deliver to His people. God promised to send a faithful Servant who would be rejected and despised and yet accomplished salvation through His suffering. The New Testament shows that this prophecy is fulfilled in Jesus and His work.

LIFEWISE QUALITY | 3–5 Min

SACRIFICE – Giving of myself to help someone else.

Living LifeWise

Because God has promised to redeem all suffering, we can accept sacrifice instead of avoiding it.

LWQ Script

Hundreds of years before Jesus came, God gave Isaiah a vision of the Messiah who would come and whose suffering and sacrifice would accomplish God's ultimate victory. This coming Servant accepted the cost of His sacrifice because He knew that God was able to redeem it (make it worthwhile, trade the hurt of it for good) completely (Mark 14:36). And ultimately, God will fully redeem all suffering and hurt, making all things completely new (Rev. 21:1–7).

While we can't fully grasp how God will weave all of our suffering and sacrifice into His good plan, He has promised to do exactly that. No suffering, no sacrifice that we make to obey God, serve Him or live His way will be wasted. We all prefer to seek our comfort and safety, but we don't have to avoid sacrificing for others or doing good because God will redeem all of those moments of hurt for our good and His glory.

Head, Heart, Hands Reinforcement | In-class or take-home

- ◆ **Head Questions**
 - ◆ Isaiah predicted the suffering of the Messiah over 700 years before it happened. According to Isaiah 52 and 53, how would the Messiah be mistreated?
 - ◆ What good came of Jesus' suffering and death?

♦ Heart Questions

- ♦ Jesus went through extreme suffering and pain in order to be a "successful servant" (Isaiah 52:13). What does that mean?
- ♦ When God's love fills our hearts, that love makes it possible for us to give up what's important to us for someone else's good. What would it take for you to be a successful servant? Could you give up something you value (time, money, possessions, passions, worldly success) to do something for others? What might that look like?

♦ Hands Challenge

- ♦ Jesus told His disciples, "No one has greater love than this: to lay down his life for his friends" (John 15:13). Jesus gave His life as a willing sacrifice. We admire people who do the same. We love stories and movies about real-life events where someone sacrifices, sometimes even their lives, to save others.
- ♦ Think of a particular person or an occupation people have that demonstrates this kind of sacrifice. Write a note of appreciation or think of a gesture of appreciation you can do for that person or group. Be sure to send or give it to them.

EXTENDED LESSON RESOURCES

Bible Commentary for the Teacher

What is the significance of Jesus being the suffering servant from Isaiah 53?

- ♦ **Jesus fulfilled Old Testament prophecies.** The Old Testament is full of prophecies about Israel's future and God's promised Messiah. God gave Isaiah these prophecies at least 600 years before Jesus came to Earth. Most scholars agree that Jesus fulfilled over 300 messianic prophecies,¹ including 27 in one day.² The mathematical odds of Jesus fulfilling just eight of these predictions are astronomical.³
- ♦ **God gave us clear evidence that Jesus is the Messiah.** Jesus' fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy leaves no doubt. Jesus is the promised one whom God sent to deliver us from sin. If we believe that God's Word is true, we are left with no excuse to claim that Jesus was anything other than the Savior of the World.
- ♦ **Isaiah's prophecy foreshadows Jesus' sacrifice for sin.** Though Jesus' disciples did not initially believe that God's Son would need to suffer in these ways (Mark 8:31–34), after the death and resurrection of Jesus, they recognized that Isaiah's prophecy truly pointed to Him. In addition to the obvious parallels between the Gospel accounts and these words, six different New Testament authors apply these verses to Jesus in eight different places (Matt. 8:17; Mark 15:28; Luke 22:37; John 5:31; Acts 8:32–35; Rom. 10:16, 15:21; 1 Pet. 2:22–24).
- ♦ **God withheld nothing from us.** God did not spare His Son from suffering but gave Him to us freely (Rom. 8:31). Jesus went through unimaginable pain and agony to free us from sin. Recognizing what Jesus went through on our behalf gives us a greater picture of His sacrifice and love for us.

¹ Phylicia Masonheimer, "What Old Testament Prophecies Reveal About Jesus," Bible Gateway Blog, 28 February 2023, accessed 13 March 2023, <https://www.biblegateway.com/blog/2023/02/what-old-testament-prophecies-did-jesus-fulfill/>.

² Ana Willis, "27 Messianic Prophecies Fulfilled by the Messiah in One Day," accessed 13 March 2023, <https://www.theycallmeblessed.org/27-messianic-prophecies-fulfilled/>.

³ Lee Stroebel, *The Case for Christ* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1998), 183.

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**GOD PROMISES A SUFFERING SERVANT**

Jesus is the Suffering Servant who was rejected and struck down on our behalf.

JESUS CONNECTION

God gave Isaiah a message to deliver to His people. God promised to send a faithful Servant who would be rejected and despised and yet accomplished salvation through His suffering. The New Testament shows that this prophecy is fulfilled in Jesus and His work.

**LIFEWISE QUALITY**

SACRIFICE – Giving of myself to help someone else.

**HEAD**

Isaiah predicted the suffering of the Messiah over 700 years before it happened. According to Isaiah 52 and 53, how would the Messiah be mistreated?

What good came of Jesus' suffering and death?



HEART

Jesus went through extreme suffering and pain in order to be a "successful servant" (Isaiah 52:13). What does that mean?

When God's love fills our hearts, that love makes it possible for us to give up what's important to us for someone else's good. What would it take for you to be a successful servant? Could you give up something you value (time, money, possessions, passions, worldly success) to do something for others? What might that look like?



HANDS

Jesus told His disciples, "No one has greater love than this: to lay down his life for his friends" (John 15:13). Jesus gave His life as a willing sacrifice. We admire people who do the same. We love stories and movies about real-life events where someone sacrifices, sometimes even their lives, to save others.

Think of a particular person or an occupation people have that demonstrates this kind of sacrifice. Write a note of appreciation or think of a gesture of appreciation you can do for that person or group. Be sure to send or give it to them.



HEAD

GOD RECEIVES THE PEOPLE'S REPENTANCE

True repentance leads to worship and obedience.



HEART

JESUS CONNECTION

Josiah was a good king whom God used to lead the people back to Him, but he was not the perfect king that the people needed. Jesus is the righteous King of kings who brings us to God by paying our sin penalty and giving us His righteousness.



HANDS

LIFEWISE QUALITY

RESPONSIBILITY – Taking ownership of my choices and behavior, including the consequences.

BIBLE REVIEW

MSL 33 God Promises a Suffering Servant | 1–2 Min

In the previous lesson, God promised to send a servant who would free God's people through His own sacrifice.

- ◆ How was this servant described? (*Ordinary, rejected and despised by people, familiar with suffering and sickness, exalted.*)
- ◆ How would this servant suffer? Why? (*God's servant would be oppressed, afflicted and killed. He took our punishment for sin so that we could be healed and at peace with God.*)

Today, we will learn about King Josiah leading the people of Judah to repent and turn back to the Lord.

SESSION STARTERS

Compass Points | 5–10 Min

- ◆ Bring a handheld compass, phone or maps program to class. Write the four directions on separate sheets of paper. Discuss how a compass works with the class. Allow them to work together and figure out which wall in your class points closest to north, south, east and west. Or provide a series of directions (take 5 steps north, 7 steps east, 3 steps south, 10 steps north, etc.) for student volunteers to follow. See where in the room the students end up and discuss.
- ◆ Compasses help us make sure we are heading in the right direction. But they are dependent on something outside of themselves. We know where we are *in relation to* an outside standard (north). God's Word provides us with a standard in a similar way. We can compare where we are to God's Word to see how close we are to the kind of life and relationship that God desires for us to have with Him. Today, we'll meet Josiah, a young king of Judah who recognized his need to be led by God's Word.

Last Chance | 5–10 Min

- ♦ Have the students work in pairs or as a class. Give them two minutes to brainstorm situations where someone gets multiple chances. Allow them to share their ideas with the class.
- ♦ Do you think there's such a thing as too many chances? How do you respond when someone tells you "this is your last chance"? In today's story, the young king of the Southern Kingdom of Judah does something unusual that leads to God giving His people another chance.

BIBLE LESSON: GOD RECEIVES THE PEOPLE'S REPENTANCE | 10–20 Min

Although the kingdom of Israel had been destroyed and its people forced into exile, the kingdom of Judah still remained. Most of the kings of Judah led the people to worship idols, but a few of them called God's people to repent and turn back to the Lord. **Josiah was the last king of Judah who chose to serve the Lord wholeheartedly.**

2 Chronicles 34:1–7.

When his father, Amnon, died, **Josiah was crowned the sixteenth king of Judah at the age of eight.** Josiah's father, Amnon, was an evil king. Instead of humbling himself before the Lord, Amnon led his people to worship idols (2 Chr. 33:21–24). But **King Josiah desired to do what was right in God's eyes from the time he was young.** Josiah's rule was compared with that of King David, the greatest king of Israel, and a man who loved God with all his heart.

Josiah was the son and grandson of kings who worshiped idols. More than likely, he grew up worshiping idols too. But he had a change of heart. **When he was 16 years old, he began to seek and worship the Lord. His repentance led him to call his people to repent and turn to the Lord. He began to purge the land of Judah from idol worship when he was 20 years old.** Josiah went throughout Judah and ordered that idols and places to worship false gods be completely destroyed.

2 Chronicles 34:8–11.

When Josiah was 26 years old, in his 18th year of ruling over Judah, **he gave orders to the governor, recorder and high priest to repair the temple of God.** The Levites collected money from the people all throughout the land of Judah, oversaw and paid workers to repair the temple that was built by King Solomon. **Everyone worked faithfully until the temple repairs were completed (2 Chr. 34:12).**

2 Chronicles 34:14–15, 18–21.

While the people repaired the temple, the high priest found the Book of the Law, or the first five books of the Old Testament. **Even though God had commanded that the king should have a copy of the Law and the priests should teach it to the people, the book of the Law had somehow been misplaced or lost. When the book was read to King Josiah, he became aware of God's holiness and power. He also realized how greatly he and his people had sinned against God and the certainty of God's wrath against sin and disobedience (v. 21). Josiah responded by tearing his clothes to show his sorrow over Judah's sin (v. 19).**

Summary of 2 Chronicles 34:22–33.

After this, God spoke to **Huldah, a prophetess,** and she sent the Lord's message to King Josiah. She **told Josiah that God's wrath would certainly come upon Judah because they were unfaithful to their covenant with the Lord and worshiped false gods. However, God saw how Josiah had humbled**

himself and repented when he first heard God's laws. The Lord heard Josiah's prayers **and declared that He would not bring disaster on Judah during Josiah's lifetime.**

Josiah continued to lead his people to worship the Lord alone. He gathered all the people of Judah together, read the Law and made a covenant before God to follow God's Word. He also made the people agree to this covenant too. After this, **Josiah removed all idols from the land of Judah, and the people served the Lord faithfully during his reign.**

Big Ideas

- ◆ **God reveals Himself to those who seek Him.** Josiah began to seek the Lord when he was 16 years old. He rejected his father's false gods, destroyed idol worship in Judah and repaired the temple. God caused His Word to be discovered and revealed Himself to Josiah through it. If we seek the Lord like Josiah, Jesus promises that God will help us to know Him (Matt. 7:7).
- ◆ **God calls us to act on our faith in Him, regardless of our stage of life.** When Josiah chose to turn away from idolatry and worship the Lord, he was still a boy learning how to be a king. He rejected his father's way of life, acted on his own faith and chose to do what was right, even though he was still growing and learning. Anyone of any age can choose to believe in and follow God.
- ◆ **God uses our faith to impact our communities.** Josiah could not turn the hearts of the people away from idolatry, but he did as much as possible to influence them to repent and turn to the Lord. Josiah demonstrated what repentance and worshiping the Lord looked like. He set his people up for success by cleansing Judah from idol worship, repairing the temple, repenting of sin and reading them the law so they would know how to follow God. Because Josiah did these things, the people followed the Lord his entire reign. We cannot force other people to know or follow God. But when we choose to set an example of what a true disciple of Jesus is, God uses our active faith to impact those around us and change our communities for the better.

Discussion Questions

- ◆ Josiah's spiritual growth came in stages. What did he do at age 16, age 20, age 26? Why might it be important that Josiah sought God before he tried to do something for God?
- ◆ The Bible claims to be God's very words and a tool He uses to teach and equip us (Heb. 4:12). It also exposes our sin and calls us to live in a way that reflects God's holiness and right character (2 Tim. 3:16). Does this view of the Bible match our culture's view of the Bible? Explain. How do you think we should see and treat God's Word?
- ◆ Why is taking personal responsibility for our choices and actions (including accepting the consequences) so important? What happens if we don't take responsibility?
- ◆ How does repentance and taking responsibility for our actions impact our relationships with parents, friends or even strangers? How do they lead us to love and serve others better?
- ◆ List some of the people we've learned about so far (Abraham, Joseph, Moses, Joshua, Elisha, Josiah, etc.) and note whether they were old or young when God interacted with them. Is someone's age (old or young) important in our culture? Is our age the most important value to God when choosing someone to serve Him? If not, what is most important to God?

REINFORCEMENT ACTIVITIES

Suggested Video | 5–10 Min

BibleProject Video: *How to Read the Prophets*; Full video: 5:00.

Suggested Visual Aid | 5 Min.

Poster 14: *New Covenant*

Condemned or Convicted? | 5–10 Min

- ◆ Before class, prepare index cards with the following phrases written on them or print them out and cut the paper into strips.
 - ◇ **Condemnation:** divine judgment against sin; humanity's status without Jesus Christ; leads to shame, guilt and hopelessness; pushes people apart; an act of punishment.
 - ◇ **Conviction:** a challenge to think of our actions as sinful; done by the Holy Spirit; if accepted, leads to sorrow and repentance; creates closeness; comes through God's Word; an act of grace
- ◆ In class, draw a T-chart on the board or a large paper. Write *condemnation* on one side and *conviction* on the other. Ask the students to explain these two words in their own words. Divide into groups of two or three students, giving each group at least one prepared phrase, and invite them to place their phrase on the side of the chart where it fits best. When all phrases have been placed, go over the chart and correct any placements as needed.
- ◆ When the book of the Law was found and read, Josiah realized that Judah faced God's condemnation for their idolatry, and he was convicted of sin.
 - ◇ How did the king and the people respond to God's condemnation? To conviction?
 - ◇ Josiah took responsibility for his sin immediately and wholeheartedly. How easy is it to accept conviction and choose repentance? Why?



JESUS CONNECTION



Josiah was a good king whom God used to lead the people back to Him, but he was not the perfect king that the people needed. Jesus is the righteous King of kings who brings us to God by paying our sin penalty and giving us His righteousness.



LIFEWISE QUALITY | 3–5 Min

RESPONSIBILITY – Taking ownership of my choices and behavior, including the consequences.

Living LifeWise

Because God is holy, we must take responsibility for our lives and actions, including our sin.

LWQ Script

The king bears the responsibility to do what is best for his people. Josiah took this responsibility seriously. He saw the damage done by his father and grandfather's idolatry, took ownership of his own faith and began to lead the people back to God. It was not easy, but because he was willing to be responsible, God used Josiah to lead the people into repentance and a restored relationship with God.

We don't often think of responsibility as fun, but living responsibly is the surest path to a meaningful life. Taking responsibility for our skills and choices, and then using them to pursue God right where we are is deeply fulfilling. It will involve admitting, making amends for, and turning away from our sinful or hurtful choices at times. But Jesus' death and resurrection make it possible for us to be fully forgiven for every sin we commit. Even as He convicts us, God's Spirit will empower us to take responsibility in every area so that we can live God's way every day.

Head, Heart, Hands Reinforcement | In-class or take-home

- ◆ **Head Questions**
 - ◇ What steps did Josiah take to get rid of idol worship in Judah?
 - ◇ God's law had not been read or taught for many years. Where did the priests find it? What was Josiah's response when he heard God's Word?
- ◆ **Heart Questions**
 - ◇ Josiah's father and grandfather had not worshiped God. But Josiah chose to follow Him and do the right thing. Do you think everyone agreed with his changes?
 - ◇ Why is it hard to follow God by yourself? Why would having family, friends or church members who also follow God help you do the right thing?
- ◆ **Hands Challenge**
 - ◇ We cannot force people to do the right thing, whether that means following God or making good choices or stopping a harmful behavior. But we all have influence. What are some practical ways you can use your words and actions to positively influence those in your circle to follow God and live life His way?

EXTENDED LESSON RESOURCES

Bible Commentary for the Teacher

God leads us to true and lasting repentance through knowing Him and His Word:

- ◆ **Repentance is our personal responsibility (2 Chronicles 34:3–7).** Josiah understood that his first responsibility was to repent of his own sin. Josiah's repentance made an incredible impact on the Kingdom of Judah, but it did not release the people of their personal guilt in regard to sin. Each person must answer to God for their own sin and make the choice to repent and turn to the Lord or to continue in their sins apart from God.
- ◆ **Repentance produces obedience to the Lord (2 Chronicles 34:3–21, 35:1–19).** Josiah began to seek God when he was 16 years old, and his repentance led to a life of obedience. He didn't just say he was done worshiping idols; he destroyed them. His change of mind and heart meant he lived differently. He repaired the temple so that God could be worshiped and read the Book of the Law so he and his people would know how to worship the Lord. Later, Josiah also obeyed the Lord by following His command to celebrate the Passover. Josiah read God's instructions on how to observe the Passover, shared the instructions with the people and diligently oversaw the

celebration. The Passover had not been observed with such diligence and faithfulness since before the time of the Kings of Israel and Judah (2 Chr. 35:18).

- ♦ **True repentance is internal and brings lasting change (2 Chronicles 34:1–2, 19–21, 27–33).** Josiah worshiped God the rest of his days (2 Chr. 34:33). If Josiah's repentance was only outward, to save his kingdom from God's wrath, he would have stopped worshiping God after hearing that God would hold back His judgment on the people. But Josiah's continued pursuit of God proved that his repentance was genuine and brought lasting change to his life and kingdom.
- ♦ **Repentance and obedience are built on God's Word (2 Chronicles 34:21).** Josiah's lack of knowledge about the book of the Law is puzzling because earlier kings had relied on its teaching. David organized the temple activities according to "everything that was written in the law of the Lord" (1 Chron. 16:40). Jehoshaphat (2 Chron. 17:7–9), Amaziah (2 Chron. 25:4) and Hezekiah (2 Chron. 31:3) also purposefully turned to the Law during their reigns. However, at some point after Hezekiah, the book of the Law was suppressed, hidden or lost. It could have been suppressed when later kings led Judah into idolatry, hidden from the threat of an enemy of God (from inside or outside Judah), or simply lost as the people did not worship the Lord for many years.¹ Whatever the reason for its disappearance, when Josiah began to seek after the Lord, He ensured that His Word was discovered again, so their repentance and obedience would be built on God's commands.

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¹ Andrew Hill, "1 & 2 Chronicles," The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2003).

**GOD RECEIVES THE PEOPLE'S REPENTANCE**

True repentance leads to worship and obedience.

JESUS CONNECTION

Josiah was a good king whom God used to lead the people back to Him, but he was not the perfect king that the people needed. Jesus is the righteous King of kings who brings us to God by paying our sin penalty and giving us His righteousness.

**LIFEWISE QUALITY**

RESPONSIBILITY – Taking ownership of my choices and behavior, including the consequences.

**HEAD**

What steps did Josiah take to get rid of idol worship in Judah?

God's law had not been read or taught for many years. Where did the priests find it? What was Josiah's response when he heard God's Word?



HEART

Josiah's father and grandfather had not worshiped God. But Josiah chose to follow Him and do the right thing. Do you think everyone agreed with his changes?

Why is it hard to follow God by yourself? Why would having family, friends or church members who also follow God help you do the right thing?



HANDS

We cannot force people to do the right thing, whether that means following God or making good choices or stopping a harmful behavior. But we all have influence. What are some practical ways you can use your words and actions to positively influence those in your circle to follow God and live life His way?



HEAD

GOD DECLARES A NEW COVENANT

God writes His law on our hearts and sends the Holy Spirit to dwell in us.



HEART

JESUS CONNECTION

Despite having God's law, God's people were still unable to obey Him because of the sinfulness of their hearts. The prophet Jeremiah told about a coming day when God would write His law on His people's hearts and provide lasting forgiveness of sin. When we trust in Jesus' work on the cross and allow the Holy Spirit to work within us, God forgives us and enables us to obey His commands.



HANDS

LIFEWISE QUALITY

FORGIVENESS – Erasing a debt that another person owes me.

BIBLE REVIEW

MSL 34 God Receives the People's Repentance | 1–2 Min

In the previous lesson, Josiah led the people to repent from idolatry and turn back to the Lord.

- ◆ How did Josiah show that he had repented from worshiping idols? (*He destroyed all the places people worshiped idols, destroyed the idols themselves, repaired the temple and worshiped God.*)
- ◆ How did Josiah respond after he heard the book of the law read? (*He tore his clothes and grieved over the sin of his people; he prayed that God would spare them from His wrath over their sin.*)

Today, we will learn about God's message to Jeremiah about a new covenant God would make with His people.

SESSION STARTERS

An Honest Response | 5–10 Min

- ◆ In each situation, which approach do you think is better? Why?
 - ◇ One person you talk to after dinner doesn't mention that you have food stuck in your teeth because they don't want to make you feel bad but one quietly tells you there's something there while offering you a mirror so you can fix it.
 - ◇ A person who will listen right now to what's bothering you but who may tell other people what you said or someone who says they can't listen right now, but promises to call you later to talk about it privately.
 - ◇ The friend who listens about the fight you're having with a sibling and agrees that you're the good guy and it's all their fault or the friend who listens but also points out that you share some of the blame for the conflict and asks you to think about how you could fix it.

- ♦ We'd like to think we want everyone to be honest with us, but it's sometimes difficult to hear difficult truths. Most of us prefer to be told everything will work out or that what's going wrong isn't our fault. Even though it's difficult, the best approach is to share the truth with someone and encourage them to take the necessary steps to resolve the situation. In today's story, Jeremiah, one of God's prophets, was called to share the honest but difficult truth with God's people.

Hardened "Hearts" | 5–10 Min

- ♦ Before class, gather two types of chocolate-covered candy: one with a hard center, such as toffee, and one with a soft center, such as nougat or caramel. You'll also need plastic knives and cutting boards or plates. During class, give two student volunteers one piece of each type of candy, a plastic knife and a plate, and challenge them to cut through both pieces as quickly as possible. The first one to cut both pieces wins. For a shorter activity, demonstrate how to cut both pieces of candy yourself.
- ♦ From the outside, did either candy look like it would be hard to cut? What made the difference? (*The center of one was harder.*) These fillings are a good picture of our hearts. Our hearts can be soft or hard, especially toward God. In today's story, the prophet Jeremiah tells God's people about the soft heart God promised to create in them.

BIBLE LESSON: GOD DECLARES A NEW COVENANT | 10–20 Min

God called Jeremiah to be His prophet when Jeremiah was young. He had a dangerous job during a difficult time in Israel's history. **Jeremiah delivered God's messages to the people of Judah, beginning during the reign of Josiah and continuing through the reigns of four evil kings and the people's exile from the land of Judah at the hand of Babylon.**

The people of Judah lived in an uncertain cultural and political situation and **probably wanted to hear a message about prosperity, peace and stability in their lives. But that isn't the message they received from Jeremiah.** Instead, he told them the truth about their broken relationship with God. **Jeremiah warned the people that if they did not repent and turn to the Lord, judgment would come, but his words were rejected. He was persecuted, or mistreated, for his faith in God and his message to the people.** Jeremiah is often referred to as the "weeping prophet" because his message, experiences and conversations with God were so distressing.

Although many of God's messages to Jeremiah caused sorrow, **God also gave Jeremiah a message filled with hope.** God spoke of His everlasting and faithful love for His people (Jer. 31:3). **He promised to redeem them from their enemies, gather them like a shepherd and lead them back to the land of Israel. The Lord said one day He would turn the people's mourning to joy, comfort them and provide for their needs (Jer. 31:10–13).**

Jeremiah 31:31–34a.

God knew that the people could never keep from being unfaithful to the Lord. It wasn't a matter of willpower, working harder or sacrificing more. Instead, it was a matter of their sinful nature. **All people are born into sin through Adam and Eve's disobedience and fall short of God's holiness (Ps. 51:5; Jer. 17:9; Romans 3:10, 23).** **Because our hearts are fully and completely corrupted by sin, we don't just need a program or good intentions. We need a new heart.**

God promised His people that He would bring about the change that was needed. He would place His law within them and write it on their hearts, minds and wills. The old covenant was written on stone

(Ex. 31:18, 34:28–29; Deut. 4:13, 5:22) and scrolls (Ex. 24:7), but the new covenant would be written on new hearts (Ezek. 36:26). **Once God wrote His Word on the people's hearts, they would be able to obey God and have a loving personal relationship with Him—their relationship with God would be completely restored.**

Jeremiah 31:34b–40.

Part of God's nature is that He is all-knowing, or omniscient. God cannot stop knowing fully, even about our sin. However, **God promised that, in the new covenant, He would choose not to hold the people's sin against them. He promised to remove it from them** "as far as the east from the west" (Ps. 103:12).

God knew that this promise to the people might seem too good to be true, so He took it a step further. **He affirmed that His people would be restored and forgiven unless two impossible things happened.** If the sun, stars and moon ceased to shine, then Israel would cease to be God's chosen people. If the vast earth and space were completely explored and known, then God would reject Israel. **Because these things would never come to pass, God's people could believe that He would never abandon them and bring about the new covenant that He promised.**

The people of Judah experienced the consequences of their unfaithfulness to God when the city of Jerusalem and God's temple were destroyed. They watched them be burned and torn down with their own eyes (2 Chr. 36:19). **Yet, God promised that the day would come when the city would be rebuilt and that even the places God had considered unclean would be cleansed and set apart as holy to the Lord (v. 40).**

Big Ideas

- ♦ **Jesus reconciles us to God.** God promised the people that one day they would all "know God." They would no longer be rejected or far away from God because of sin, but brought into a right relationship with Him. This promise was ultimately fulfilled through Jesus' death and resurrection (Rom. 5:10; 2 Cor. 5:19–21). Jesus sacrificed Himself to give us eternal life so that we might know God the Father and His Son, Jesus (John 17:3), have a personal relationship with God and one day see Him face to face without fear of judgment.
- ♦ **The Holy Spirit empowers us to obey God.** God vowed that one day He would write His Word on the hearts of His people. The people's obedience would no longer be external only but motivated internally by their love for God. This continual love and desire to please God does not come from the sin nature, but from God Himself. Anyone who repents, confesses their sins and believes in Jesus' ability to save them is given the Holy Spirit. God's Spirit indwells, or lives inside, each of Jesus' followers (Jn 14:17; 1 Cor. 6:19–20), cleansing, softening and transforming their hearts and helping them to walk in God's ways (Jn. 16:8; 2 Cor. 3:16–18; Tit. 3:5).

Discussion Questions

- ♦ How would you describe the differences between the old covenant God gave to the people through Moses and the new covenant described in Jeremiah?
- ♦ We often try to address our problems by focusing on external things (behavior, appearance, image, etc.). But the Bible teaches that we have a heart problem, not a behavioral problem. How might this idea change the way we deal with our problems?
- ♦ How does the new covenant demonstrate God's grace and mercy toward us?

- ◆ Some see religion as following a list of rules to impress God into liking or doing something for us, but the Bible emphasizes that obedience to God should come out of our love for Him. Why is that difference so important?
- ◆ Some in our culture believe that people don't really change. Do you agree or disagree? Do you think God agrees or disagrees? Explain.

REINFORCEMENT ACTIVITIES

Suggested Video | 5–10 Min

BibleProject Video: *Lev/Heart*; Full video: 3:33.

Suggested Visual Aid | 5 Min.

Poster 13: *Prophets*

Forgiveness Song | 5–10 Min

- ◆ Play a song or music video about forgiveness for your class. Consider providing lyrics or using a lyric video so they can follow along. Suggested songs:
 - ◆ Kevin LeVar, "A Heart that Forgives"
 - ◆ Sidewalk Prophets, "Where Forgiveness Is"
 - ◆ Matthew West, "Forgiveness"
- ◆ After playing the song or video, discuss how forgiveness is described in the song.
 - ◆ What images or lyrics stuck out to you? Why?
 - ◆ How does this song relate forgiveness to our heart?
 - ◆ Why do we need the heart God promises in the new covenant to give and receive forgiveness?

JESUS CONNECTION



Despite having God's law, God's people were still unable to obey Him because of the sinfulness of their hearts. The prophet Jeremiah told about a coming day when God would write His law on His people's hearts and provide lasting forgiveness of sin. When we trust in Jesus' work on the cross and allow the Holy Spirit to work within us, God forgives us and enables us to obey His commands.

LIFEWISE QUALITY | 3–5 Min

FORGIVENESS – Erasing a debt that another person owes me.

Living LifeWise

Because of Jesus' death and resurrection, we are free to accept forgiveness and offer it to others.

LWQ Script

Because our sinful hearts are hard and deceitful (Jer. 17:9), we often refuse to seek forgiveness for our sins or accept it when it is offered. God uses **conviction** to soften our hearts. When we feel convicted, we see and admit our guilt, the depth of our sin and how much hurt we have caused to God, ourselves and others. Experiencing sadness and regret for what we've done doesn't feel good, but it can lead us to ask for God's and others' forgiveness so that our relationships can be restored.

The new covenant Jeremiah describes will be written on the heart. The idea is that our hearts will be made soft and open, like Jesus' heart. And while we still live with the reality of sin, we have access to that covenant now in Jesus. Jesus' heart was fully committed to God. And because Jesus never sinned, His sacrifice on the cross covers our sin debt. Rather than making us feel bad about ourselves, God's conviction is intended to drive us to the cross where we can receive Jesus' full forgiveness and His Spirit who will empower us to ask for forgiveness from, and offer it to, those around us whenever it is needed.

Head, Heart, Hands Reinforcement | In-class or take-home

◆ Head Questions

- ◆ What was God basing His covenant and promise of forgiveness on—the people's obedience or His own faithfulness? Why is that good news for us?
- ◆ The people were living in times of political upheaval and cultural unrest. God could have promised them peace and prosperity, but He didn't. What did God promise them?

◆ Heart Questions

- ◆ Forgiveness is a necessary ingredient for strong relationships. How does forgiveness help restore a broken relationship?
- ◆ Is forgiveness by itself enough to make everything right again?
- ◆ How might God's willingness to forgive you because of Jesus affect how you react to those who hurt you?

◆ Hands Challenge

- ◆ An apology is often the first step to asking for and giving forgiveness. An effective apology has four parts:
 - The words "I'm sorry"
 - A clear explanation of the offense: "I'm sorry for speaking to you so unkindly"
 - An acknowledgment of harm: "I know I hurt your feelings"
 - A request for forgiveness: "Please forgive me," or "Will you forgive me?"
- ◆ How good are you at apologizing? How good are you at receiving an apology and offering forgiveness?
- ◆ Write out an apology for something you know you need to ask forgiveness for. Ask God for the courage and opportunity to offer that apology to the one you hurt.

EXTENDED LESSON RESOURCES

Bible Commentary for the Teacher

In ancient times, a covenant was a formal, solemn, and binding agreement. Both parties involved would promise something (money, support, protection, etc.), and if either side failed to keep the rules of the covenant, they faced harsh punishment, even death. Jeremiah's message to the people showed that God's covenants are very different from the promises that human beings made at that time.

- ◆ **God's covenant is based on His grace (Jeremiah 31:31–33).**

- ❖ **God paid the cost for both parties.** Whenever God initiated a covenant (e.g., Noah, Abraham), He took the price for both sides on Himself. The Lord's covenant with Israel depended entirely on His power and grace, rather than their ability to keep their end of the agreement. He loved His people so much that He bonded Himself to them although they could offer Him nothing in return.
- ❖ **God's covenant was eternal.** While human covenants existed for a set time or until the parties involved died, God's promises offer grace to the people of Israel then and for the future. The Old Testament proclaimed a future hope, a new covenant, that would not be fulfilled in Jeremiah's day, that would last forever and would include all who hear and believe the good news about Jesus' death and resurrection.
- ◆ **God's covenant allows for the forgiveness of sins (Hebrews 10).**
 - ❖ **God withheld the punishment for sin before Jesus died.** Human covenants focused on physical help or protection, but God's covenants focused on the spiritual. God's covenant with Israel at Mount Sinai allowed the people to sacrifice animals as a payment for their sins, but it did not take their sin away (Heb. 10:4, 11). When the people sacrificed animals, God promised to withhold the punishment that their sin deserved, but they had to make continual sacrifices, day after day and year after year, to remind them that they were sinners in the presence of a holy God (Heb. 1:1) and that no animal was worthy enough to cleanse the people of their sin and rebellion.
 - ❖ **After Jesus' death and resurrection, God was able to offer the people complete forgiveness.** Jesus' sacrifice was the beginning of the new covenant Jeremiah spoke about. He paid for sins in a way that the animal sacrifices could not. Jesus sacrificed Himself on the cross, once for all time (Heb. 10:12) and opened the way to what the old covenant could never accomplish—the complete forgiveness of our sins (Heb. 10:16–18).
- ◆ **God's covenant brings us close to Him (Jer. 31:34).**
 - ❖ **God desires a personal relationship with us.** Human covenants created a legal relationship. But the term *know* in this verse points to an intimate personal knowledge between two persons who are completely committed to a relationship with one another forever. God gave His people the law because He wanted them to “know” Him in this way.
 - ❖ **God restored our relationship with Him through Jesus' sacrifice.** This kind of relationship with God was impossible through the old covenant because people's sin separated them from a close relationship with God. Through His death and resurrection, Jesus destroyed the barrier between himself and sinners by reconciling us with God.

REVIEW
ONLY

**GOD DECLARES A NEW COVENANT**

God writes His law on our hearts and sends the Holy Spirit to dwell in us.

JESUS CONNECTION

Despite having God's law, God's people were still unable to obey Him because of the sinfulness of their hearts. The prophet Jeremiah told about a coming day when God would write His law on His people's hearts and provide lasting forgiveness of sin. When we trust in Jesus' work on the cross and allow the Holy Spirit to work within us, God forgives us and enables us to obey His commands.

**LIFEWISE QUALITY**

FORGIVENESS – Erasing a debt that another person owes me.

**HEAD**

What was God basing His covenant and promise of forgiveness on—the people's obedience or His own faithfulness? Why is that good news for us?

The people were living in times of political upheaval and cultural unrest. God could have promised them peace and prosperity, but He didn't. What did God promise them?



HEART

Forgiveness is a necessary ingredient for strong relationships. How does forgiveness help restore a broken relationship?

Is forgiveness by itself enough to make everything right again?

How might God's willingness to forgive you because of Jesus affect how you react to those who hurt you?



HANDS

An apology is often the first step to asking for and giving forgiveness. An effective apology has four parts:

- ◆ The words "I'm sorry."
- ◆ A clear explanation of the offense: "I'm sorry for speaking to you so unkindly."
- ◆ An acknowledgement of harm: "I know I hurt your feelings."
- ◆ A request for forgiveness: "Please forgive me," or "Will you forgive me?"

How good are you at apologizing? How good are you at receiving an apology and offering forgiveness?

Write out an apology for something you know you need to ask forgiveness for. Ask God for the courage and opportunity to offer that apology to the one you hurt.



HEAD

GOD ANSWERS A CONFUSED PROPHET

Joy is rooted in a relationship with God, not circumstances.



HEART

JESUS CONNECTION

Habakkuk lived at a time when evil seemed to be everywhere. By faith, he trusted God's promise that God would deliver His people. Injustice, violence and wickedness surround us today, but we can live by faith and trust that Jesus will return one day to make all things right.



HANDS

LIFEWISE QUALITY

JOY – Having a cheerful response regardless of my circumstances.

BIBLE REVIEW

MSL 35 God Declares a New Covenant | 1–2 Min

In the previous lesson, Jeremiah proclaimed a new covenant that God would make with His people.

- ♦ How were the new covenant and old covenant different from one another? (*The old covenant was given through Moses, the new covenant through Jesus; The old covenant was external and obeyed out of duty, the new covenant internal—God's Word would be obeyed through love and the power of God's Spirit instead of duty.*)
- ♦ How would the new covenant change the people's relationship with God? (*There would be no separation between God and His people, they would be forgiven and reconciled to Him.*)

Today, we will learn about a conversation between God and a prophet named Habbakuk. Habbakuk begged God to bring justice where there was evil.

SESSION STARTERS

Pictures of Joy | 5–10 Min

- ♦ Form groups of 2–3 students and provide paper and markers for each group. Give a few minutes for the groups to brainstorm and choose one symbol that represents joy to them and draw it on their paper. Have groups share their symbol pictures with the class and briefly explain why they chose that symbol.
- ♦ Joy is an important quality for us. Without a source of joy, we can easily become anxious, discouraged or sad. In today's story, we'll learn about a prophet of God who learned an important lesson about the true source of joy.

Joy vs. Happiness | 5–10 Min

- ♦ Draw a venn diagram (overlapping circles) on the board or a large piece of paper. Write *Joy* on one circle and *Happiness* on the other. Invite students to think of words or ideas that describe joy,

happiness or both and write them in the appropriate part of the diagram. After a few minutes, ask students to share which one (joy or happiness) they would rather have and why.

- ♦ While happiness is often something we feel based on external circumstances, joy comes from a different source. In today's story, the prophet Habakkuk faced some scary circumstances, but through this experience, he learned that happiness and joy are not the same thing. Habakkuk was facing some pretty scary circumstances but learned that joy is still possible because of God's presence.

BIBLE LESSON: GOD ANSWERS A CONFUSED PROPHET | 10–20 Min

Habakkuk served God as a prophet in Judah before Babylon invaded the land. The four kings of Judah who reigned after Josiah were evil and turned the people back to sin and idolatry. **The people were unfaithful to the Lord and the land was filled with sin, violence and injustice.** Habakkuk loved his people, yet he questioned why God allowed Judah to continue sinning without any consequences.

Habakkuk 1:2–6.

Habakkuk asked God some very honest but difficult questions. He grieved over Judah's sins, their violence, injustice, wrongdoing, oppression, strife and conflict. Although Habakkuk desired to see revival and repentance in Judah, as it was during the reign of King Josiah, he also wanted God to judge the people's sin. **He asked why God tolerated such evil behavior and called God to action.** Habakkuk was justified in his frustration with injustice, but he wrongly assumed that God had not acted because He didn't care.

Habakkuk also asked how long God would allow injustice to go on. Habakkuk longed for God to deal justly with the wicked people of Judah, But **he struggled to trust God's timing.**

In His grace, God willingly answers Habakkuk's questions. **God told His prophet to pay attention because He was already at work. In fact, what God was doing was so surprising that Habakkuk would struggle to believe it—God was raising up a powerful people to punish Judah: the Chaldeans, also known as the Babylonians.**

Summary of Habakkuk 1:7–11.

As if to make sure, there is no way Habakkuk could misunderstand who He meant, God begins to describe this coming force. God acknowledged that the Babylonians were a "dreaded and fearsome" people without any sense of the justice or dignity described in God's laws (Hab. 1:7). Instead, their god was their own strength (v. 11). They would soon come to Judah bent on violence and destruction.

Habakkuk 1:12–13; 2:3–4.

God's response raised more questions for Habakkuk. Although it reassured him to know that God was concerned, engaged and had a plan to hold the people of Judah accountable for their sin, Habakkuk was still confused. **Why would God give power and victory to a nation that was even more evil than Judah? God is perfect and holy. How could He use wicked people to cleanse Judah of sin? Wouldn't giving Babylon the power to destroy Judah be the same thing as giving them permission to live wickedly?**

God graciously responded to Habakkuk's questions a second time. He **wanted Habakkuk to trust in His sovereignty in the midst of injustice.** God had a perfect plan in place, even though it wasn't the plan that Habakkuk would have chosen. **Habakkuk was mistaken to believe that God's character would not allow Him to use enemy nations to discipline His people.** God had used the Assyrians to discipline the

Kingdom of Israel over 100 years before and would soon send the same judgment on the Kingdom of Judah. But this didn't mean that God approved of Babylon in any way.

God described Babylon and its king as puffed up with pride and self-reliance. Babylon's kingdom would be short-lived, and **God would also judge Babylon for their great sin and rejection of Him** (Hab. 2:6–20). But **He encouraged Habakkuk and all who still followed the Lord to live by faith, by placing all their trust in God in the midst of a dark time.**

Summary of Habakkuk 3:1–15.

After God revealed His plan, Habakkuk stopped asking questions; instead, he **prayed. He humbled himself before God and stood in awe of Him.** He recalled how God had worked for the salvation of His people in the past by bringing them out of Egypt. Habakkuk asked God to do a new work for His people and show mercy in the midst of His wrath. Most of all, Habakkuk praised the Lord for who He is: an all-powerful Creator, full of glory and might.

Habakkuk 3:16–19.

Habakkuk still trembled with fear as he thought about God's plan unfolding. Yet, his perspective of God and the situation had changed. His conversation with God moved him from confusion and worry to trust, worship and contentment.

Habakkuk understood that God's judgment against Judah would be devastating. Everything the people depended on for survival would be destroyed: fig trees, grape vines, olive trees, produce, sheep and cattle. Even though this experience would be incredibly painful, **Habakkuk** declared that he would still choose to rejoice in the Lord. He **learned that his joy was not dependent upon his circumstances and that he could trust God when everything around him fell apart. Habakkuk resolved to wait confidently and patiently for the day when God would make all things right.**

Big Ideas

- ♦ **God always does what is right.** Habakkuk had a strong opinion about exactly how God should work, but his plan was not what God thought was best. God's thoughts are not the same as our thoughts and His ways are higher than ours (Isa. 55:8–9). His wise and all-knowing nature means that He always does what is right.
- ♦ **God's timing is perfect.** Habakkuk longed for God to right injustice immediately, but he couldn't see that God was already working behind the scenes to address Judah's sin. Because God knows all things (1 Jn. 3:20), He alone knew the best time to bring judgment upon Judah. God challenged Habakkuk to wait patiently on God's timing and trust that God was working even though no one could see it.
- ♦ **God will have the final victory over sin.** Even though Habakkuk thought things looked hopeless, God was in control. God has authority over all things, and He affirmed to His prophet that He would bring judgment in regard to sin. He has also promised us that one day He will judge all sin and right every injustice (Ps. 94:15–16, 23; Rom. 2:5–8, Rev. 21:3–5). It is because of this promise that we can live with confidence and joy as we place our trust in Him.

Discussion Questions

- ◆ God told Habakkuk that “the righteous one will live by his faith” (Hab. 2:4). What does it look like to live by faith? Does living by faith mean blindly trusting God? Why or why not?
- ◆ What is the connection between faith and evidence? Are they opposites or can they be combined? Is faith blind, as some people claim? Why or why not?
- ◆ Why is it important to remember God’s character when facing hard things? How can that keep us from believing lies about God, our circumstances or ourselves when we feel attacked or hurt?
- ◆ In what ways is Habakkuk’s life and culture like (or unlike) your life today? How was Habakkuk able to rejoice despite his circumstances? How can you respond to your difficulties with joy and worship?

REINFORCEMENT ACTIVITIES

Suggested Video | 5–10 Min

BibleProject Video: *Habakkuk*; Full video: 6:46.

Suggested Visual Aid | 5 Min.

Poster 13: *Prophets*

The Source of Joy | 5–10 Min

- ◆ Read out loud, display or help the students find the following verses in their Bibles.
 - ◇ Psalm 16:11 – You reveal the path of life to me; in your presence is abundant joy; at your right hand are eternal pleasures.
 - ◇ Nehemiah 8:10b – Do not grieve, because the joy of the Lord is your strength.
- ◆ Discuss the verses with the class: How is joy described in these verses? How is joy related to God? Do you see these verses illustrated in Habakkuk’s story? How might they help you find joy when you face difficult circumstances?
- ◆ Optional: provide index cards or paper and markers and allow the students to choose one of the verses to write on a card and decorate to take home with them.

JESUS CONNECTION



Habakkuk lived at a time when evil seemed to be everywhere. By faith, he trusted God’s promise that God would deliver His people. Injustice, violence and wickedness surround us today, but we can live by faith and trust that Jesus will return one day to make all things right.

LIFEWISE QUALITY | 3–5 Min

JOY – Having a cheerful response regardless of my circumstances.

Living LifeWise

Because God is eternal and all-powerful, we can face every situation with joy.

LWQ Script

With smartphones and the 24-hour news cycle, it is easy to get swept up in the latest political or celebrity feud or our personal dramas. Negative emotions threaten to overwhelm us, and joy seems completely out of reach. Thousands of years ago, Habakkuk faced the same struggle. His world was spinning out of control, and God’s plan to bring Babylon to punish Israel meant the future looked bleak. And yet, when Habakkuk looked at God, joy appeared.

God is eternal, unchanging and all-powerful. Our lives may be a mess, our culture in upheaval, and the future uncertain, but God has it all firmly in hand. He has already provided all we need in Jesus, and His promises cannot fail. His Spirit brings peace in sorrow and anchors us firmly in the truth. So no matter what we face, we can choose to respond with joy.

Head, Heart, Hands Reinforcement | In-class or take-home

◆ Head Questions

- ◆ Habakkuk struggled to understand what God was doing. He began to doubt God as he witnessed the violence and injustice all around him. But by the end of the passage (3:17–19), how was Habakkuk responding?
- ◆ Did Habakkuk’s circumstances change? What was his response rooted in?

◆ Heart Questions

- ◆ What is the difference between happiness and joy? Why do we pursue happiness instead of joy?
- ◆ The world is full of evil. If we haven’t already experienced it, we will someday, probably soon. God’s interaction with Habakkuk gave him joy in the face of great difficulty. What is your response to God’s answers to Habakkuk?

◆ Hands Challenge

- ◆ Rewrite Habakkuk 3:17–18. Replace Habakkuk’s imagery in verse 17 with scenarios from our day and age (example: “Though no one shares a single post of mine on social media”), but copy verse 18 exactly. Hang it up where you can see it daily and ask God to help you rejoice in Him no matter what.

EXTENDED LESSON RESOURCES

Bible Commentary for the Teacher

Humanity often struggles to address injustice, so it is helpful to know that God is deeply concerned about justice. God’s conversation with Habakkuk reveals how God’s people can respond to injustice.

- ◆ **Recognize and call out injustice (Habakkuk 1:2–6).** Habakkuk’s ministry occurred in the final years of Judah’s kingdom. He was a contemporary of the prophets Nahum, Zephaniah and

Jeremiah¹ and likely served God as a prophet during the reign of Jehoiakim, just a decade after King Josiah called the people to repent, destroy their idols and return to the Lord. King Jehoiakim was evil; he rejected all Josiah had done for the Lord and promoted dishonesty and injustice. Instead of making excuses or covering up their sin, Habakkuk honestly admitted how unjust and far from God the people of Judah had become.

- ◆ **Pray for God to act (Habakkuk 1:2–6, 1:12–2:1).** Habakkuk was greatly burdened at the unfaithfulness of God's people, but he didn't just talk about it with other prophets or complain. Instead, he prayed. He asked God to intervene. He prayed for **spiritual revival** among his people but also understood that God's punishment was the catalyst needed for cleansing and spiritually reviving His people. And when God's answers to his questions weren't what Habakkuk expected, he honestly expressed his confusion and doubt to God as well.
- ◆ **Focus on God's character, rather than sin and injustice alone (Habakkuk 3:1–15).** Habakkuk's prayer is a great example of true confidence in God. He reminded himself about God's character and past actions on behalf of His people. By shifting his focus, Habakkuk realized the sin and injustice of God's people were not stand-alone issues but existed in the context of God's character and authority. He reminded himself and the people that God was right to judge sin and able to restore His people. His plan could be trusted.
- ◆ **Choose joy in the midst of difficulty (Habakkuk 3:17–19).** When Habakkuk's prayer concluded, his circumstances had not changed. The outer world remained evil and filled with injustice. God's people were unfaithful, and their judgment was near. The prophet, however, chose to praise God because He had heard God's voice, had seen God's vision and knew the outcome. Rather than being swept away by fear, he chose to respond to difficult circumstances with faith and joy. He declared that nothing we have is better than knowing God, that there is always great joy in His presence (Ps. 16:11) and that having a personal relationship with God means we can rejoice in the midst of sorrow.

¹O. Palmer Robertson, "This Historical Setting," The New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans Publishing Co. Database, 1990).

**GOD ANSWERS A CONFUSED PROPHET**

Joy is rooted in a relationship with God, not circumstances.

JESUS CONNECTION

Habakkuk lived at a time when evil seemed to be everywhere. By faith, he trusted God's promise that God would deliver His people. Injustice, violence and wickedness surround us today, but we can live by faith and trust that Jesus will return one day to make all things right.

**LIFEWISE QUALITY**

JOY – Having a cheerful response regardless of my circumstances.

**HEAD**

Habakkuk struggled to understand what God was doing. He began to doubt God as he witnessed the violence and injustice all around him. But by the end of the passage (3:17–19), how was Habakkuk responding?

Did Habakkuk's circumstances change? What was his response rooted in?



HEART

What is the difference between happiness and joy? Why do we pursue happiness instead of joy?

The world is full of evil. If we haven't already experienced it, we will someday, probably soon. God's interaction with Habakkuk gave him joy in the face of great difficulty. What is your response to God's answers to Habakkuk?



HANDS

Rewrite Habakkuk 3:17–18. Replace Habakkuk's imagery in verse 17 with scenarios from our day and age (example: "Though no one shares a single post of mine on social media"), but copy verse 18 exactly. Hang it up where you can see it daily and ask God to help you rejoice in Him no matter what.



HEAD

GOD DISCIPLINES A REBELLIOUS PEOPLE

God patiently pursues sinners, but those who harden their hearts will one day face judgment.



HEART

JESUS CONNECTION

God righteously punished His people for their sin, but He remained faithful to them and kept the promise He had made to David to preserve a remnant and provide a king. Ultimately, Jesus defeated sin on the cross and is our King forever.



HANDS

LIFEWISE QUALITY

HUMILITY – Refusing to think of myself as more important than I am.

BIBLE REVIEW

MSL 36 God Answers a Confused Prophet | 1-2 Min

In the previous lesson, God reminded Habbakuk that even when things were very difficult, He was still at work.

- ♦ What questions did Habakkuk ask God? (*Why wasn't God punishing Judah for their sin? How long would God wait to punish His people? Why was He using a wicked nation to punish Judah?*)
- ♦ When God answered Habakkuk's questions, what did Habakkuk learn about God? (*God was in control, God would act at the right time, God is at work even when we can't see it.*)

Today, we will learn about how God judged the people of Judah for their sin.

SESSION STARTERS

Mold the Clay | 5-10 Min

- ♦ Before class, create two portions of modeling dough or clay. Keep one sealed so it remains soft and leave the other uncovered (or, if clay, bake in the oven) to dry out or harden it. In class, choose two volunteers to come to the front. Give each student one of the portions of clay and challenge them to mold it into a shape of your choosing (a house, an animal, a star, etc.) in 30 seconds. The student with the hardened clay should not be able to accomplish the task. Be sure to praise both students for their efforts.
- ♦ Ask the students to describe what happened during the activity. What determined whether the clay could be shaped? This activity demonstrates the problem of pride in our hearts. When our hearts are hardened by pride, we won't change our ways even when we know we aren't doing what's right. In today's story, the pride of the last four kings of Judah resulted in God's final judgment against the sin of His people.

Rules of Rebellion | 5–10 Min

- ♦ Ask the students to come up with a list of stories or movies that include rebels or a rebellion (*Star Wars*, *The Hunger Games*, etc.). Have them choose one that all (or most) of them are familiar with. Using that story or movie as a starting point, ask the students to brainstorm a list of qualities that define or describe rebels or rebellion. Write them on the board.
- ♦ Do we tend to think of rebels or rebellions as good or bad? What determines if a rebel is the good guy or the bad guy? In our story today, we will see how both the rulers and the people of Judah rebelled against God and how God punished them as a result.

BIBLE LESSON: GOD DISCIPLINES A REBELLIOUS PEOPLE | 10–20 Min

Summary of 2 Chronicles 36:1–10.

King Josiah did what was right in God's eyes. He reigned in Judah for 31 years. In comparison, **the reign of Judah's last four kings totaled only 22 years. Kings Jehoahaz, Jehoiakim, Jehoiachin and Zedekiah not only lacked the wisdom to lead their people well, but they were also unfaithful to God. In fact, all four did what was evil in God's eyes** (2 Kings 23:32; 2 Chron. 36:5, 9, 12).

Nebuchadnezzar, the ruler of Babylon, threatened the last three kings of Judah with attack, so they became his vassals. Nebuchadnezzar gradually removed all of the treasure and items used to worship the Lord from the temple in Jerusalem. **Whenever one of the kings of Judah rebelled against Nebuchadnezzar, he removed them from rule and established someone else as king of Judah.**

2 Chronicles 36:11–16a.

The last of Judah's kings was Zedekiah, who reigned for 11 years. He was a deceptive and prideful ruler who hardened his heart toward God. Judah was only 20 years removed from the spiritual reform experienced under King Josiah. At that time, it would have been unimaginable for the priests to defile the temple with pagan worship practices. When his father, King Josiah, died, **Zedekiah was about 10 years old, but he was old enough to remember the people worshiping God according to His Word.** Yet during **Zedekiah's 11-year reign, he rejected God's ways. The king, priests and people turned back to idolatry.**

In God's faithfulness and compassion, He sent prophets "time and time again" to warn the people to repent and turn back to the Lord (2 Chr. 36:15). They not only refused to listen, but mocked God's messengers and despised God's words. The result was spiritual and political devastation.

Although he swore allegiance to Nebuchadnezzar before God, Zedekiah begged Egypt for help to defeat Babylon (Ezek. 17:11–21). As the Babylonians laid siege to Jerusalem, **the prophet Jeremiah told Zedekiah to surrender to King Nebuchadnezzar so that the city and the people might be saved** (Jer. 21:8–10; 27:8–15; 38:1–3, 17–18). **Instead, Zedekiah arrested and imprisoned Jeremiah** (Jer. 37–38). Zedekiah depended on his own wisdom rather than admitting that God knew what was best, resulting in the complete destruction of Judah and Jerusalem.

2 Chronicles 36:16b–21.

What followed was one of the most important events in Old Testament history: the fall of Jerusalem and the exile of God's people. **Because God's people continually hardened their hearts toward God and rejected His Word, God had no choice but to unleash His wrath.**

The Lord brought the Babylonians against Judah, and Nebuchadnezzar completely destroyed Jerusalem. The Babylonians massacred the people seeking refuge at the temple, regardless of age and

gender. **They removed all the temple treasures left and burned it. The Babylonians destroyed all the palaces and city walls.** Judah felt the full force of God's judgment.

God judged the people of Judah because of their sin and unfaithfulness to Him, but at the same time, He also showed mercy. He preserved a remnant of His people. This remnant was exiled to Babylon for 70 years just as the prophet Jeremiah had prophesied. But at the end of 70 years, God would allow His people to return to the land. They would worship Him again and wait for God to send the promised Messiah to save them from sin.

Big Ideas

- ◆ **God is long-suffering toward unrepentant sinners.** For generations, God had faithfully sent the prophets to warn His people to repent of sin and turn to Him. God is like a loving father patiently pleading with his child to turn from a dangerous and destructive path. God does the same for us. Rather than sending immediate punishment for our sin, He sends people to warn us and allows us to experience situations that confront our sin and call us to repentance and faith (2 Pet. 3:9).
- ◆ **God's discipline provides an opportunity for His people to repent.** Although God repeatedly sent His messengers to warn His people about the consequences for their sin, their pride blinded them to their own responsibility, so God took it a step further. God sent Babylon to destroy Jerusalem. God's intent was not to reject and destroy His people forever, but to punish them so that they would learn from their sin. He wanted them to experience the devastating consequences of sin and idolatry so they would humble themselves and return to the Lord. When we say we are Jesus' followers, but continually refuse to listen to God's Word, God sometimes disciplines us so that we will repent of our sin and humbly return to Him.
- ◆ **God preserves a remnant.** Even though God's wrath fell on the people of Judah, they were not all destroyed. He graciously allowed some of them to live. God wants His people to live, not die. This idea is seen many times in the Bible (e.g., Noah and the flood, Moses' deliverance as a baby, God punishing the Israelites in the wilderness, Obadiah hiding 100 prophets from Jezebel, etc.) In His grace, God always preserves a remnant whom He will continue to invite to humbly serve Him (Rom. 11:5).

Discussion Questions

- ◆ Why is it a good thing that God exercises judgment against sin?
- ◆ Why do we tend to want God to judge other people's sins but overlook our own?
- ◆ How is God's wrath different from ours?
- ◆ What are some ways people demonstrate pride? How can we identify areas of pride in our own lives?
- ◆ Do you think pride is ever acceptable? Why or why not?
- ◆ How do you typically respond to being corrected? What might this say about your heart?
- ◆ How can you practice humbly receiving a correction from a parent or teacher? What is the best way to approach someone you need to correct?

REINFORCEMENT ACTIVITIES

Suggested Video | 5–10 Min

BibleProject Video: *Holiness*; Full video: 5:55.

Suggested Visual Aid | 5 Min.

Poster 11: *Divided Kingdom*

All Blown Up | 5–10 Min

- ♦ Challenge the students to blow up a balloon as big as they can or until they pop. (You can also have two or three volunteers race to blow up balloons or use bubble gum, if desired.) When everyone has gotten as big as they can or popped their balloon, move to discussion.
- ♦ Pride is like blowing up our own balloons. We think we are better or more important than others, and we start to expect them to think so as well. Sometimes we even think our way, our ideas or our plans are better or more important even than God's.
 - ◇ What kind of problems does being filled with pride cause?
 - ◇ Read James 4:6–10 or provide copies for the class. How does the Bible say God reacts to our pride? To humility? What does James tell us to do in response to this truth? (*Submit, humble ourselves.*)
 - ◇ Does being humble mean we walk around deflated like a sad little balloon? No, of course not. So what does it look like to be humble?

JESUS CONNECTION



God righteously punished His people for their sin, but He remained faithful to them and kept the promise He had made to David to preserve a remnant and provide a king. Ultimately, Jesus defeated sin on the cross and is our King forever.

LIFEWISE QUALITY | 3–5 Min

HUMILITY – Refusing to think of myself as more important than I am.

Living LifeWise

God alone is perfect and holy, so we can respond humbly to God and to others.

LWQ Script

Pride can have devastating consequences. Judah's kings were more concerned with protecting their power and political positions than leading God's people well. Although God says He will honor and give grace to the humble (Is. 57:15; Jas. 3:6), Zedekiah refused to repent, rely on God or listen to the prophets, so Jerusalem was destroyed and God's people were sent into exile from the Promised Land.

A humble person, however, knows that God is holy and powerful and they are not. So they listen to God and obey Him, instead of competing for social standing or power.¹ Jesus demonstrated true humility when He came to Earth, served others and sacrificed His life for us (Phil. 2:6–8), and His Spirit enables us to submit to God and to serve others, instead of comparing ourselves to them.

Head, Heart, Hands Reinforcement | In-class or take-home

◆ Head Questions

- ◇ Who pleaded with Zedekiah to return to the Lord? How did Zedekiah respond to this advice?
- ◇ Zedekiah pursued his own greatness because of his pride. What were the consequences of this lack of humility?

◆ Heart Questions

- ◇ If we declare that we believe in God and want to put our faith in Him, He becomes our one true God, whom we serve and follow. He is our King. Therefore, we shouldn't act like we are better, wiser or more important than God.
Are there times when you become so focused on yourself, your accomplishments, your possessions or how good you are at something that you forget God is the author of all of it?
- ◇ Choose one of those things (an accomplishment, possession or talent) and write down how you could use it to serve someone else instead of getting praise for yourself.
- ◇ Do you think of yourself as a prideful person? Think of a time when a teacher, coach, pastor or parent gave you some advice to help you do better or to correct what you were doing. Did you carefully listen, thank them and try to do better? Or did you get angry, roll your eyes, shrug it off and continue as you were? If the latter, how could you have responded with more humility?

◆ Hands Challenge

- ◇ Pride is a very destructive force. Zedekiah's pride led to the utter destruction of Judah and Jerusalem. Thankfully, pride does not have to control us. If we listen and apply wise counsel from others, look to serve others and remember that God is responsible for all that we have, we will be on our way to eliminating pride in our lives. Out of those three things, which one will you commit to improving? Write how you will do that.

EXTENDED LESSON RESOURCES

Bible Commentary for the Teacher

The story of Zedekiah helps us to see the consequences of a continually prideful attitude:

- ◆ **Pride blinds us to God's wisdom (2 Chron. 36:11–13).** Zedekiah surely did not take the crown hoping for his kingdom's demise. He likely thought his intentions for his reign were good; unfortunately, good intentions devoid of godly character never end well. Zedekiah's pride (2 Chron. 36:12) caused him to harden his heart against the Lord, and therefore he rejected God's word and counsel. He was also unable to see God's coming judgment.
- ◆ **Pride negatively impacts those around us (2 Chronicles 36:14).** When Zedekiah rejected God and turned to idolatry, he set a clear example for his kingdom. The ramifications of his idol worship filtered down from the throne all the way to the common people. Even the priests, who were

¹ Jerry Bridges, *The Practice of Godliness* (Colorado Springs, CO: Navpress, 1996), 75.

charged with teaching the people about God and maintaining the temple's purity, were involved in idol worship. In the end, Zedekiah's pride led to the utter destruction of his people and kingdom.

- ◆ **Selfish pride and confidence in God cannot co-exist (2 Chron. 36:16).** Three harsh words are used to describe Judah's reaction to the warnings God's messengers sent: ridicule, despise and scoff. Defining these words reveals the hardness of Judah's heart toward the Lord.
 - ◇ Ridicule: speech intended to cause contemptuous laughter at a person
 - ◇ Despise: to regard with contempt, disgust or disdain
 - ◇ Scoff: to speak derisively; to mock or jeer

Judah's fade into hatred toward the Lord and His prophets wasn't immediate, but a subtle drift into rebellion. When we continually refuse to humble ourselves before God and others, pride slowly grows in our hearts. Before we realize how pride has infected our faith, we are blinded to the truth. The only remedy for this is to humble ourselves before God by renewing our minds daily in God's Word (Rom. 12:2; Eph. 4:22-24).

- ◆ **Pride brings God's discipline (2 Chron. 36:16b-17).** God disciplined the people of Judah when they hardened their hearts against Him and completely rejected His Word and messengers. God disciplines those He loves; His discipline is purposeful and always for our good (Heb. 12:5-11). In God's mercy, He never withdraws His salvation from us as a method of discipline. For those who believe in Christ, God's judgment for sin has already fallen upon Christ; therefore, God's wrath no longer remains for those who are in Christ (Rom. 8:1). Instead, God uses only faithful, loving discipline to correct His beloved children in their sin and guide them on the path of holiness.

FOR
REVIEW
ONLY

**GOD DISCIPLINES A REBELLIOUS PEOPLE**

God patiently pursues sinners, but those who harden their hearts will one day face judgment.

JESUS CONNECTION

God righteously punished His people for their sin, but He remained faithful to them and kept the promise He had made to David to preserve a remnant and provide a king. Ultimately, Jesus defeated sin on the cross and is our King forever.

**LIFEWISE QUALITY**

HUMILITY – Refusing to think of myself as more important than I am.

**HEAD**

Who pleaded with Zedekiah to return to the Lord? How did Zedekiah respond to this advice?

Zedekiah pursued his own greatness because of his pride. What were the consequences of this lack of humility?



HEART

If we declare that we believe in God and want to put our faith in Him, He becomes our one true God, whom we serve and follow. He is our King. Therefore, we shouldn't act like we are better, wiser or more important than God.

Are there times when you become so focused on yourself, your accomplishments, your possessions or how good you are at something that you forget God is the author of all of it?

Choose one of those things (an accomplishment, possession or talent) and write down how you could use it to serve someone else instead of getting praise for yourself.

Do you think of yourself as a prideful person? Think of a time when a teacher, coach, pastor or parent gave you some advice to help you do better or to correct what you were doing. Did you carefully listen, thank them and try to do better? Or did you get angry, roll your eyes, shrug it off and continue as you were? If the latter, how could you have responded with more humility?



HANDS

Pride is a very destructive force. Zedekiah's pride led to the utter destruction of Judah and Jerusalem. Thankfully, pride does not have to control us. If we listen and apply wise counsel from others, look to serve others and remember that God is responsible for all that we have, we will be on our way to eliminating pride in our lives. Out of those three things, which one will you commit to improving? Write how you will do that.



GOD PICTURES A FUTURE HOPE

God's Word is capable of bringing life where there is none.



JESUS CONNECTION

God gave Ezekiel a vision of God's promise to bring life out of death and to restore His broken and scattered people. Ezekiel's vision was fulfilled through the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Jesus is the King who gives life and will rule over a unified people from every nation, tribe, people and language (Rev. 7:9).



LIFEWISE QUALITY

HOPE – Expecting God will do what is best in every situation.

BIBLE REVIEW

MSL 37 God Disciplines a Rebellious People | 1-2 Min

In the previous lesson, God judged the people of Judah for their sin.

- ◆ What did Judah's pride cause them to do? (*Harden their hearts toward God, refuse to listen to God's Word and messengers and turn to idolatry.*)
- ◆ How were the people punished for their sin? (*The city of Jerusalem and the temple were destroyed, and the people of Judah were killed or taken as captives.*)

Today, we will learn how God gave the prophet Ezekiel a vision about Israel's future.

SESSION STARTERS

When Bad Things Happen | 5-10 Min

- ◆ Have the class stand up. When you tell them to move, they should walk to one side of the room or the other, depending on whether they have experienced what you mention or not.
 - ◇ Move to the left if you've ever had surgery or had to stay overnight in the hospital.
 - ◇ Move to the right if you have had to move to a new town or new school.
 - ◇ Move to the left if you've asked for a pet and you were told, "no."
 - ◇ Move to the right if you've never had anything difficult happen to you.
- ◆ We've all experienced something difficult. Big or small, challenging things do happen. We need to learn to respond to hard times or difficult circumstances. Many people think that if God loves us, He would keep difficult situations from our lives, but in today's story, we will learn that God doesn't promise us an all-good life. Instead, He promises us something much better.

Coin Flips | 5-10 Min

- ◆ Bring a coin to class. Tell the students that you're going to flip it 10 times, and if it's heads six or more times, you'll give every student a _____ (prize, 5 minutes of free discussion, etc). If it's tails

six or more times, no prize. Flip the coin and let a student keep the tally on the board. Be sure to have small prizes or incentives ready!

- ♦ Most people use the word *hope* to mean “I wish for.” What are some things we might hope for in that way? Let students share some ideas. [Example: *I hope my team wins the playoffs.*] But in the Bible, hope isn’t based on chance, like flipping a coin to *hopefully* get a treat. In today’s story, God’s people were in exile, struggling to understand what God was doing, but God gave the prophet Ezekiel a vision to give them true hope.

BIBLE LESSON: GOD PICTURES A FUTURE HOPE | 10–20 Min

Ezekiel, a young priest of Judah, **was taken into exile to Babylon by King Nebuchadnezzar** (Ez. 1:1–3). **God appointed Ezekiel as a prophet and watchman assigned to warn the people to repent and turn to the Lord** (Ez. 3:17). Like the prophet Jeremiah, Ezekiel was called to proclaim God’s message at great personal cost. **Even though God’s people refused to repent of their sin, God graciously gave them hope for the future. This promise came in the form of a vision received by Ezekiel.**

Ezekiel 37:1–6.

In Ezekiel’s vision, God’s Spirit took him to a valley filled with dry bones. The Lord led him back and forth among the vast number of bones to see that no life existed within them. **After Ezekiel observed the valley’s dry bones, God asked him if those bones could live.**

God’s power had brought the dead to life through Elijah and Elisha, but no one had ever seen bones raised back into a living person. Yet, **Ezekiel knew the impossible was possible with God and humbly answered that God was the only one who knew what would happen. The Lord commanded Ezekiel to prophesy to the bones and told him to announce that God would bring them completely back to life.**

Summary of Ezekiel 37:7–11

As Ezekiel declared God’s promise to the bones, God brought the bones back to life: the bones began to rattle and then were joined by tendons and covered with flesh. After commanding Ezekiel to prophesy again, the Lord completed the **resurrection** process by breathing life into the lifeless bodies. **A vast army, brought from death to life, stood before Ezekiel’s eyes.**

God told Ezekiel that the dry bones were a picture of the people of Israel (including Judah). The people’s rejection of God, His Word and the prophets had hardened their hearts and led to their death. **The kingdom of Israel was destroyed and the people considered it gone forever.** They were entirely cut off from the land and worshipping God at the temple, and **their hope was gone.**

God promised that He would raise the nation of Israel back to life, just like He had brought the dry bones to life. The Lord promised to put His Spirit in them and take them back to their land. God affirmed that when He fulfilled this promise, His people would know that He truly was God.

Ezekiel 37:16–17, 20–22.

Next, God commanded Ezekiel to take two sticks, one representing Judah, the Southern Kingdom, and the other representing Ephraim, the Northern Kingdom of Israel, and bind them together as one stick. God promised that **just like these sticks, He would unite Judah and Israel together into one kingdom, as it had been before King Solomon’s death (1 Kings 12), and restore them as a nation.**

God's plan for restoration extended beyond those exiled to Babylon; it **included all Israelites scattered throughout the nations. God promised to bring them back to their homeland and unite them forever under one king.**

Ezekiel 37:23–28.

God told Ezekiel that He **would place a king from King David's family line on the throne. Under this king's leadership, God's people would repent from idolatry, return to the Lord and be permanently cleansed from sin.** This king would lead Israel to obey the Word of the Lord, and **God would dwell with His people forever.**

God's people would experience a measure of renewal when God allowed them to return from exile and rebuild the temple and city of Jerusalem during the time of Zerubbabel, Ezra and Nehemiah. But **the people of Israel would not be cleansed from their sin and empowered to follow God fully until Christ brought the new covenant by shedding His blood on the cross for the forgiveness of sins** (Matt. 26:27–28).

Big Ideas

- ◆ **God raises the dead to life.** God's people were a broken nation, cut off from the land, dead in their sins and helpless to change their situation. But God revealed His power and plan to raise the dead and restore His people. Ezekiel's vision gave hope to Israel in his day and still offers us spiritual and physical hope today. We are spiritually dead because of sin, yet when we trust in Jesus, we are made spiritually alive through His great power (Eph. 2:1–5). In addition, when God raised Jesus from the dead, He gave Him a new physical body that would never die again. God promised that just as He has made our spirits alive, one day He will raise His followers to life and transform our physical bodies to be like Jesus' **resurrected body**.
- ◆ **God will dwell with His people forever.** God declared that under the new covenant, He would cleanse His people from their sin and place His Spirit in them so they would be able to obey his laws. He also promised to dwell with His people permanently. After Jesus was crucified and rose again, He sent the Holy Spirit to dwell permanently in those who trust in Him (Acts 2:1–3; 1 Cor. 3:16; 2 Cor. 6:16–18), just as He promised the people of Israel through Ezekiel.
- ◆ **God will bring full restoration to His people.** God promised to restore His people spiritually and politically, and He did. But this restoration would be limited because of the people's sin. Ezekiel's vision also pointed to Jesus' second coming, when God will not only restore Israel, but all of His people. One day, He will destroy every trace of sin and death (1 Cor. 15:55). Revelation 21:4 tells us that the Lord will "wipe away every tear from their eyes. Death will be no more; grief, crying and pain will be no more, because the previous things have passed away." Jesus will make all things new (Rev. 21:5).

Discussion Questions

- ◆ Before he died, Moses told Israel that God's words "are not meaningless words to you, but they are your life, and by them you will live long in the land" (Dt. 32:47). How had the people treated God's Word in Ezekiel's day? What was the result?
- ◆ God said the dry bones were a picture of the spiritual and physical lifelessness of God's people in exile. What do you think it feels like to be "dry bones"?

- ◆ What situations can lead us to feel like dry bones today? Why is hope important to those who feel like dry bones?
- ◆ Ezekiel's vision offered hope to God's people. What does it tell you about God that He offers hope to us even when we don't deserve it?
- ◆ Ezekiel's vision showed the power of God's Word, and the New Testament also describes its power. Read Heb. 4:12. What power does God's Word have? Why is this a good thing? How can we make God's Word part of our daily life?
- ◆ For hundreds of years, Israel had offered sacrifices for their sin, but they couldn't completely remove their sin. How is Jesus' cleansing power greater than the cleansing power offered through the Old Testament sacrificial system?

REINFORCEMENT ACTIVITIES

Suggested Video | 5–10 Min

BibleProject Video: *Yakhal/Hope*; Full video: 4:13.

Suggested Visual Aid | 5 Min.

Poster 13: *Prophets*

Poster 14: *New Covenant*

Hope Symbols | 5–10 Min

- ◆ Before class, find pictures of or draw a cross and an empty tomb, but don't show them to the class. Divide students into small groups and provide paper and writing utensils for each group. Challenge the groups to write down or draw pictures of as many symbols for hope as they can think of in 3 minutes. When time is up, have the groups display their papers, crossing off any symbols that other groups also used. The team with the most individual symbols wins.
 - ◇ Looking at all the ideas we came up with, what is your favorite symbol of hope? Why are these symbols so powerful? Why is hope so important?
 - ◇ Display your pictures. According to the Bible, the most powerful symbols of hope are the cross and the empty tomb. Why do these symbolize hope for us? How much hope would we have if Jesus had not died or had not risen from the dead? Let's stop and thank God for the hope we have because of Jesus.

JESUS CONNECTION

God gave Ezekiel a vision of God's promise to bring life out of death and to restore His broken and scattered people. Ezekiel's vision was fulfilled through the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Jesus is the King who gives life and will rule over a unified people from every nation, tribe, people and language (Rev. 7:9).



LIFEWISE QUALITY | 3–5 Min

HOPE – Expecting God will do what is best in every situation.

Living LifeWise

Because God keeps His promises, we can have hope for the future, even in difficult situations.

LWQ Script

Life is full of difficult situations, difficult experiences, and hard-to-deal-with people. Ezekiel was talking to people who were far from home, among enemies and strangers and couldn't see what God was doing. They were heartbroken and hopeless. But God sent His prophet to remind them that He was with them, He was completely faithful and He was bringing about a future filled with good beyond their wildest dreams. That, God told them, was the anchor for their hope.

God is completely faithful and always keeps His promises. And just like Israel, His character anchors our hope. Jesus' death and resurrection has provided us salvation and welcomed us into God's family, and His Spirit provides all we need to live God's way, regardless of what difficulties we face. God is unchanging, and the future God has promised (Rev. 20–21) is completely guaranteed, so we can fearlessly anchor our hope in Him.

Head, Heart, Hands Reinforcement | In-class or take-home

◆ Head Questions

- ◇ In today's Bible passage, we read about a scene from the prophet Ezekiel that is full of both despair and hope. What did God show Ezekiel to represent despair?
- ◇ What good news did God deliver to Ezekiel to give him hope?

◆ Heart Questions

- ◇ Had God rescued the Israelites from seemingly impossible situations in the past? If so, why did they doubt God in this situation?
- ◇ When we find ourselves in impossible situations, it's easy to focus on the circumstances. And God doesn't always change our circumstances. However, He always offers us hope. Hope means we step back and get the bigger picture of who God is and what He might be doing. Based on God's words to Ezekiel, what can we expect God can and will do even when our situation doesn't change?

◆ Hands Challenge

- ◇ The Lord brought His prophet to a valley full of dry bones to show him the hopelessness of life in exile, but also to reveal the power of God to raise the dead and restore His people. The vision gave hope to the people in Ezekiel's day that God would bring them back to their land.
- ◇ In order to help a friend, relative or someone you know have hope in a difficult situation, read or share today's story with them. Give them your thoughts on what you know about "expecting," trusting or believing God will do what is best in every situation.

EXTENDED LESSON RESOURCES

Bible Commentary for the Teacher

Old Testament prophecies often had a short-term, limited fulfillment followed by a long-term, complete fulfillment. The same is true of Ezekiel's vision in Ezekiel 37.

- ◆ **God's short-term fulfillment:** God brought His people back to Jerusalem after the exile and helped them to rebuild the temple and city. Worship and obedience toward God was restored at the temple through the efforts of God's chosen leaders (Zerubbabel, Ezra, Nehemiah), but this was only a foreshadowing of the full restoration God's people would experience through the promised King, Jesus. Even after the exile, God's people did not follow God wholeheartedly. Because of this, God has allowed other nations to rule Israel again and again.
- ◆ **God's long-term complete fulfillment:** Ezekiel's vision concludes with God announcing a permanent future covenant with His people. The Hebrew for "forever" or "permanent" is written five times in verses 25–28. God promised to restore the people to their land forever and to construct a sanctuary that would last forever. God also promised to dwell among the people permanently—something the people only experienced in a limited way in the Old Testament. Since this promise has not yet been fulfilled, it points us forward to a future time when Jesus will return to destroy Satan and sin itself and make everything new. He will create a New Heaven and Earth and rule His people for eternity (Rev. 21:1–5, 22:3–5).

**GOD PICTURES A FUTURE HOPE**

God's Word is capable of bringing life where there is none.

JESUS CONNECTION

God gave Ezekiel a vision of God's promise to bring life out of death and to restore His broken and scattered people. Ezekiel's vision was fulfilled through the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Jesus is the King who gives life and will rule over a unified people from every nation, tribe, people and language (Rev. 7:9).

**LIFEWISE QUALITY**

HOPE – Expecting God will do what is best in every situation.

**HEAD**

In today's Bible passage, we read about a scene from the prophet Ezekiel that is full of both despair and hope. What did God show Ezekiel to represent despair?

What good news did God deliver to Ezekiel to give him hope?



HEART

Had God rescued the Israelites from seemingly impossible situations in the past? If so, why did they doubt God in this situation?

When we find ourselves in impossible situations, it's easy to focus on the circumstances. And God doesn't always change our circumstances. However, He always offers us hope. Hope means we step back and get the bigger picture of who God is and what He might be doing.

Based on God's words to Ezekiel, what can we expect God can and will do even when our situation doesn't change?



HANDS

The Lord brought His prophet to a valley full of dry bones to show him the hopelessness of life in exile, but also to reveal the power of God to raise the dead and restore His people. The vision gave hope to the people in Ezekiel's day that God would bring them back to their land.

In order to help a friend, relative or someone you know have hope in a difficult situation, read or share today's story with them. Give them your thoughts on what you know about "expecting," trusting or believing God will do what is best in every situation.