

THE STORY



1ST

**AMAZING
ISSUE!**

ADAM AND EVE - GENESIS 1

GOD CREATED THE HEAVENS AND THE EARTH

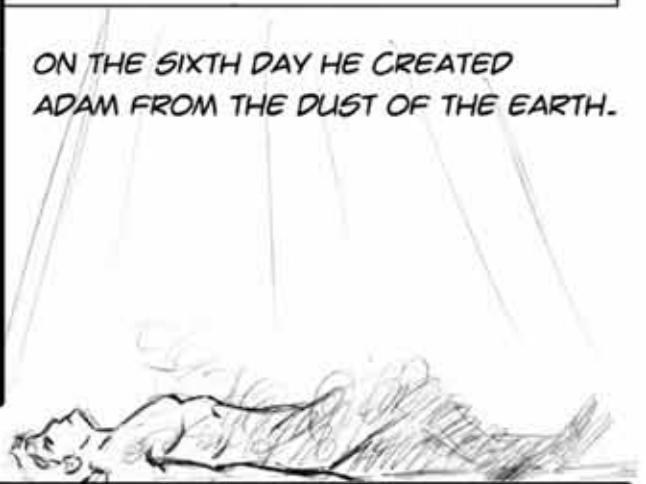


HE CREATED EVERYTHING, THE OCEANS, MOUNTAINS, ANIMALS, PLANTS, TREES.

ALL THAT WE SEE TODAY.



ON THE SIXTH DAY HE CREATED ADAM FROM THE DUST OF THE EARTH.



THEN ON THE SEVENTH DAY GOD RESTED.



ADAM NAMED ALL THE ANIMALS GOD HAD CREATED BUT HE WAS ALONE.

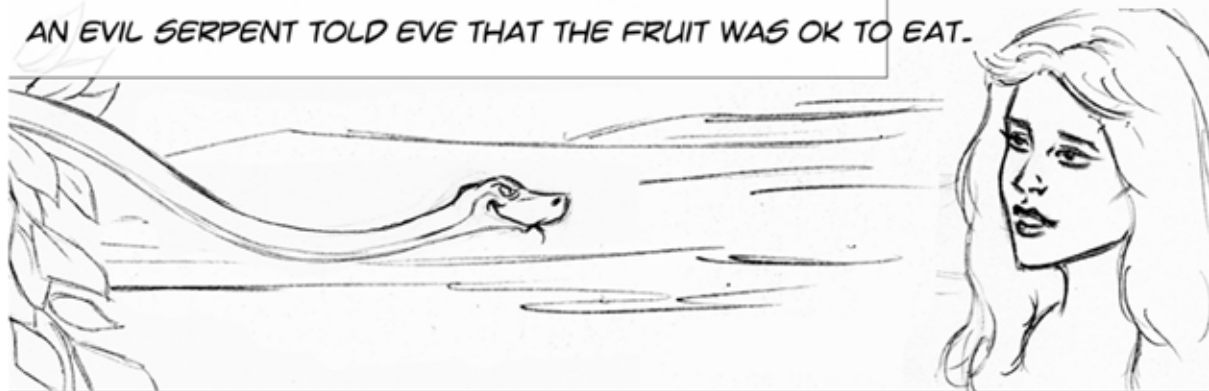
SO GOD MADE ADAM SLEEP AND THEN CREATED EVE FROM ONE OF ADAM'S RIBS.



THERE WAS A TREE IN THE GARDEN WHERE ADAM AND EVE LIVED. IT WAS CALLED THE TREE OF KNOWLEDGE OF GOOD AND EVIL. GOD TOLD THEM NOT TO EAT THE FRUIT FROM THE TREE.



AN EVIL SERPENT TOLD EVE THAT THE FRUIT WAS OK TO EAT.



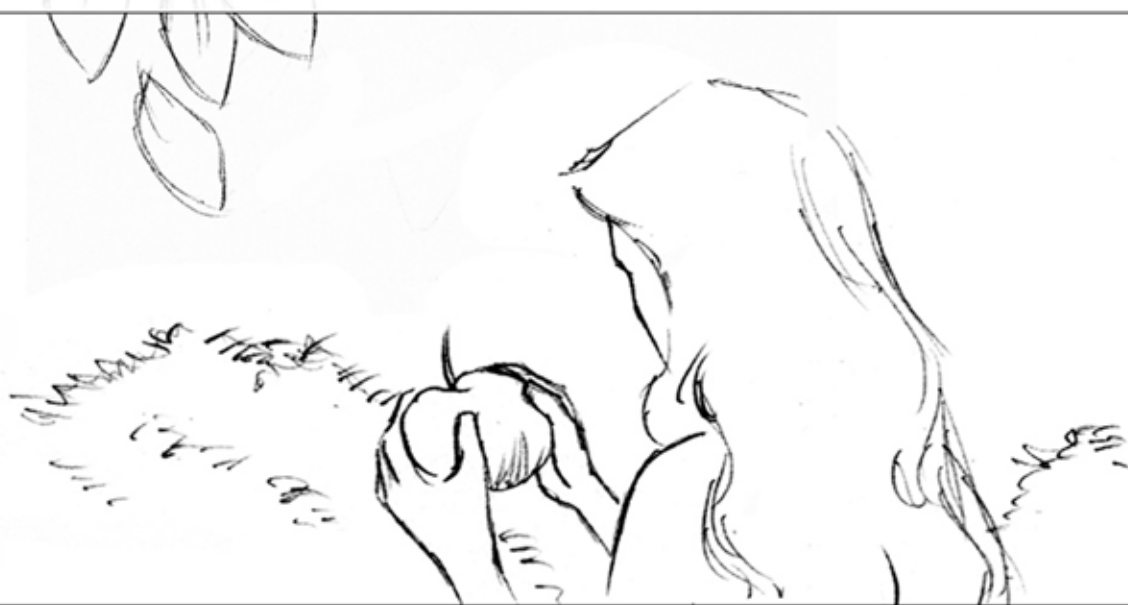
HE TRICKED EVE INTO WANTING TO EAT THE FRUIT.



SHE THEN TOOK A PIECE OF FRUIT FROM THE TREE.



SHE THEN ATE THE FRUIT AND DECIDED TO GET ADAM TO TRY IT TOO.



ADAM TRIED THE FRUIT TOO. GOD WAS SAD THAT THEY DIDN'T LISTEN TO HIM AND THEY LEFT THE GARDEN.



MORAL OF THE STORY- LISTEN TO WHAT GOD HAS TO SAY. HE KNOWS BEST.

#1 Adam and Eve Bible Studies - Student Edition

Scripture: Genesis 1-3

Lesson Title: The Story of Two Trees

DAY ONE LESSON

Read the original story of God's creation. (Genesis 1)

"In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. " (Genesis 1:1)

In the very first words of the Bible, we are told that God is the Creator who created everything that exists. We don't have to wonder about where everything around us originated. God, who is All-Powerful, made it all appear out of nothing.

In Genesis 1, the Bible also tells us how He did it. God simply SPOKE the entire Universe into existence. He created the sun, the moon, and the stars simply by saying the words, "Let there be..." Instantly all of those things that God ordered came into existence! What a supernatural miracle that was!

So, God made the heavens, the earth, and everything in them - including the birds, fish, all animals and insects - in just five days time. Up to this point, God had said that everything He had created was "good." On the sixth day, God finished His work of creation by making a man and a woman. When He had finished making the first humans, God said that his entire creation was "very good"!

What was it about man's creation that was so different from everything else? Why did God say that it was "very good"? God had created man in His very own image!

Think about what this means. In some very important ways, man was like God and was different from all the other animals. Man could think. He could speak words. He had feelings. He could make choices. Man was the crown of God's creation.

So, God put man in charge of all the earth. God gave man authority, or dominion, to rule over everything He had created. What this means is that human beings are rightly supposed to rule over the earth. However, we are also supposed to be good stewards, which means we have to take good care of what God has entrusted to our care. We call this original God-given authority the "Dominion Mandate."

We see plenty of evidence that God is real. Sunsets, pretty flowers, butterflies, sweet tasting fruits, stars up in the sky - all of these are just some examples of God's power. Everything we see in the natural world bears witness that there is an intelligent Creator. It doesn't take a lot of faith to believe in God.

The Bible says, "The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims His handiwork" (Psalm 19:1). We see God's hand in all of nature.

SOMETHING TO THINK ABOUT: What other explanations do some people give for where the world came from? What evidence is there for their different opinions? How do those other opinions match

up with what the Bible says?

DAY TWO LESSON

Read the details of the creation of Adam & Eve. (Genesis 2)

"Then the Lord God formed the man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living creature." (Genesis 2:7)

Chapter 2 of *Genesis* describes specifically how God made the first man, Adam, from the dust, and how God later made the first woman, Eve, from Adam's side. Eve was made to live with Adam as his companion and to help him rule over everything in the earth.

God also told them to "be fruitful and multiply and replenish the earth." This means that they were supposed to have children so that there would be more people to cover the entire planet. This command tells us what God originally intended for a family to look like. God wanted men and women to marry one another and have children together. When Jesus was asked later about marriage and the family, He referred to this story as an explanation as to what God wanted for men and women (see *Matthew* 19:5).

Now, here is an important point. God wanted Adam to love Him because that was the right thing to do; it was the best choice. After all, why would anyone not love the Creator who had given him life itself? Unfortunately, God knew that man also had to have the right to make a choice not to love him. So, God put Adam and Eve in a beautiful place called the

Garden of Eden, and in the garden, God provided everything that Adam and Eve needed to live and prosper. Then, God gave them both a choice.

God told Adam and Eve that they could eat of any tree in the garden EXCEPT ONE! They couldn't eat from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil.

During the time that Adam and Eve were in the Garden of Eden, they were both given a choice to obey God simply because they chose to love Him, or they could love something else more than God and disobey Him by eating from the tree that He told them not to eat. God also warned them that the consequence of eating from the forbidden tree would be death (*Genesis* 2:15-16).

SOMETHING TO THINK ABOUT: What should Adam and Eve have done? Should they have obeyed God? Why?

DAY THREE LESSON

Read the story of the fall of Adam & Eve. (*Genesis* 3)

"Now the serpent was more crafty than any other beast of the field that the Lord God had made. He said to the woman, 'Did God actually say, You shall not eat of any tree in the garden?' " (*Genesis* 3:1)

This part of the story of Adam and Eve describes an event that changed everything. Now, we meet a fourth character, the serpent, who was actually an evil spirit being called Satan, a bitter enemy of God. Disguised as a snake, Satan came up to Eve. She was standing in front of the one

tree that she had been told she couldn't eat.

First, Satan questioned Eve about exactly what God had told her about the fruit of the tree. Eve answered that they could eat of all the trees except this one tree, the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. If they ate the fruit from this tree, God had warned them that they would die. Then Satan said, "You won't really die!"

Satan was challenging God's Word and calling God a liar. He also told Eve that God didn't want them to eat that fruit because then they would know good and evil and would become gods themselves, and they would no longer need to depend on God (Genesis 3:5). Satan told Eve that God was trying to keep something good from her. Satan was really saying that they couldn't trust the God who created them.

Think about this. God had made Adam and Eve, and He had given them life and everything they needed. He came to talk with them every day in the garden (Genesis 3:8). God had carefully crafted man as His highest creation and had invested time in having a close relationship with Adam and Eve. Yet, Satan talked Eve into loving the fruit more than God. He appealed to her desire for secret wisdom and power.

Here is the saddest part of the story. First, Eve listened to Satan, and she ate the forbidden fruit. Then, she went to Adam and handed him the fruit. Eve was tricked by the snake (Satan), but Adam made a conscious decision to ignore God's warning. He willfully

disobeyed God in spite of God's warning that he would die. Adam and Eve actually died that very day. Their immediate death was a "spiritual death" or a separation from God. It happened exactly the way God had warned them it would.

Now instead of being excited to see God, they were afraid of God. Notice that God came to talk with them, and they hid (Genesis 3:8). Now they were afraid of God (Genesis 3:10), and they realized for the first time they were naked (Genesis 3:10). They now had an awareness of good and evil, and in their minds, being naked was evil. So, they made clothes from plants. They had been given the plants as food, and now they were using them to make clothes. They also started to age, and they would one day die physically, as well.

See how everything changed when Adam and Eve decided to disobey God!

DAY FOUR LESSON

Read about the consequences of the fall of Adam & Eve. (Genesis 3:12-24)

Adam and Eve disobeyed God, and as an immediate result, they died spiritually and lost their close fellowship with God. They also suffered other serious consequences. Now, let's talk about some of the consequences of disobeying God.

God began to talk to Adam and Eve, wanting them to admit what they had done wrong. Instead, both of them began to play the blame game. Adam blamed Eve, and then he even tried to blame God

for giving him Eve to be his wife! Eve blamed the snake (Satan) for tempting her and lying to her, but their excuses were no good.

Satan had no one else to blame but his own evil self. God condemned the snake to crawl on its belly in the dirt forever (Genesis 3:14). Snakes still do this today! Then, God told Satan (his enemy) that in the very end, he would be defeated by a child born to a woman (Genesis 3:15). That child was to be Jesus Christ.

Eve's punishment was that she would feel pain when she gave birth to her children, and she would naturally struggle with rebellion and self will (Genesis 3:16). Adam's punishment for disobeying God was that his work would become difficult, and his sin would be passed to every other man (Genesis 3:17-19; Romans 5:12). Both Adam and Eve were forced to leave the Garden of Eden. This expulsion from the garden is what people are referring to when they speak of "Paradise Lost."

So, what do we learn from the story of Adam and Eve? We learn that disobedience to God is called "sin", and this sin separates us from God. Sin also brings death, both spiritually and physically, and that lost condition can result in permanent separation from God for all of eternity.

Because of Adam's choice to disobey God, each one of us today is born with what we call a "Sin Nature" that was passed down to all of Adam's descendants, or "children." On our own, we are unable to change our natural inclination to rebel against God.

This lost condition is called "Original Sin." Most people don't even realize how lost they are, because God is so far away from their everyday lives. Still our consciences warn us when we are violating God's laws (Romans 2:14-16).

Since God had created the whole world and had also created Adam and Eve, God had the right to expect that they should listen to Him and obey Him. God had told them, in advance, about the consequences of making the choice to disobey Him. They didn't listen to God, and they paid a high price.

SOMETHING TO THINK ABOUT: Why do we want to do the very thing we are warned not to do? Is it ever a smart choice to disobey God?

DAY FIVE LESSON

"For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Romans 6:23)

First, let's think about what that phrase "the wages of sin" means.

Recall the story of Adam and Eve. We have seen that choosing to eat from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil resulted in really bad consequences for Adam and Eve. Instead of being greatly blessed by God, they died. They were actually cursed by God for their disobedience! As a consequence, so are we today!

Here is the sad news for all people. We can't solve our sin problem. We can't reverse our own lost and cursed condition through doing good deeds. So, we all suffer the bad effects of sin by being

separated from God, BUT...here's the Good News! God stepped in to take care of our unsolvable problem of "sin."

God's promised that a child would defeat Satan. This promise came true when God's own Son, Jesus Christ, took on the body of a little baby and was born to Mary (Matthew 1:23). Remember what God told Satan in Genesis 3:15.

"I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel." The Bible tells us that Jesus came down from Heaven to Earth in order to destroy the works of the Devil, which is Satan, the old serpent (1 John 3:8).

Jesus took every person's guilt and paid the ransom price for every person's sin. Jesus was taken to a cross, a cruel Roman execution "tree", where God poured out on Him the total punishment for all of man's sins. Jesus died in place of you and me because he loved us so much! (1 Corinthians 15:3; Romans 5:8; John 3:16.)

However, here's the Greatest News! Jesus came back to life again in a special supernatural miracle called the resurrection!

This event is described in 1 Corinthians 15:4-8. Only the power of God was able to raise a person from the dead. This miraculous resurrection showed that God accepted Jesus's sacrifice. So, each of us now has the chance to have a personal relationship with God. All we have to do is believe in Jesus with all of our hearts and accept what He has done for us on the Cross.

The snake told Eve to doubt God's goodness, but Satan was a liar. Instead of listening to any of Satan's lies, we have to trust in Jesus, who loved us so much that he laid down His own life for us. I encourage you to trust in God's perfect plan of mercy and forgiveness today. Put your trust in Jesus to work in you and save you. Give your entire life to Him because He loves you (Romans 5:8).

God has freely given us a precious gift. God has given us eternal life in Jesus.

NOAH AND THE ARK - GENESIS 5

GOD WAS DISAPPOINTED WHEN HE SAW THAT PEOPLE HAD BECOME WICKED AND MEAN.



BUT ONE MAN NAMED NOAH WAS OBEDIENT TO GOD.



GOD TOLD NOAH HE WOULD SEND A GREAT FLOOD AND THAT HE SHOULD BUILD A BOAT.



IT HAD NEVER RAINED BEFORE.

NOAH TRIED TO WARN EVERYONE BUT THEY MOCKED HIM AND CALLED HIM NAMES.

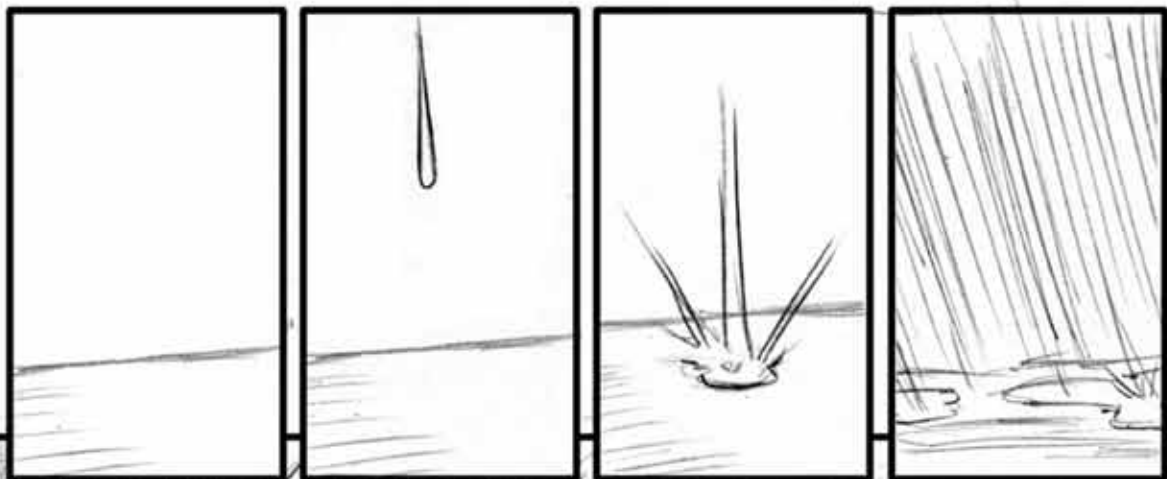


IT TOOK MANY YEARS BUT NOAH BUILT THE ARK WITH HIS FAMILY.

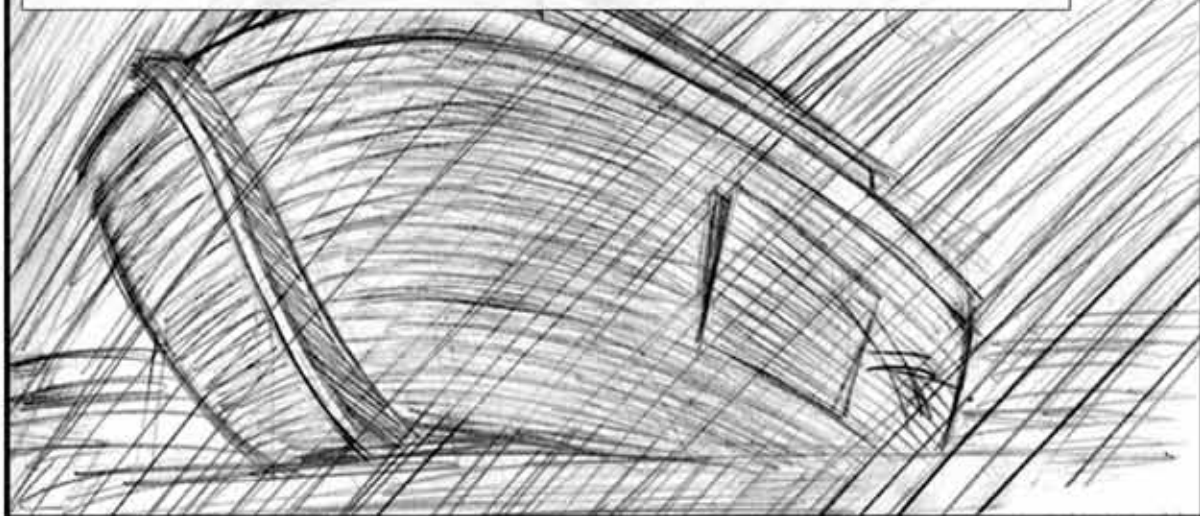


THEN HE DID AS GOD ASKED AND LOADED 2 OF EACH ANIMAL ON THE ARK.





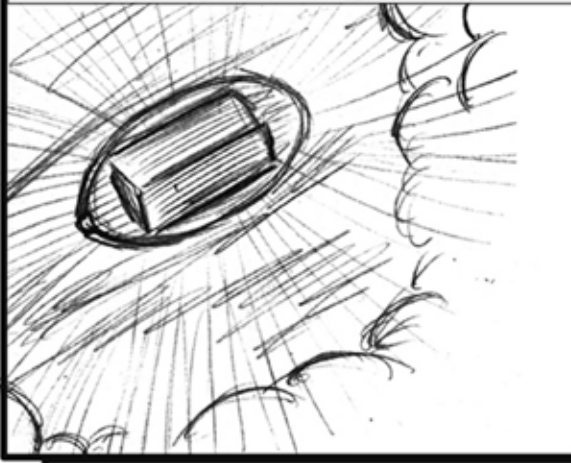
THEN ONE DAY IT STARTED TO RAIN...AND IT RAINED AND RAINED.



ALL THE ONES THAT LAUGHED AND CALLED NOAH NAMES WERE WASHED AWAY IN THE FLOOD.



IT RAINED 40 DAYS AND 40 NIGHTS.



FINALLY ONE DAY IT STOPPED.



GOD SENT A RAINBOW TO SHOW THAT HE WOULD NEVER FLOOD THE WORLD WITH WATER AGAIN.



MORAL OF THE STORY - GOD IS ABLE, AND DOES HOLD HIS HAND AGAINST WHAT COULD HURT US. HE WILL PROTECT HIS CHILDREN.

Lesson #2 Noah & the Ark Studies – Student Version

Noah and the Ark

Our Way of Escape or Our Own Way (Redemption or Rejection)

DAY ONE LESSON

Read about the corruption of the human race. (Genesis 6)

"The Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intention of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually." (Genesis 6:5)

From the story of Adam and Eve, we learned that everyone is born with a desire to do what we want, regardless of what God wants. This is called our "sin nature."

Hundreds of years after Adam and Eve died, their children had multiplied and spread over large portions of the earth. Unfortunately, most of these people had drifted far away from God and had started living only for their own selfish lusts. People had become so wicked that even their thoughts were evil all the time. People weren't really thinking about God at all.

One sin was extremely wicked. God had told Adam and Eve to have children and populate the Earth; that was God's original good plan. Now, people began to do something very bad. The human women began to have children with the fallen angels who worked for Satan, the enemy of God. This unnatural sexual activity caused a mixed breed of evil giants to rise up in the earth (Genesis 6:1-4).

Soon, wars and violence were everywhere. The people had completely corrupted God's

glorious creation. This great sin grieved God's heart and made God so angry that He was sorry He had ever made people in the first place. So, God decided to destroy everything He had made because it was too corrupt to exist (Genesis 6:6-7).

However, there was still one good man named Noah, who was trying to live for God and do what was right. Noah was not a sinless person, but he was a man who walked with God. That means that Noah decided to believe and trust in God and to obey God's laws. So, Noah found favor in the eyes of the Lord (Genesis 6:8-9).

Because of Noah, God decided that He would not completely destroy everything, just all the corruption. God was planning to send a great flood that would drown all the wicked people. So, God told Noah to build a big boat that would hold Noah, his family, and enough of the animals to start over again. God gave Noah detailed instructions about exactly how he should build the boat, called an ark. This was a big job, and it took Noah 120 years of hard work to accomplish it (Genesis 6:9-22).

SOMETHING TO THINK ABOUT: God sees our sin as a horrible thing that needs to be destroyed. Sin separates us from God and keeps us from living the good life that God intends for us. Sin also corrupts the good world that God has made. That's why God was

bringing judgment on the whole earth. However, the fact that God spared Noah tells us another important truth. God is a merciful Creator who is willing to show grace to people who try to obey Him. Grace is unearned favor in the sight of God.

DAY TWO LESSON

Read about how Noah built and loaded the ark. (Genesis 7:1-10)

"Then the Lord said to Noah, 'go into the ark, you and all your household, for I have seen that you are righteous before me in this generation.' " (Genesis 7:1)

God told Noah that he needed to build a very large boat called an ark. Noah worked for 120 years to build that boat. When it was finished, God told Noah to take pairs of all the animals into the ark. It was God's plan for a male and a female of every species to reproduce more of their own kind, just the way God had originally created them. God didn't want a corrupted world where things had been changed from His original perfect design. That's why God was sending the Great Flood upon the earth.

God gave Noah the exact size to build the ark. It was to be 300 cubits long, 50 cubits wide, and 30 cubits high. In modern measure, that is 450 feet long by 75 feet wide by 45 feet high. After that, all ships would be based on the same 6:1 ratio (300 cubits long by 50 cubits wide).

The ark had 100,000 square feet inside, or enough room to fit 569 railroad cars. Noah took 2 pairs of every unclean animal and 7 pairs

of every clean animal onto the ark. Scientists tell us that about 40,000 animals were on the ark. That many animals would fill about 167 railroad cars or just about 30% of the space inside the ark. So, there was room for all the animals, plus all the food needed to feed them, and room left inside for many more people to come aboard. Unfortunately, no one did.

The Bible says that Noah was "a preacher of righteousness" (2 Peter 2:5). Noah warned the wicked people around him that a huge flood was coming, and he urged them to repent of their sins and turn back to God; but they all mocked him as a fool for building such a big boat where there was not even any water. They had never seen such a flood, and they didn't believe that God was sending His judgment.

Of all the people alive, only Noah was found to be "perfect in his generations" (Genesis 6:9). That means only Noah and his family had not sinned in the same terrible way as the rest of the people. So, only eight souls in the whole world - Noah, his wife, take out "and" their three sons and their wives - were allowed to enter the ark.

Seven days before the Flood, God brought the animals to Noah, and he loaded them all into the ark. Noah took both males and females of each animal so that they could make more animals to repopulate the earth after the Flood. Then Noah and his family went in. The only door into the ark was shut and sealed up tight by God.

SOMETHING TO THINK ABOUT: Noah warned all the people to repent of their sins and to

flee from the wrath to come, but nobody listened. Do people still react that way today when someone says we should obey God? Why do they do that?

DAY THREE LESSON

Read about the destruction of the Great Flood. (Genesis 7:11-24)

"In the six hundredth year of Noah's life, in the second month, on the seventeenth day of the month, on that day all the fountains of the great deep burst forth, and the windows of the heavens were opened. And rain fell upon the earth forty days and forty nights." (Genesis 7:11-12)

God had warned people for 120 years that the Great Flood was coming. Then on a certain predetermined day, the rain began, and it rained hard for 40 solid days and nights. No one had ever seen so much rain at one time. Not only that, but the water came gushing up from below the oceans and from inside the earth, as well. After 40 days of rain, the entire surface of the earth was covered with water.

The waters of the Great Flood steadily rose until they covered the highest mountains with 15 cubits of water (Genesis 7:20). A cubit was 18 inches or 1.5 feet. So, the mountains were covered by over 22 feet of water. Then, the waters gradually began to recede. The entire Flood lasted for an entire year, and every living thing perished.

"And all flesh died that moved on the earth, birds, livestock, beasts, all swarming creatures that swarm on the earth, and all mankind.

Everything on the dry land in whose nostrils was the breath of life died." (Genesis 7:21-22)

During this time, all of the people who were not on the ark died because they had rejected God's way of escape. God had given them a warning that lasted 120 years, but they did what they wanted to do, continued to live in their sin and rebellion, and rejected God's plan of salvation. God had enough room for all to escape, but in the end, only Noah and his family were kept safe inside the ark. Noah saved himself and his family because he listened to God and was obedient to do what God told him to do. Noah trusted God. Thus, he became a hero of the faith forever.

"By faith Noah, being warned by God concerning events as yet unseen, in reverent fear constructed an ark for the saving of his household. By this he condemned the world and became an heir of the righteousness that comes by faith." (Hebrews 11:7)

SOMETHING TO THINK ABOUT: God's judgment for mankind's gross sin was to send a Great Flood that was so big it would cover the entire earth. However, with the ark, God provided a way for righteous people to escape that terrible judgment. The ark was a real boat. But symbolically, the ark ALSO represents the only way of salvation from sin that God later provided in Jesus Christ, as we learned earlier. By trusting in Jesus and His death for us on the cross, we can enter into a safe place and escape the judgment for sin that will come upon all the wicked people who reject God.

DAY FOUR LESSON

Read about God's safety and deliverance. (Genesis 8)

"And God remembered Noah..." (Genesis 8:1)

The Great Flood destroyed the entire earth and remained for an entire year. Through it all, God protected Noah and his family and kept them safe inside the ark. For months, the waters rose and the ark floated freely on the surface, drifting without direction. Noah tended to all the animals that were inside with him.

After seven months, the waters had receded enough so that the ark settled and came to rest on the top of Mount Ararat. By the tenth month, Noah could see the tops of the mountains poking up above the water (Genesis 8:4-5). However, the water still covered the rest of the ground, and Noah couldn't leave the ark. Noah sent out first a raven and then a dove to fly around and see if there was any dry land anywhere. Twice the dove came back. Finally, the third time, he released the dove, it did not return. Noah knew that soon he and his family could leave the ark.

The Bible says that "in the six hundredth and first year" of Noah's life, the waters appeared to be dried up, and then "in the second month, on the seven and twentieth day, was the earth dried" (Genesis 8:13-14). That is about 370 days that Noah and his family were in the ark, before God told them to open the door and come out, and to bring all of the animals out with them. When Noah left the ark, they were grateful to be alive and to be back on solid

ground.

Immediately, Noah built an altar and worshiped God with sacrifices of some of the clean animals. Their sacrifice pleased God, and God made up His own mind and vowed that never again would He destroy every living thing on the entire earth.

"And when the Lord smelled the pleasing aroma, the Lord said in his heart, "I will never again curse the ground because of man, for the intention of man's heart is evil from his youth. Neither will I ever again strike down every living creature as I have done." (Genesis 8:21)

Noah and his family were the only eight people left alive after the Great Flood. So, every person of every race who has ever lived since then has descended from Noah.

SOMETHING TO THINK ABOUT: Why do you think God was pleased with Noah's burnt offering sacrifice of clean animals? With so few animals left alive, was it a good idea to sacrifice any of them?

The answer is "Yes", because the blood sacrifices of the Old Testament were symbols of the ultimate blood sacrifice that Jesus later would make on the cross for our sins, for "without the shedding of blood is no forgiveness of sin" (Hebrews 9:22). Noah was acknowledging that God was still in complete control, and He held everything in His sovereign power. Noah was trusting God.

DAY FIVE LESSON

Read about the new world and the rainbow. (Genesis 9:1-17)

"And God blessed Noah and his sons and said to them, 'be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth. The fear of you and the dread of you shall be upon every beast of the earth and upon every bird of the heavens, upon everything that creeps on the ground and all the fish of the sea. Into your hand they are delivered.' " (Genesis 9:1-2)

After Noah had left the ark and had built an altar to worship God the Creator, the Lord spoke to Noah again. God basically blessed Noah with the same blessing He had given to Adam in the beginning. God restated the dominion mandate and put everything in the earth under the authority and control of mankind. Thus, God established man's lawful government over the earth for a second time.

God told Noah and his offspring to be fruitful, multiply, and replenish the earth, just like He had originally told Adam and Eve. God intended for a new human race descended from righteous Noah to replace all the people who had corrupted themselves through sin and perished as a result.

God specifically gave Noah and his descendants the right to eat animals for food. God also decreed the death penalty for murder as a divine ordinance. God explained that He was doing this because all men were (and are still) created in the image of God, and thus, human

life has superior value to other animal life (Genesis 9:3-7).

Then, God made a special covenant promise to Noah and sealed it with a sign. God promised that He would never again destroy the whole earth with a flood.

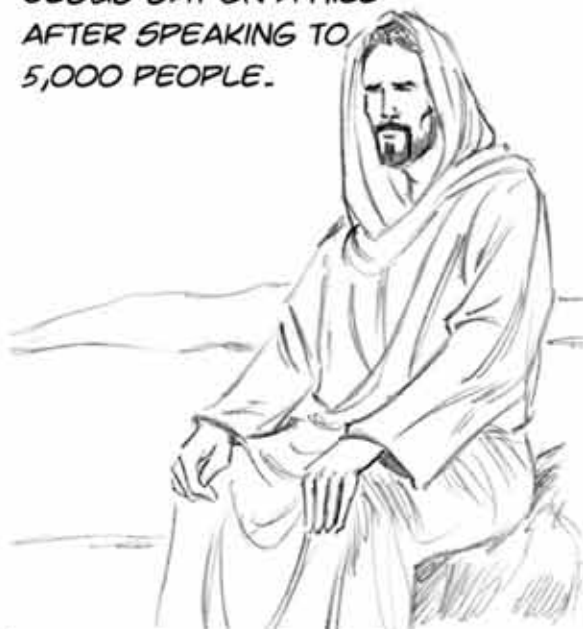
"I establish my covenant with you, that never again shall all flesh be cut off by the waters of the flood, and never again shall there be a flood to destroy the earth." And God said, "This is the sign of the covenant that I make between me and you and every living creature that is with you, for all future generations: I have set my bow in the cloud, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and the earth." (Genesis 9:11-13)

God made this solemn covenant promise to Noah for "future generations." That means forever. We still see the sign of it today whenever we see a rainbow up in the sky. God wants us to remember that He is always faithful to keep His promises.

SOMETHING TO THINK ABOUT:
A covenant made by God is a special kind of promise that can never be broken, no matter what, because it is based in the integrity and character of Almighty God. Does it make you feel good to know that whenever you see a rainbow? Do you think that God is happy when some people use His special rainbow to celebrate things that God calls Sin?

JESUS FEEDS 5,000 - MATTHEW 14

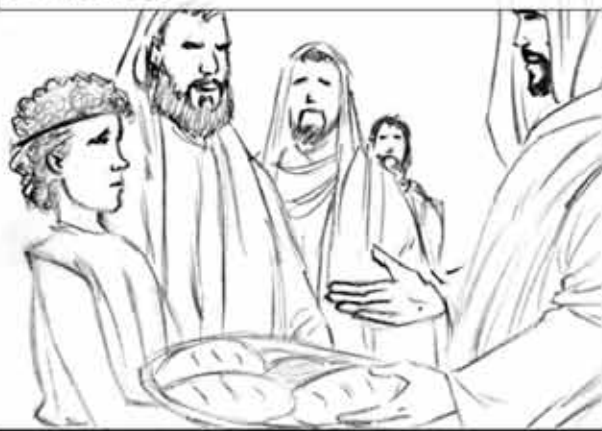
JESUS SAT ON A HILL AFTER SPEAKING TO 5,000 PEOPLE.



THE CROWD THAT GATHERED HAD BECOME HUNGRY AND THERE WASN'T ENOUGH FOOD. JESUS ASKED THEM TO BRING HIM ALL THE FOOD THAT THEY HAD.



A BOY HAD 5 LOAVES OF BREAD AND 2 FISHES.



JESUS BLESSED THE FOOD AND A MIRACLE HAPPENED.



THEY HANDED OUT THE FOOD TO THE PEOPLE AND THERE WAS MORE THAN ENOUGH.



MORAL OF THE STORY - GOD WILL ALWAYS PROVIDE.

Lesson #3 Jesus Feeds 5,000 – Student Version

Jesus Feeds 5,000

Matthew 14, Mark 6, Luke 9, John 6

DAY ONE LESSON

Read the loaves and fish story.
(Matthew 14:13-21)

"Now when Jesus heard this, he withdrew from there in a boat to a desolate place by himself. But when the crowds heard it, they followed him on foot from the towns. When he went ashore he saw a great crowd, and he had compassion on them and healed their sick." (Matthew 14:13-14)

Jesus had left the city after doing miracles and disputing with the religious leaders there. He had just learned that John the Baptist had been killed by King Herod. Jesus wanted to go away into a quiet place to be alone, pray, and minister to His inner circle of 12 chosen disciples.

Crowds of people followed Jesus on foot and surrounded the place where he had stopped. When Jesus saw the people, He was not angry with them for following Him. Instead, "He was moved with compassion." He did more miracles for the people and healed their sicknesses. This attitude and action reflects the basic nature of Jesus: He loves people and wants to help them.

Then, it began to get late in the day, and the people were getting hungry. The disciples told Jesus to send the people away so they could find food elsewhere because there was no food out there in the desert. Jesus said, "They need not go away; you give them something to eat." Unfortunately, the

disciples only had five small loaves of barley bread and two small fish, which could never feed the crowd.

The disciples brought what they had to Jesus, and He blessed the food. Then He told the disciples to pass it around to the crowd. Then, a great miracle happened! The small amount of food they had brought to Jesus was multiplied, and everyone had plenty to eat, with a lot of scraps left over.

The message of this miracle is plain. Wherever Jesus is, there is always enough. Whatever is given to Jesus will be multiplied far beyond what it could ever be in the natural realm.

In verse 21, we read that the people who ate numbered 5,000 men, plus women and children. So, there might have been 10 or even 15,000 people out there in the desert who ate their fill from just 5 loaves and 2 fish. Truly this act was a great miracle of God.

SOMETHING TO THINK ABOUT: Why do you think that large crowd of people all followed Jesus from the cities out into the desert? Most Bible students say it was because they had seen Jesus do other miracles, and they wanted to see more.

That explanation may be true, but even more compelling than that, there was something special about Jesus that drew people to Him and made them want to be around him. Do you think that might have been because they could tell that Jesus really and truly loved them? Even

when Jesus was tired and wanted to get away by Himself so that He could fellowship with God, still He was not angry because the people followed Him. Jesus felt compassion, or loving kindness, toward them, and He healed them and helped them in a supernatural miraculous way that no one else could.

DAY TWO LESSON

Read the story of the loaves and fish. (Mark 6:30-44)

"When he went ashore he saw a great crowd, and he had compassion on them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd. And he began to teach them many things." (Mark 6:34)

Here in the Gospel of Mark, we find the same basic story being told, but there are a couple of added elements in Mark's version. We see that Jesus uses the image of Himself as a shepherd and the people as sheep.

Throughout the Bible, sheep are used as an example of creatures that are vulnerable and weak. Sheep have no long horns, no big claws, and no sharp teeth with which to fight. Sheep can't defend themselves from the ravaging wolves that would come to destroy them. That's why sheep need a strong and courageous but loving shepherd to protect them from harm. The image of shepherds watching over their sheep is repeated all throughout the Bible.

David, who was a hero of faith, started out as a humble shepherd boy faithfully guarding his father's flock from lions and bears long before he was a mighty warrior defeating the giants of enemy

armies. One of the most beloved verses in the Bible is Psalm 23:1, "The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want." Here, God is the Shepherd protecting the sheep.

In the New Testament, Jesus specifically applies this symbolic shepherd's role to Himself. Jesus explains that Good Shepherd image more fully in John 10:1-18.

"I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep." (John 10:11)

So, here in Mark's account of the loaves and fish story, we see that Jesus was moved with compassion on this great multitude because He could tell that they were lost like sheep without a shepherd. Mark is the only Gospel writer who ties in this particular aspect of Jesus's character.

Mark also mentions how expensive it would be for the disciples to buy enough food to feed all of these people. "Two hundred pennyworth of bread" was roughly the equivalent of six months wages back then. Just think how much food it would take to feed a family of four and multiply that by about 5,000. That would be like a whole mountain of food, but Jesus miraculously made that much food appear from just 5 small barley loaves and 2 small fish. Even after that, the disciples collected 12 baskets full of leftovers.

SOMETHING TO THINK ABOUT: Why do you think that people don't like to compare themselves to sheep? Could it be because we want to be strong and powerful and able to take care of ourselves?

We don't want to see ourselves as weak and defenseless. Isn't that

the same attitude that Adam and Eve had back in the Garden of Eden, when they decided to eat the forbidden fruit so they could gain super wisdom and be like God?

It would be better to be safe under the protection of a loving God who is our Good Shepherd, than to try to fight off the wild beasts by ourselves.

DAY THREE LESSON

Read the story of the loaves and fish. (Luke 9:10-17)

"When the crowds learned it, they followed him, and he welcomed them and spoke to them of the kingdom of God and cured those who had need of healing." (Luke 9:11)

The same essential story is repeated again in Luke's Gospel. God must have considered this particular story especially important, because it is the only account of one of Jesus's miracles that is repeated by all four Gospel writers. Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John all agree on the basic story, but each one adds a little extra detail so we can get the whole picture. For example, both Matthew and Luke agree that Jesus healed all the people that needed healing, and Mark and Luke agree that Jesus taught the people. However, only Luke says that He taught them about the Kingdom of God.

The Kingdom of God was a new teaching that the religious leaders of that time did not understand. They thought that God was mainly concerned with rules, regulations, and ceremonial rituals. Jesus taught that the Kingdom of God

was not centered in manmade temples but rather in genuine love inside of people's hearts, and that it came about when people worshipped God in Spirit and in truth (John 4:23-24). The Kingdom of God was manifest with attitudes of love, peace, and righteousness. This was a radical new teaching for the Jews, and this was why the traditional religious leaders hated Jesus (Mark 11:11).

Notice that in verse 12, the disciples told Jesus to send the hungry multitude away. So often that is the same attitude we take when we are not listening to the Spirit of God. We look at people with problems as being too much trouble for us to bother with, and our solution is to send them away. Jesus didn't see people that way. Jesus delighted to help the people that trusted in Him.

In the beginning of this Chapter 9 of Luke, Jesus had sent these same disciples out into the world with nothing but the clothes on their backs, and He had told them to do miracles in His name. The Bible says that Jesus "gave them power and authority over all devils, and to cure diseases." They went out in simple faith and did exactly what Jesus had told them to do (Luke 9:1-6). Now, just a short time later, these same disciples had forgotten the supernatural power of God. They were looking at the physical facts, the shortage of food, and the large number of hungry people.

Jesus didn't look at the natural facts or the physical size of the problem. Jesus saw the whole thing as an opportunity to help needy people and to demonstrate

the supernatural power of God.

SOMETHING TO THINK ABOUT:

When we are confronted with some problem that looks like it is impossible for us to solve, what is our reaction?

Most often, we tend to fall back on our human nature, experience, and understanding, and that means we see limits that we can't overcome. Is this what God wants us to do?

Maybe God would rather have us to see these challenges the same way Jesus did - as an opportunity to use our faith in Jesus to help people in need and bring glory to God the Father in the process.

Jesus told His disciples that all things are possible with God (Mark 11:22-23). By performing this mighty miracle in their sight, Jesus was demonstrating the truth about God's unlimited power.

DAY FOUR LESSON

Read the story of the loaves and fish. (John 6:1-14)

"Lifting up his eyes, then, and seeing that a large crowd was coming toward him, Jesus said to Philip, 'Where are we to buy bread, so that these people may eat?' He said this to test him, for he himself knew what he would do.' " (John 6:5-6)

The Gospel of John is the fourth account of this story in the Bible. Here, another new fact is introduced. It was Jesus Himself who asked the question, "Where can we buy bread to feed all these people?" Does this mean that Jesus was worried about how He could handle this crisis? Not at all. The Bible plainly says that Jesus already knew what he was

going to do. However, he asked the question to see how his disciples would respond. This was a prime teaching moment for Jesus.

Then, Andrew, the brother of Peter, said, "There is a boy here who has five barley loaves and two fish, but what are they for so many?" This is the first time that we learn where the original food came from. Out of all the multitude of men and women, including Jesus's disciples, only one small boy had thought to bring his lunch with him into the desert. And this child was willing to share the little bit of food that he had with Jesus.

This is a supremely important truth. We sometimes hear it said, "Little is much when you give it to God." This story illustrates that truth. The boy's small lunch was nothing as long as he held on to it. On the other hand, when he was willing to give it all to Jesus, in faith, that act of giving released the supernatural power of Almighty God to extend and multiply those limited resources far beyond what anyone standing there could have expected or believed.

This is something we need to remember. No matter how little we may think we have to offer, if we turn it all over to Jesus, He can multiply it in ways that we never could have dreamed of.

Every version of this story mentions the fact that the disciples collected a lot of leftovers after the people had finished eating their fill of the food, but only John says why they did that. Verse 12 says that Jesus told the disciples, "Gather up the

leftover fragments that nothing may be lost."

Here is another important spiritual principle of the Kingdom of God, the law of economy. God uses everything, no matter how insignificant it may seem to us. God takes broken pieces and makes beautiful pieces of art. God takes today's leftover scraps and uses them for future good.

"When the people saw the sign that he had done, they said, 'This is indeed the Prophet who is to come into the world!' " (John 6:14). so the ultimate result of this miracle in the sight of all these people was to confirm in their minds the awareness that Jesus was no ordinary human, but actually the special prophet (and Messiah) that had been foretold for so long (Deuteronomy 18:15 and John 1:20-21). This mighty miracle testified to the power of God.

SOMETHING TO THINK ABOUT:
Do you think that there was any particular significance to the fact that the 12 disciples collected 12 baskets full of leftover food? Was that number just a coincidence, or did God have a special plan for using that extra food, too?

DAY FIVE LESSON

Read about the Bread of Life.
(John 6:22-38)

"Jesus said to them, 'I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst.' " (John 6:35)

The very next day after Jesus had done the miracle with the loaves and fish and fed the hungry

multitude, he had crossed the Sea of Galilee and retreated to Capernaum with the disciples. The crowd from the other side of the water also got on boats, and again they followed Jesus. When they found him, they were full of questions. They wanted to know how He had gotten across the sea - since they had not witnessed him walking on the water (John 6:13-21).

Jesus took this opportunity to bring forth a new teaching for the benefit of all men. He started out by rebuking the crowd for their wrong selfish motives. They were seeking him because they had their bellies full of bread, not because they had seen the miracles that showed the supernatural power of God. Jesus told them to seek "the food that endures to eternal life." This statement set the stage for Jesus to reveal one of the most important truths in the Bible.

"Then they said to him, 'What must we do, to be doing the works of God?' " (John 6:28). The people were asking what they had to DO in order to be able to do miracles like Jesus did. They saw the miracles as being "the works of God", and they wanted to possess that power. Jesus corrected them on that essential point.

"Jesus answered them, 'This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent.' " (John 6:29). The true work of God was that they should BELIEVE on the One whom God had sent into the world to be the Savior of all men. The work of God was not DOING; it was BELIEVING. This is the fundamental truth that we have to grasp in order to be saved. We

can't do anything to work our way into Heaven. We can only believe in Jesus's sacrifice on the cross and accept God's gracious free gift of eternal life by faith.

Then the people asked Jesus to show them a sign that He was really the One sent from God.

This opened the door for Jesus to remind them of the supernatural loaves and fish miracle the day before and to expand upon that theme. This is where Jesus first began to refer to Himself as the Bread of Life and to explain what that phrase meant (John 6:30-51).

Jesus compared Himself to the manna that God had sent to the Children of Israel while they were wandering in the desert long years

before. That manna had kept the people alive physically while they were on their long journey to the Promised Land. Jesus was telling them that to get into Heaven, they needed a different kind of bread. They needed the bread of Life, which was Jesus.

SOMETHING TO THINK ABOUT:
Is it hard for you to understand what Jesus meant when He called Himself the Bread of Life? Or does that make sense when you think about it?

Jesus is the life-giving Savior that God has sent to us so that we won't perish in the desert but can eventually make it into heaven, the real Promised Land. Have you accepted Jesus in your heart?

DAVID VS GOLIATH - 1 SAMUEL 17

THERE WAS A WAR IN ISRAEL. KING SAUL AND THE ISRAELITES WERE FIGHTING THE BAD PHILISTINES.



ONE OF THE PHILISTINES WAS A GIANT. HIS NAME WAS GOLIATH.



HE WAS SIX CUBITS AND A SPAN TALL (9 FEET, 6 INCHES)



DAVID, A SMALL SHEPPARD BOY, HAD SEEN HOW THE ISRAELITES WERE AFRAID OF GOLIATH.



DAVID ASKED THE KING TO LET HIM FIGHT GOLIATH. THE KING WAS WORRIED.

DAVID WENT TO THE RIVER AND FOUND 5 SMOOTH STONES TO USE AGAINST THE MIGHTY GIANT.



THE GIANT LAUGHED AT DAVID
AND CALLED HIM NAMES.



DO PEOPLE CALL YOU NAMES?



BUT DAVID WAS NOT AFRAID.
GOD WAS ON HIS SIDE.

THE MIGHTY GIANT RAN TOWARD DAVID WITH ARMOR AND
SWORD, SHAKING THE EARTH WITH EACH STEP.

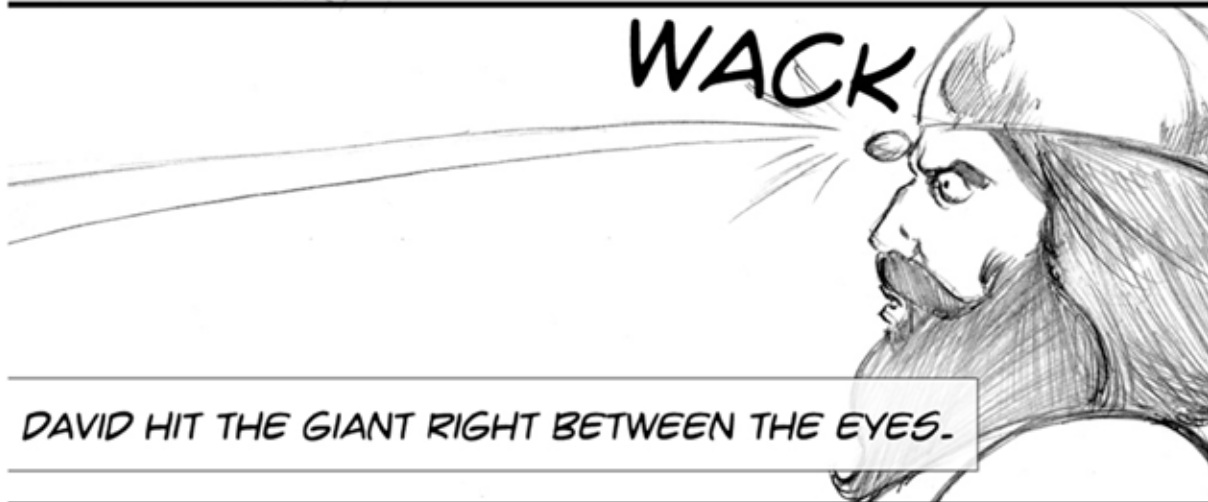


DAVID STARTED TO SWING HIS SLING

DAVID SLUNG THE STONE AT GOLIATH'S FOREHEAD WHICH WAS NOT COVERED IN ARMOR.



WACK



DAVID HIT THE GIANT RIGHT BETWEEN THE EYES.

GOLIATH FELL. DAVID WAS VICTORIOUS! ISRAEL WON THE BATTLE AND THE PHILISTINES SURRENDERED.



MORAL OF THE STORY - WE CAN OVERCOME BIG THINGS IN OUR LIVES IF WE JUST HAVE FAITH.

Lesson 4

David and Goliath

1 Samuel 16 & 17

DAY ONE LESSON

Read the story of Goliath's defiant challenge to Israel. (1 Samuel 17:1-19)

"And the Philistine said, 'I defy the ranks of Israel this day. Give me a man, that we may fight together.' When Saul and all Israel heard these words of the Philistine, they were dismayed and greatly afraid." (1 Samuel 17:10-11)

King Saul was the new king who had been chosen to lead Israel when the people demanded that God give them a king like the other tribes had. Saul was handsome and strong, but he had some mental problems at times.

The Children of Israel were God's chosen people who had come to live in the Land of Canaan. However, pagan tribes like the Philistines, who worshipped idols and hated God, were already living there. As this story opens in 1 Samuel 17, the pagans had decided to drive the Israelites out of the land and had raised a great army to fight against them.

King Saul had brought his army out to meet the enemy. The two armies were camped on mountains opposite each other, with a great valley lying between them.

Every day, a huge Philistine warrior named Goliath would come down to the valley and challenge the Israelites to send out a man to fight him. Goliath promised that whoever won, that army would be declared the victor, and the losers

would become their servants.

Unfortunately, no one in Israel would go out to fight against Goliath because he was a fearsome giant, and they were all afraid of him. Goliath stood between 10 and 11 feet tall, and he carried an enormous spear with an iron head that weighed 15 pounds. He was clothed with heavy armor made of brass or bronze. King Saul was also a large man, who stood head and shoulders above his soldiers, but even Saul was afraid to take the challenge and fight the giant.

So, day after day, for 40 days, the huge giant humiliated the Israelite soldiers with his taunts and insults. No one dared to go fight him.

David was just a teenage shepherd and at this time he was back at home tending to his flocks, while his three oldest brothers were away in the army. David's father Jesse was worried about his sons in the war; so one day Jesse sent David to take a load of food and supplies to his brothers and the other soldiers at the battlefield. He told David to deliver the supplies and bring back word about how the battle was going, and to see if his brothers were safe.

SOMETHING TO THINK ABOUT: Goliath was a bully who was bigger and stronger than everyone else. He liked to threaten people and make them afraid. Have you ever been in a situation like that where someone bigger and stronger made you so afraid that you couldn't muster up the courage to take up

for yourself? How did that make you feel? What did you do about that?

DAY TWO LESSON

Read about when David the young shepherd boy arrives at the battle. (1 Samuel 17:12-31)

"And David said to the men who stood by him, 'What shall be done for the man who kills this Philistine and takes away the reproach from Israel? For who is this uncircumcised Philistine, that he should defy the armies of the living God?' " (1 Samuel 17:26)

So, David left his sheep with other keepers to watch, and he went up to the battlefield. When David got there, the armies were lined up opposite each other and there was a lot of shouting, but there was no fighting going on. David delivered the food to his brothers and asked them what was happening. Then, Goliath the giant appeared again, defiantly challenging the armies of God.

All of the Israelite soldiers were afraid, and they fled from him in terror. David was amazed at the humiliating sight of his army running away from the enemy. "Who is this uncircumcised Philistine, that he should defy the armies of the living God?" David demanded. Notice that David identified the Israelites with the army of God.

David began to question the soldiers, "What shall be done for the man who kills this Philistine and takes away the reproach from Israel?" Some of the soldiers answered David and said that the king would give great riches and

honor to anyone who killed the giant, and would even give the king's own daughter to be his wife.

As David was asking these questions, his brothers became angry with him. "Why did you even come down here?" they wanted to know. They ignored the fact that David's father had sent him, and they accused him of being too proud and selfish, and of coming just to watch the battle.

As these questions were being debated back and forth, someone overheard them talking and went and told King Saul. The king sent for David to be brought to him.

SOMETHING TO THINK ABOUT: Why do you think David's brothers got so upset with him, just for asking his questions? Maybe his brothers were embarrassed because they were afraid to fight the giant themselves, and they didn't want David to go back home and tell their father about their cowardice. Maybe they were jealous because David wasn't afraid. What do you think?

Sometimes people are ashamed of the wrong things they themselves are doing, so they get defensive and turn against their friends because they are doing what is right. Has something like this ever happened to you? What did you do?

DAY THREE LESSON

David the young shepherd boy volunteers to fight the giant. (1 Samuel 17:30-40)

"Your servant has struck down both lions and bears, and this uncircumcised Philistine shall be like one of them, for he has defied

the armies of the living God.' And David said, 'The Lord who delivered me from the paw of the lion and from the paw of the bear will deliver me from the hand of this Philistine.' And Saul said to David, 'Go, and the Lord be with you!' " (1 Samuel 17:36-37)

When David appeared before King Saul, the young shepherd boy quickly volunteered to go out and fight the giant. "Let no man's heart fail because of him. Your servant will go and fight with this Philistine," David said.

The king was reluctant to send David into battle against Goliath, because he thought David was too young and inexperienced. Saul said to David, "You are not able to go against this Philistine to fight with him, for you are but a youth, and he has been a man of war from his youth."

David was confident that he could defeat Goliath. He told the king about the time when he was watching his father's sheep, and a bear and a lion had come to steal and eat the helpless sheep, but David had driven them away, killed them both, and rescued the sheep. David said, "Your servant has struck down both lions and bears, and this uncircumcised Philistine shall be like one of them, for he has defied the armies of the living God...The Lord who delivered me from the paw of the lion and from the paw of the bear will deliver me from the hand of this Philistine."

David was speaking prophetically about what he sincerely believed would come to pass. Notice that he doesn't promise King Saul that he will defeat Goliath because he himself is such a great

warrior. Rather, he expresses his confidence that the mighty power of God will deliver him from the much stronger enemy he faces. David is not just fighting for himself; he is most concerned to defend the honor of God.

After hearing this, King Saul is persuaded, and he allows David to go fight the giant. He insists that David should wear the king's own armor out to the battle. Saul was probably trying to protect David, but his armor was too big and heavy for David to carry. Plus, David had never worn armor like that before; so instead of helping him, it would only burden him down. So, David took off the king's armor and went out to fight Goliath without any protection.

SOMETHING TO THINK ABOUT: David was brave, but surely he knew that physically he was no match for the giant. Why did David volunteer to fight Goliath, when everyone else was afraid? Why do you think David was so confident that God would help him win the battle? Was David foolish to risk his life so impetuously, on the spur of the moment? Have you ever faced a challenge or a danger that was so huge, you didn't see how you could win? What did you do?

DAY FOUR LESSON

David goes out to fight against Goliath. (1 Samuel 17:41-47)

"Then David said to the Philistine, 'you come to me with a sword and with a spear and with a javelin, but I come to you in the name of the Lord of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied.' " (1 Samuel 17:45)

David strode out into the valley to confront Goliath. On his way, he stopped at the brook and selected five smooth stones and put them in his shepherd's bag. David was carrying his shepherd's staff in one hand and his sling in the other. He had no sword or spear. Goliath saw David coming and started to approach him; but when he saw that David was just a handsome young shepherd, without any weapons of war, the giant warrior was insulted and he mocked David. "Am I a dog, that you come to me with sticks?" Goliath demanded.

Then the Bible says that Goliath "cursed David by his gods." The giant or his curses did not frighten David. What he said in reply is important. "Then David said to the Philistine, 'You come to me with a sword and with a spear and with a javelin, but I come to you in the name of the Lord of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied. This day the Lord will deliver you into my hand, and I will strike you down and cut off your head. And I will give the dead bodies of the host of the Philistines this day to the birds of the air and to the wild beasts of the earth, that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel, and that all this assembly may know that the Lord saves not with sword and spear. For the battle is the Lord's, and he will give you into our hand.' " (1 Samuel 17: 45-47).

Both Goliath and David recognized that the battle was a test between their two opposing deities, or gods. Notice that David did not promise merely to defeat Goliath, but also to feed the dead bodies of the whole Philistine army to the birds and animals.

Then, Goliath came closer to kill David with his sword, but instead of trying to avoid the giant, David ran toward him as fast as he could. David pulled one stone from his bag and used his sling to hurl the stone at Goliath. It hit the giant right between the eyes, so hard that the stone sank into his forehead. Goliath fell on his face on the ground, either dead or unconscious. The battle was over quickly, in a matter of mere moments.

This is the classic story of an underdog hero who is able to win against overwhelming odds. It also illustrates the old folk saying, "The bigger they come, the harder they fall."

SOMETHING TO THINK ABOUT: David told Goliath that he was going to kill him and his whole army. Was David proudly boasting, the same way Goliath had been blustering for 40 days before? How was David's prophetic utterance in the name of the Lord different from Goliath's pagan curses "by his gods"? Keep this in mind as you read the end of the story.

When David selected five smooth stones, was he taking extra ammunition in case he missed his first shot? Or was he taking extra stones because he knew that Goliath had four brothers who were also giants, and they might come out to help? What do you think?

How important do you think it was that David was fighting to defend the honor of Almighty God, and not just to win a victory for the armies of Israel and King Saul?

DAY FIVE LESSON

David slays the Philistine with a smooth stone. (1 Samuel 17:48-58)

"So David prevailed over the Philistine with a sling and with a stone, and struck the Philistine and killed him. There was no sword in the hand of David." (1 Samuel 17:50)

David had promised Goliath that he would sever his head from his dead body, but David didn't even carry a knife with him out to the battle.

After Goliath was hit with the stone and had fallen to the ground, David ran and climbed on top of his giant body and pulled Goliath's huge sword from its sheath; and then, David used the giant's own sword to cut off his head. It was a dramatic and gruesome gesture that filled the entire Philistine army with fear. The Philistines ran away, but the Israelite army had suddenly become bold because of David's surprise victory, and they pursued the Philistines and fought them.

The result was a rout and a great slaughter of the enemies of God. Just as David had promised, the dead bodies of the Philistines littered the ground to be devoured later by the birds and wild animals. Then the Israelites spoiled the tents of the Philistines.

This is what always happens when the supernatural power of God shows up. The enemies of God are confounded and put to flight, and the true followers of God are encouraged and empowered. The spoils of war always go to the victors.

David took Goliath's armor home with him as a trophy of his great victory, but David took the head of Goliath the giant to Jerusalem, where it was put on public display to demonstrate what happens to those enemies who mock and defy God. As promised and expected, David received honor from King Saul.

Whenever we step out in faith and do something bold and daring that honors God, God will see to it that in some way we receive honor and recognition from men.

SOMETHING TO THINK ABOUT:
When the giants in your life threaten to overpower and destroy you, do you have the supernatural resources to defeat them?

Where do we find the kind of boldness and courage that young David displayed? What kind of special faith is it that can give us victories like David had over Goliath? Do you think that God's supernatural power can be released by speaking words of faith into a difficult situation?

DANIEL IN THE LIONS DEN - DANIEL 6

DANIEL WOULD PRAY TO GOD DAY AND NIGHT.



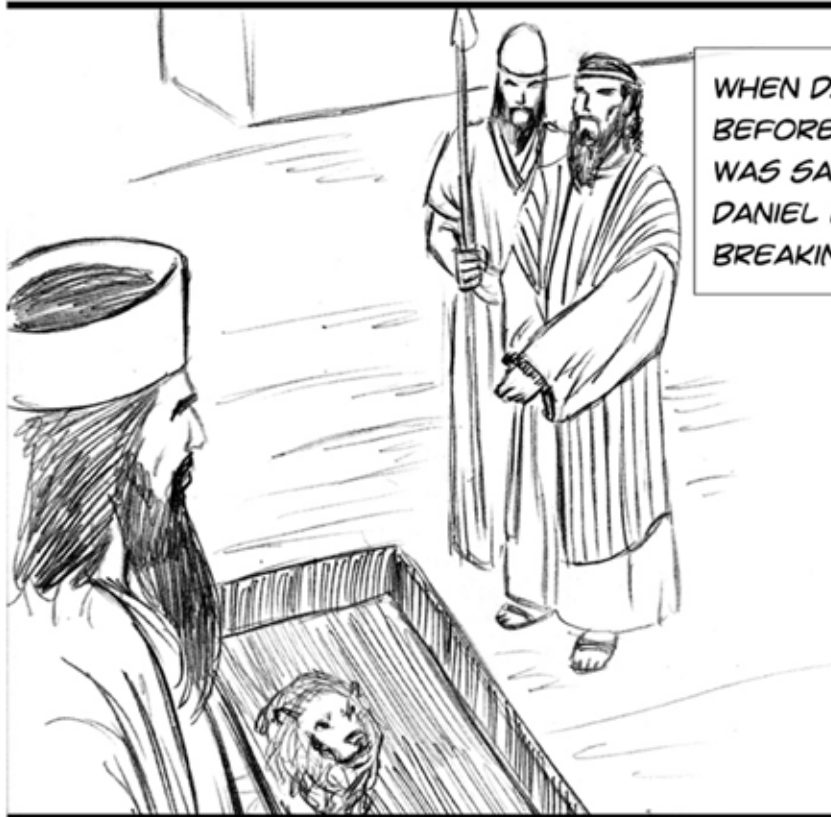
SOME PEOPLE DID NOT LIKE IT AND DECIDED TO PUNISH DANIEL.

THEY ASKED THE KING TO MAKE A LAW THAT EVERYONE WOULD HAVE TO PRAY TO THE KING.



THE PRIDEFUL KING SIGNED A LAW THAT WOULD FORBID DANIEL FROM PRAYING TO GOD.





WHEN DANIEL WAS BROUGHT BEFORE THE KING, THE KING WAS SAD BUT HAD TO PUT DANIEL IN THE LIONS DEN FOR BREAKING THE LAW.



DANIEL STOOD IN FRONT OF HUNGRY LIONS AS THEY WERE GROWLING AND MOVING TOWARD HIM.



DANIEL PRAYED TO GOD TO SAVE HIM BECAUSE HE KNEW GOD COULD

THE KING COULDN'T SLEEP KNOWING
WHAT HE HAD DONE TO DANIEL.



BUT DOWN INSIDE THE LIONS
DEN, THE LIONS WERE QUIET.



FOR GOD HAD TAMED
THE LIONS AND SAVED
DANIEL.



WHEN THE KING CAME THE NEXT MORNING HE SAW THAT DANIEL
WAS NOT HARMED. HE WAS OVERJOYED AND CHANGED THE LAW.

Lesson 5

Daniel and the Lion's Den

Daniel Chapter 6

DAY ONE LESSON

Read the description of Daniel's promotion by the King. (Daniel 6:1-3)

"Then this Daniel became distinguished above all the other high officials and satraps, because an excellent spirit was in him. And the king planned to set him over the whole kingdom." (Daniel 6:3)

The history of Daniel is one of the most enduring and inspiring stories in the Bible. Daniel was a young Jewish boy who had come to Babylon as a slave, after King Nebuchadnezzar conquered his country. However, he was chosen, along with three other Hebrew children, to sit at the king's table and to be trained in the royal court.

In his early years, Daniel and his three friends were set apart as especially gifted prodigies. Daniel was even able to interpret dreams and visions and render an accurate analysis.

"As for these four children, God gave them knowledge and skill in all learning and wisdom: and Daniel had understanding in all visions and dreams . . . And in all matters of wisdom and understanding, that the king enquired of them, he found them ten times better than all the magicians and astrologers that were in all his realm." (Daniel 1:17, 20)

Again and again, throughout his entire life, Daniel was promoted

within the Babylonian government. You can read about all of that in the first five chapters of the Book of Daniel.

In Daniel 6, we find that once again Daniel has found favor. The new King Darius has reorganized the governmental structure of his kingdom and has established a hierarchical system of 120 princes and 3 presidents to manage all the important affairs of the realm.

Daniel was the number one president to whom everyone else reported. What's more, King Darius intended to turn his whole kingdom over to Daniel to manage for him. Daniel was wise and honest, and the king trusted and favored Daniel.

The Bible says that all of this happened to Daniel "because an excellent spirit was in him." This means more than saying that he had a great personality and was able to get along well with people. It also implies that he had uncommon wisdom and ability.

WHY could he do this? Was it because Daniel had special abilities? Perhaps so, but even more importantly, it was because from his childhood, Daniel had made it a practice to honor God in his life. Daniel put God first and tried always to do those things that were most pleasing to God. As a result, God continually caused Daniel to receive favor and promotion.

SOMETHING TO THINK ABOUT:

A lot of people try to get ahead in life by running roughshod and climbing over the top of other people. They think that their own success depends on being shrewder and tougher than everybody else, but is this what Daniel, the wise man, did?

Do you think that a person will gain more prestige and power by shameless self-promotion and cutthroat competition, or by honoring God with honest dealings and diligent service? What does it mean to honor God while living in today's modern world?

DAY TWO LESSON

Read about the jealous men who plotted against Daniel. (Daniel 6:4-9)

"Then these men said, 'We shall not find any ground for complaint against this Daniel unless we find it in connection with the law of his God.' " (Daniel 6:5)

It is not surprising to read that the other two presidents, and the 120 princes appointed by the king, were all jealous of Daniel's success. They schemed to find a way to remove Daniel from power so that they could move up and take his place. This sort of backstabbing and lust for power has been a standard feature of government throughout history.

However, these plotters had a problem, because they couldn't find anything over which they could accuse Daniel. This is because Daniel was honest, loyal, and faithful to the king. Since he wasn't trying to promote himself dishonestly, he had done nothing

wrong; but in the eyes of Daniel's enemies, he had one fatal flaw. Daniel was devoted to his God.

If the plotters were going to bring Daniel down, they realized that they would have to use his own religious devotion against him. These evil men knew that Daniel prayed to God every day; so they hatched a wicked conspiracy against him. A conspiracy is when people agree to work together secretly to do some wicked thing.

So, these power hungry men went before King Darius with a proposal that appealed to his own inflated ego. They advised him to make a special decree that for 30 days, nobody in the entire kingdom was allowed to ask or petition anyone for anything, unless that request was addressed to the king himself. This rule included all prayers to any pagan god or to the true God.

Anyone who broke this royal decree was to be punished by being thrown into a den of hungry vicious lions. Since this was a death sentence, the new law made prayer a capital crime. The evil conspirators reasoned that this flattering proposal would appeal to King Darius' sense of self-importance, and he would sign it into law quickly without thinking through all the implications. Unfortunately, that is exactly what he did.

One of the unique rules of the Law of the Medes and Persians was that, once such a royal decree had been officially issued, it could not be changed. Not even King Darius could overrule his own royal decree. So, now the trap for Daniel was set.

The plotters were counting on Daniel's honesty and integrity to get him into trouble. They knew that Daniel was devoted to his God, and they were betting that he would continue to pray, no matter what the new law said; and again, the plotters were right in their predictions.

SOMETHING TO THINK ABOUT:
Do you think it is a good idea to hastily pass a major law that can't be changed? Why or why not?

King Darius was manipulated by a group of people with a personal agenda. Is it a good idea to have a legal system where one man has the power to make all the rules for everyone else?

We say the punishment should fit the crime. Is it a fair system of justice to establish a mandatory death penalty for an offense like private prayer that is not hurting anyone else? Have you ever had someone who was jealous of you and tried to do something to hurt you? What did you do about that, and how did it turn out?

DAY THREE LESSON

Read how Daniel reacted to the evil plot against him. (Daniel 6:10-17)

"When Daniel knew that the document had been signed, he went to his house where he had windows in his upper chamber open toward Jerusalem. He got down on his knees three times a day and prayed and gave thanks before his God, as he had done previously." (Daniel 6:10)

Daniel had heard about the new law, and he knew that King Darius had signed it. If the king hadn't

acted so hastily, he might have asked Daniel's wise advice first; but he didn't. So, now the law was in effect, and it could not be changed.

Daniel risked a gruesome death if he prayed to his God, but that threat did not deter Daniel one bit. The Bible says that Daniel went into his house and got down on his knees and three times a day he "prayed and gave thanks before his God, as he did aforetime." In other words, Daniel did exactly what he normally did, new law or no law.

What is more, while he did it privately inside his own house, he did not do it secretly. Daniel prayed to God with the windows wide open, so that anyone outside could hear him. Daniel was not ashamed to praise his God!

The plotters assembled themselves nearby and heard Daniel praying. This was just what they were hoping for. They rushed immediately to tell the king. When King Darius heard the news about Daniel, he realized immediately that he had been tricked. He was angry with himself for signing the new law, but it couldn't be undone.

King Darius tried to figure out a way to deliver Daniel from the conspiracy, but he couldn't. The plotters were pressing the king to enforce the irrevocable royal decree. Darius loved Daniel, but he had no choice. He sent his guards to arrest Daniel and thrust him into the den of lions.

However, Darius called out to Daniel, "May your God, whom you serve continually, deliver you!" This was an amazing statement of faith

from a pagan king in a moment of crisis.

Then the king caused a great stone to be rolled over the entrance to the lions' den, and he sealed it with his own signet ring so that no one could remove the stone without his order. It was now late in the day, and Daniel would spend the night locked up with the ravening lions. Most reasonable people would have expected Daniel to be dead and devoured by morning.

SOMETHING TO THINK ABOUT: Daniel was the most powerful man in the kingdom, right after the king. He knew that the laws had to be enforced without partiality, and that he risked not only his high position but also his very life. Yet, Daniel defied the king's royal decree and prayed anyway. This raises the very real question: When does a person have the right - or even the duty - to disobey any law of man that goes contrary to the law of God?

This is a question that many Christians have had to ask themselves over the past 2,000 years, and there have been times of severe persecution where millions have died as martyrs for their faith in God.

Sir William Blackstone famously wrote that whenever any law of man contradicts the law of God, it is no law, and thus is null and void. What do you think a person should do when faced with the choice between obeying an unjust or illegitimate law, and violating his or her own conscience? What would you do?

Do you think Daniel was brave to pray? Did Daniel have any real

choice?

DAY FOUR LESSON

Read what happened to Daniel in the lion's den. (Daniel 6:18-23)

"Then the king was exceedingly glad, and commanded that Daniel be taken up out of the den. So Daniel was taken up out of the den, and no kind of harm was found on him, because he had trusted in his God." (Daniel 6:23)

King Darius went back to his chambers, but he was restless all night and did not eat or sleep. He fasted and refused all pleasant music. He was clearly worried about Daniel.

Early in the morning the king arose and hurried to the lions' den, and he "cried with a lamentable voice unto Daniel." The king clearly felt guilty for allowing his loyal servant Daniel to come to any harm because of his own impetuous action in signing the law.

"O Daniel, servant of the living God, has your God, whom you serve continually, been able to deliver you from the lions?" cried the king. "O king, live forever," Daniel replied. "My God sent his angel and shut the lions' mouths, and they have not harmed me, because I was found blameless before him; and also before you, O king, I have done no harm."

So, Daniel had indeed spent the entire night in the lions' den and was still safe and sound, because the angel of God had come into the den of lions and protected him. The king was relieved and ecstatic to hear the good news that Daniel was alive. He ordered Daniel to be released from the lions' den. "So

Daniel was taken up out of the den, and no kind of harm was found on him, because he had trusted in his God."

We should notice three things in this passage of Scripture. First, the king in his first words to Daniel acknowledged "the living God," and Daniel's first words to the king were "O king, live forever." It appears that this crisis of conscience produced the conversion and salvation of King Darius, who was previously a pagan.

Second, Daniel continued to proclaim his innocence of all wrongdoing, toward either God or the king. He knew that he had broken the letter of the law of the kingdom of men, but he also knew that he had kept the spirit of the law of the Kingdom of God. So, Daniel was innocent on all counts.

Third, the Scripture declares that when Daniel was taken up out of the lions' den, "no manner of hurt was found upon him, because he believed in his God." Once again, it is the vital active faith of the believer that produces deliverance and victory in a time of crisis and danger.

SOMETHING TO THINK ABOUT: Daniel was delivered from the lions' den because he had faith in God, and God judged Daniel to be innocent of all wrongdoing. Do you think Daniel never sinned, or is this one more Old Testament example of faith being imputed to him for righteousness? (Like Abraham, Romans 4:22)

A lot of people have had strong faith in God, and yet they died as martyrs anyway. Does that mean we shouldn't expect for God to

do miracles for us today when we are in trouble? Do you think that perhaps God allowed this whole incident to happen to Daniel because God wanted to see King Darius come to faith and salvation?

DAY FIVE LESSON

Read about what happened to those who plotted against Daniel, and also to the king. (Daniel 6:24-28)

"And the king commanded, and those men who had maliciously accused Daniel were brought and cast into the den of lions—they, their children, and their wives. And before they reached the bottom of the den, the lions overpowered them and broke all their bones in pieces." (Daniel 6:24)

King Darius knew that the evil conspirators, who had plotted against Daniel because they were jealous of his success and coveted his position of power, had tricked him. King Darius didn't like being manipulated and played for a fool by people serving their own agendas. So his next act was to exact revenge upon them. He ordered the plotters to be cast into the lions' den, thus enforcing the principle of justice that calls for false accusers to suffer the same fate they had sought to inflict upon their victims.

No one should suffer under the delusion that maybe these lions were old and toothless, or maybe they weren't really hungry, and that's why they didn't devour Daniel. This theory is disproven by what the lions did to the guilty conspirators; it says they broke their bones and devoured them

before their bodies ever hit the ground in the lions' den. In other words, the lions truly were ravenous, and when unrestrained by the angel of God, they were vicious.

There is a sad note to this story, but it has to be told. Not only did 120 princes and 2 presidents perish in the lions' den that day, but all their wives and children did as well. Thus the evil men, who wickedly sought to destroy an innocent man in order to advance their own careers, ended up bringing tragedy and destruction upon their own families as well as themselves. This toll added up to several hundred people who perished at the ravages of the lions.

This fact illustrates the pervasive effects of sin. Often the sin of one person extends its destructive consequences into the lives of others. We need to be aware of that sobering truth.

There was a positive result of the whole incident. King Darius issued

another royal decree and caused it to be published throughout his entire kingdom. Here is what it said: "I make a decree, that in all my royal dominion people are to tremble and fear before the God of Daniel, for he is the living God, enduring forever; his kingdom shall never be destroyed, and his dominion shall be to the end. He delivers and rescues; he works signs and wonders in heaven and on earth, he who has saved Daniel from the power of the lions." (Daniel 6:26-27)

Thus, the king decreed that all men in his kingdom should worship the true God.

SOMETHING TO THINK ABOUT: Was it right, fair and just for the king to throw the evil plotters into the lions' den? What about throwing their families in there as well? Has the royal decree of King Darius ever changed, since the time it was recorded in the Book of Daniel, or is the Kingdom of the Living God still the same?

JONAH AND THE WHALE - JONAH 1

JONAH WAS A PROPHET OF GOD.
A PROPHET SPOKE ON BEHALF
OF GOD.



ONE DAY WHEN HE WAS
SITTING BY A TREE PRAYING,
GOD SPOKE TO HIM.



GOD TOLD HIM TO GO TO AN EVIL
CITY AND TO TELL THE PEOPLE
THERE THAT THEY NEEDED
TO REPENT..



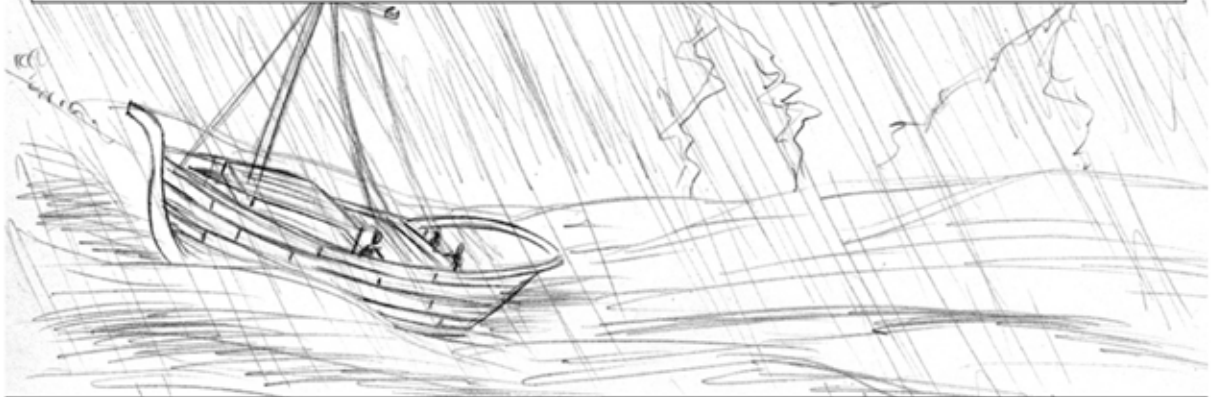
JONAH DISOBEYED GOD.
HE DID NOT WANT TO GO
AND WENT IN THE OTHER
DIRECTION.



HE GOT ON A SHIP THAT WAS
SAILING TO A DIFFERENT CITY
FAR AWAY.



SO GOD SENT A BAD STORM. THE WINDS BLEW HARD AND THE MEN ON THE SHIP WERE AFRAID IT WOULD SINK.

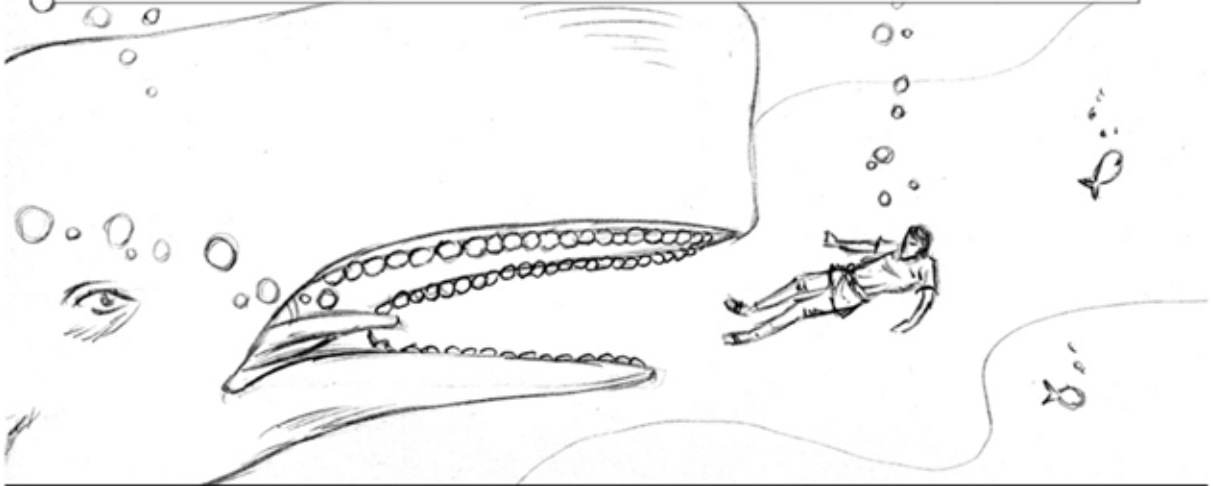


JONAH KNEW GOD HAD SENT THE STORM BECAUSE HE DISOBEYED.

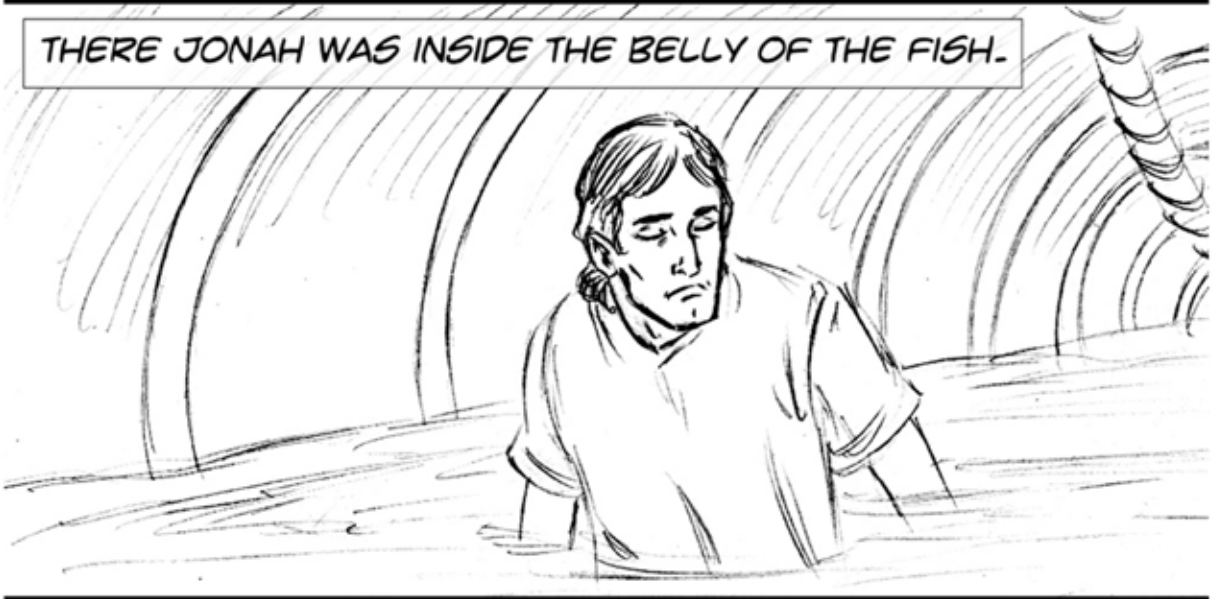
JONAH TOLD THEM TO THROW HIM INTO THE WATER AND MAYBE THE STORM WOULD STOP... AND IT DID!



GOD THEN SENT A BIG FISH THAT SWALLOWED JONAH.



THERE JONAH WAS INSIDE THE BELLY OF THE FISH.



FOR THREE DAYS AND THREE NIGHTS HE WAITED.



JONAH PRAYED TO GOD. HE SAID HE WAS SORRY HE HAD RUN AWAY. HE PROMISED TO OBEY.



THE FISH THEN PUT JONAH OUT ON DRY LAND.



MORAL OF THE STORY - GOD LOVES US EVEN WHEN WE RUN AWAY FROM WHAT WE SHOULD BE DOING.

Lesson 6

Jonah and the Whale

Jonah 1-4

Matthew 12:38-41 & 16:1-4, Luke 11:29-30

DAY ONE LESSON

Read about how Jonah ran away from God. (Jonah 1:1-17)

"And the Lord appointed a great fish to swallow up Jonah. And Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights." (Jonah 1:17)

Jonah was a Hebrew man who knew God so well that God spoke to him directly. God told Jonah that He had a special job for him to do. God wanted Jonah to go to Nineveh, which was a great city far away, and warn them that God was going to destroy their city because of their great wickedness. The Bible does not say exactly what bad things the people of Nineveh were doing, but we know that it was common for pagan people in those times to worship idols and to lie, cheat, steal, murder, and commit all kinds of wicked sexual sins.

Jonah did not want to go to Nineveh; so, Jonah decided to run away from God. The Scripture says that Jonah wanted to "flee from the presence of God." So he went down to the seacoast town of Joppa and bought a ticket on a boat bound for Tarshish. However, when the ship was far out to sea, God caused a terrible storm to come up, with high winds and raging waves. All of the sailors were afraid that the ship would sink, and they would all drown.

They tried praying to their pagan gods, but that didn't help. The storm just got worse.

Jonah was asleep in the bottom of the boat when the captain came and found him. "Get up and pray," the captain told him, "so we won't all perish." Then the men on the boat cast lots among themselves to see which one of them was responsible for the terrible storm. The lot fell on Jonah. Then Jonah confessed that God had sent the storm because Jonah had fled from God.

Jonah told them that they should cast him overboard if they wanted to save themselves. The men were afraid for their lives, but still they didn't want to sacrifice Jonah. They rowed as hard as they could, trying to get to land; but the waves were too strong, and the wind was tempestuous. Finally, they gave up trying to fight the storm and threw Jonah overboard. Then the wind and the waves became calm, and the men in the ship were saved.

Meanwhile, a great fish that God had sent swallowed Jonah whole. The Scripture says, "The Lord had prepared a great fish to swallow up Jonah." So this might have been a specially designed fish, or it might have been a large shark or whale that God had chosen. Either way, God had sent the fish, and Jonah was alive inside the fish's dark belly for three days and three

nights.

SOMETHING TO THINK ABOUT:

The obvious question is why Jonah ever thought he could disobey God and get away with it. People who don't know God, often tend to ignore God and just do whatever they want to do; but Jonah did know God, and he had received a specific assignment. When God calls a person to do something, then doing something different is no longer an option. If we refuse to obey God's instructions, bad consequences are sure to follow.

Can you think of any times in your own life when you knew you were supposed to do something that was good, but you did something bad instead? How did that work out for you?

Notice that Jonah was not surprised by the storm, nor was he confused as to why it was happening. He knew exactly what was going on, and he knew what the men needed to do to save the ship. Jonah knew that God wasn't going to take the storm away as long as he was on the ship, heading in the wrong direction and running away from God. Have you seen times in your own life where someone else did something wrong, and that disobedience brought problems not only to the one who sinned but to others as well?

DAY TWO LESSON

Read about Jonah's prayer from the dark belly of the fish. (Jonah 2:1-10)

"And the Lord spoke to the fish, and it vomited Jonah out upon the dry land." (Jonah 2:10)

The men on the ship had thrown

Jonah overboard to calm the storm, and a great fish that God had sent for that purpose had swallowed up Jonah. Now Jonah found himself alive in the belly of the fish. He had not been drowned or ripped apart by the fish's teeth. He was trapped inside the fish, helpless in what had to be total darkness.

He was there for three days and three nights. How did Jonah survive? How did he get air to breathe? We don't know the answer to those questions, except we do know that God "had prepared a great fish" to swallow Jonah. So, maybe God miraculously provided him with oxygen.

To Jonah, being trapped inside the fish's belly felt like being trapped in the depths of Hell. That's what Jonah said when he began to pray to God. "Out of the belly of hell cried I, and you heard my voice," Jonah prayed. Jonah was a desperate man, and he prayed a desperate prayer.

When you are in a totally desolate place, and powerless to save yourself, there is no one better to turn to than God. It is hard to imagine a more helpless and hopeless condition than the one in which Jonah found himself right then. Unless God came to his rescue, Jonah had no hope.

Jonah's prayer talked about the seas, floods, billows, and waves that threatened his very life. Still he prayed to God for deliverance. "I went down to the land whose bars closed upon me forever; yet you brought up my life from the pit, O Lord my God." Somehow, in the midst of his despair, Jonah was able to find the faith that God

would help him, despite the fact that he was running away from God.

Sometimes we think we are doing things our own way, but ultimately God is still in control. God sent the storm. God sent the fish. God put Jonah in a place where Jonah was able to see the error of his ways and turn back to God. Jonah finally got the message. The Bible says, "The heart of man plans his way, but the Lord establishes his steps." (Proverbs 16:9).

Jonah's desperate prayer ended with the precious promise, "Salvation belongs to the Lord." At that point, God spoke to the fish, and it vomited Jonah out on the dry land. Coming out into the fresh air and sunshine must have felt like coming back from a dark cramped grave.

SOMETHING TO THINK ABOUT: We believe that God has given men both the right and the capability to make free moral choices. God lets men choose whether to obey him or not. "Free will" is what we call this ability to choose whether or not to obey God's laws and directives. However, when men freely choose to disobey God, as Jonah did, there are always serious consequences. Those consequences can be difficult, or scary, or even deadly.

We also believe that God is sovereign, which means He has the almighty power to make things happen the way He wants them to. So, maybe God won't forcibly MAKE us do anything against our will; but God knows how to put us in a hard place where we get willing to obey Him.

Have you ever had any experiences in your life where you did something that you knew was wrong, and bad things started to happen as a result? Did you realize that you were going in the wrong direction and decide to turn back to God?

If you ever find yourself in a dark and desolate place where it seems there is no way out, always remember that you can still pray to God, and He will hear your honest prayer.

DAY THREE LESSON

Read what happened when Jonah preached to the people of Nineveh. (Jonah 3:1-10)

"When God saw what they did, how they turned from their evil way, God relented of the disaster that he had said he would do to them, and he did not do it." (Jonah 3:10)

After Jonah miraculously survived his three-day stay in the fish's belly and found himself back on solid dry land again, he was willing to do what God had told him to do in the first place. God told him again, "Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and call out against it the message that I tell you." So, Jonah travels to Nineveh and declares the message that God has given him.

"Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown," Jonah said. God was solemnly promising to destroy Nineveh in just 40 days, but something strange happened. The people of Nineveh repented of their sins. "And the people of Nineveh believed God. They called for a fast and put on sackcloth, from the greatest of them to

the least of them." Even the king himself put on sackcloth and ashes, and he made a decree that the whole city should mourn over their sins and turn to God in repentance: "But let man and beast be covered with sackcloth, and let them call out mightily to God. Let everyone turn from his evil way and from the violence that is in his hands. Who knows? God may turn and relent and turn from his fierce anger, so that we may not perish." (Jonah 3:8-9)

Why did the people do this? Was it because of Jonah's powerful preaching? Or was it maybe because he had a strong odor and a striking appearance after spending three solid days trapped inside the big fish? Some have suggested that Jonah's hair and skin might have been bleached white by the gastric juices inside the fish; so he looked more like a ghost than a human.

We don't really know why the people of Nineveh repented, but we do know that they did it. We also know that because they did, God decided to withhold His judgment for a time. Nineveh ultimately did get destroyed, but that destruction came 40 years later, rather than in just 40 days. An entire generation was spared from God's wrath because they repented after they heard the message of judgment preached by Jonah.

SOMETHING TO THINK ABOUT: The obvious message that we derive from this story is that God is merciful and longsuffering, and that He is willing to forgive even gross sins if people will repent. There are corollary messages,

as well, that dovetail with God's mercy.

One message is that God is truly sovereign. Perhaps God had already been at work preparing the hearts of the people of Nineveh so they would be sensitive to respond when they heard Jonah's words of warning. Their hearts were prepared to receive Jonah's message just as the great fish was prepared to swallow Jonah up and prepare him for his prophetic role. Thus God was working through all these circumstances to accomplish His eternal purposes.

Another thing we see is that it is important, when carrying out a mission from God, to do it God's way, in God's time, and to say the exact words God has given you to say. Jonah's instruction for Nineveh was to "call out against it the message that I tell you." God knew exactly what words the people of Nineveh needed to hear to produce the righteous response of repentance.

"When God saw what they did, how they turned from their evil way, God relented of the disaster that he had said he would do to them, and he did not do it."

DAY FOUR LESSON

Read how Jonah pouted because God spared Nineveh. (Jonah 4:1-11)

"But it displeased Jonah exceedingly, and he was angry. And he prayed to the Lord and said, 'O Lord, is not this what I said when I was yet in my country? That is why I made haste to flee to Tarshish; for I knew that you are a gracious God and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in

steadfast love, and relenting from disaster. Therefore now, O Lord, please take my life from me, for it is better for me to die than to live.' " (Jonah 4:1-3)

Jonah was a prophet of God, but he was also a guy with a really bad attitude. God has just decided to spare the people of Nineveh from severe judgment because they repented of their sins and humbled themselves before God, but Jonah doesn't like God's decision to be merciful!

Basically, what Jonah is saying is: "Look, God, I knew you were going to do this. I knew you were going to be merciful and not destroy this city. That's why I ran away in the first place. I didn't want to come here and prophesy something that wasn't really going to happen."

The Bible says that Jonah was "displeased exceedingly" with God's decision. However, that's not all. Jonah was actually "very angry" with God about it. Jonah was SO angry that he asked God to just go ahead and kill him, "for it is better for me to die than to live."

That sounds like a pretty dangerous thing to say to the Creator of the universe, and to an all-powerful God whose power to control the destiny of all human events has just been proven. Amazingly, God in His great mercy began to reason patiently with Jonah.

Unfortunately, all Jonah did was continue to pout. Jonah went to sit by himself and sulk outside the city. God caused a gourd vine to grow up and shade Jonah from the hot sun, and Jonah liked that. Then God caused a worm to eat

the gourd vine; so that it shriveled up and died. Jonah did not like that. Again, he told God to just kill him. Again, God patiently tried to reason with Jonah. "But God said to Jonah, 'Do you do well to be angry for the plant?' And he said, 'Yes, I do well to be angry, angry enough to die.' " (Jonah 4:9)

Then God explained to Jonah the logical and moral inconsistencies of his attitude. Jonah was sympathetic for the gourd vine that perished, but not for the 120,000 human souls who lived in Nineveh and would have perished if God had destroyed the city as Jonah had prophesied.

God had hand picked Jonah as the chosen prophet to deliver God's message to Nineveh, and that message had resulted not in the destruction but in the salvation of the city. Instead of being happy for the people who were spared, Jonah was angry with God for not destroying them. Jonah seemed to think that God was wrong to be merciful instead of punishing them.

From this story we see that God is good and is able to work all situations together to accomplish His intended purposes, and to bring good to those who love and honor God. However, sometimes, the people that God uses to do that are not the best examples for us to follow.

SOMETHING TO THINK ABOUT: Why do some people claim to love God but actually hate other people? It is true that God brings judgment on sin, and that is His right as the Holy Creator of all creation. On the other hand, if God chooses to show mercy, shouldn't we also rejoice for those

who are spared?

In the New Testament, the Apostle Paul gives important instructions to Christians. In Ephesians 4:32, Paul tells them to "Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you." When we realize how much God has forgiven us, we should be glad when God chooses to forgive others the same way.

DAY FIVE LESSON

Read what Jesus said about "the sign of Jonah." (Matthew 12:38-41, 16:1-4; Luke 11:29-30)

"Then some of the scribes and Pharisees answered him, saying, 'Teacher, we wish to see a sign from you.' But he answered them, 'An evil and adulterous generation seeks for a sign, but no sign will be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah. For just as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. The men of Nineveh will rise up at the judgment with this generation and condemn it, for they repented at the preaching of Jonah, and behold, something greater than Jonah is here.' " (Matthew 12:38-41)

We have learned some important lessons from the story of Jonah and Nineveh, but its real importance is something that neither Jonah nor anyone living in his day realized. God used the example of Jonah's long desperate ordeal in the belly of the great fish to illustrate what Jesus Christ endured to bring us forgiveness of our sins.

Just as Jonah endured three days and three nights of darkness and helpless captivity that seemed like "the belly of hell" to him; even so, Jesus endured three days and three nights in the depths of the earth. Just as Jonah experienced the terrors of death before God freed him; even so Jesus experienced the terrors of separation from God and the land of the living, before God sent the Holy Spirit to raise Jesus from the dead and give Him new resurrection life. This is just exactly what God intends to do for us when we put our trust in Jesus Christ.

"If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you." (Romans 8:11)

The Bible is plain that Jesus willingly sacrificed Himself on the Cross in order to pay the price for our sins, so that we might be reconciled to God and have eternal life in Heaven. God did this for us simply because he loved us, even when we were still rebellious sinners who weren't even thinking about God. (Read 2 Corinthians 5:17-21 and Romans 5:8-10 for more insight.)

Just like Jonah ran away from God because he had a rebellious bad attitude and wanted to do things his own way instead of God's way, so each one of us has run away from God to follow our own lusts and sins. However, we still have the opportunity to repent and turn back to God.

Jesus Christ used the story of Jonah as an example to illustrate

the salvation of God. He said that Jonah's ordeal in the belly of the fish was given as a sign to "an evil and adulterous generation."

The wicked men and women of Nineveh repented at the preaching of Jonah, and they were spared by God's great mercy. Even still, Jesus warned that if people refuse to repent, things would go hard for them. Will the wicked men and women of today repent at the preaching of Jesus?

SOMETHING TO THINK ABOUT:
All of the stories in the Old Testament are written to give us examples of how Christians should live out their faith, as the Apostle Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 10:1-11. We can learn valuable spiritual

lessons by carefully considering those stories.

Other stories in the Old Testament have a deeper meaning, as well. Those stories point ahead in time and foreshadow the coming of Christ the Savior. Jonah is one of those. The story of Jonah lying helpless in the dark belly of the fish is a "type" that foreshadowed the death of Jesus on the cross and His time beneath the earth before His glorious resurrection on the third day. Some people say that these stories are just myths and fables that didn't really happen, but Jesus seemed to be saying that the story of Jonah was actually true. What do you think?

THE BIRTH OF JESUS - LUKE 2

MARY'S BABY WAS SOON TO BE BORN AS THEY TRAVELED TO BETHLEHEM.



WHEN JOSEPH AND MARY ARRIVED IN BETHLEHEM, THERE WERE NO ROOMS AT THE INN.. MARY AND JOSEPH HAD TO STAY IN A STABLE.



THERE THE BABY WAS BORN.



MARY WRAPPED HIM IN RAGS AND NAMED THE BABY BOY, JESUS.



THE KING OF KINGS.



AN ANGEL APPEARED TO SHEPHERDS NEARBY AND TOLD THEM THE GREAT WONDERFUL NEWS THAT A SAVIOR HAD BEEN BORN IN BETHLEHEM. THE SHEPHERDS SET OUT TO GO SEE THE NEW KING.



WISE MEN IN THE EAST KNEW THAT A NEW KING HAD BEEN BORN WHEN THEY SAW THE BRIGHT STAR IN THE SKY. THEY TRAVELED FAR TO BRING HIM GIFTS.



THEY WORSHIPPED THE NEW BORN KING AND GAVE HIM THREE VALUABLE GIFTS GOLD, FRANKINCENSE AND MYRRH.

JESUS MADE THE LAME WALK, THE BLIND TO SEE AND THE DEAF TO HEAR. HE RAISED THE DEAD, HEALED THE SICK AND LOVED US ALL. HE THEN TOOK THE SINS OF THE WORLD AND SACRIFICED HIMSELF ON A CROSS SO THAT ALL MIGHT BE SAVED.



ON THE THIRD DAY, HE ROSE FROM THE GRAVE, DEFEATING DEATH AND PROVIDING ETERNAL LIFE.

WOULD YOU LIKE TO ACCEPT JESUS
INTO YOUR HEART?



Lesson 7

The Birth of Jesus Christ

Matt. 1:18-2:19 , Luke 1:1 -2:19 , John 1:1-14

DAY ONE LESSON

Read about the annunciation of the angel *Gabriel* to the Virgin *Mary*.
(Luke 1:26-38)

"And the angel said to her, 'Do not be afraid, *Mary*, for you have found favor with *God*. And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name *Jesus*. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. And the Lord *God* will give to him the throne of his father *David*, and he will reign over the house of *Jacob* forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end.' And *Mary* said to the angel, 'How will this be, since I am a virgin?' And the angel answered her, 'The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be called holy - the Son of *God*.' "
(Luke 1:30-35)

The birth of *Jesus Christ* is the dividing point of human history. Even our calendars reflect the ancient years *BC*, or *Before Christ*, and *AD*, or *Anno Domini*, which means "year of our Lord."

More important than any human calendar, the birth of *Jesus* marks the time when *God Himself* took on human flesh and inserted Himself into the chronology of history. Thus we rightly judge the birth of *Jesus*, also called the incarnation of the Lord, to be one of the most profoundly important events of all time.

The birth of *Jesus* is described in

three Gospels, but different parts of the story are told in different places; so, we will skip around to keep the narrative in its correct chronological order.

Here in the Gospel of *Luke*, we read about what happened when *God* sent the Angel *Gabriel* to visit a teenage girl named *Mary* and to deliver to her a very important message. *Gabriel* told *Mary* that she had been chosen by *God* to carry out a crucial task that had never happened before and would never be repeated: her job was to give birth to the very Son of *God*, who would become the Savior of the world.

Mary was startled to see an angel appear in her room and begin talking to her, but he told her not to be afraid because she was highly favored of *God*. The next part of the message was even more confusing, though, because the angel told her that she was going to have a very special baby. This didn't make sense to *Mary*, because she was young and had never been intimate with any man. She was engaged to a carpenter named *Joseph*; but they weren't married yet, and she was still a virgin. So, she questioned the angel, and he answered with more startling news.

"And *Mary* said to the angel, 'How will this be, since I am a virgin?' And the angel answered her, 'The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be called holy -

the Son of God.' " (Luke 1:34-35)

Mary didn't understand how all of this was supposed to happen, but she wanted to please God; so she replied, "Behold, I am the servant of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word." (Luke 1:38) After that, the angel left her alone.

SOMETHING TO THINK ABOUT:

In church history, the account we just read about is called the "Annunciation of the Blessed Virgin Mary." Annunciation is another word for "Announcement." It refers to the angel Gabriel's announcement to Mary that she had been specially chosen by God to do something completely unique in time and history. She would deliver a virgin birth.

Try to put yourself in Mary's place and imagine what you would think if such an extraordinary supernatural encounter took place in your own life? Would you accept God's assignment as quickly and as willingly as Mary did, or would you perhaps be skeptical?

DAY TWO LESSON

Read about the angel's dream message to Joseph the Carpenter. (Matthew 1: 18-25)

"Now the birth of Jesus Christ took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit. And her husband Joseph, being a just man and unwilling to put her to shame, resolved to divorce her quietly. But as he considered these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream,

saying, 'Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary as your wife, for that which is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.' " (Matthew 1:18-21)

After God had sent word to Mary about what He intended to do through her, next, He dispatched the angel to confirm the message to her betrothed husband Joseph. Although Joseph and Mary were not yet married, they were officially engaged. He was technically considered to be her husband already, even though they had not yet been physically intimate. Yet, Mary was obviously pregnant.

In those days, premarital sex was considered a great sin. Everyone would assume that she had been with another man, even though she really hadn't. Of course, no one would believe her. Joseph loved Mary, and he didn't want to cause her problems; but he couldn't go through with the wedding now. So he was planning to quietly break off their engagement and leave Mary.

However, God had other plans for this special couple. God intended for these two people to raise their special child together. So, God sent the angel to visit Joseph in a dream and to tell him the truth about Mary, in hopes that Joseph would believe her and keep her as his wife. The angel confirmed to Joseph the same thing he had already told Mary - they were supposed to name the baby JESUS.

The angel also imparted some

new information to Joseph. He revealed that this special child would grow up to save his people from their sins. The angel explained that all this was happening in order to fulfill a 700-year-old prediction from Isaiah 7:14.

"All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet: 'Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel' (which means, God with us)." (Matthew 1:22-23)

Whether Joseph fully understood all that the angel meant, we do not know; nevertheless, he knew that God ordained his marriage with Mary. Like Mary, Joseph accepted his assignment willingly. Joseph abandoned his plans to break off the engagement, no matter what other people might think. He married Mary and accepted her as his wife while she was still pregnant. However, Joseph did not have intimate sexual relations with Mary until months later, after their special baby Jesus had been born in Bethlehem.

SOMETHING TO THINK ABOUT: The Virgin Birth of Jesus Christ is one of the bedrock doctrines of the historic Christian faith. In fact, it has been labeled one of the fundamental beliefs that accompany orthodox understanding of the Scriptures. There are a lot of profound theological reasons why this fact is important, but we can't discuss all those now.

What is important right now is that we understand that the Bible clearly teaches that this is true. If the Bible is truly the Word of God, then the virgin birth of Jesus

must be a fact. Nonetheless, it is one of the main things that skeptics and unbelievers love to attack about the Bible. What do you think? Is the Virgin Birth a true story, or is it a myth?

DAY THREE LESSON

Read about the birth of the baby Jesus in an animal stable. (Luke 2:1-21)

"In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered. This was the first registration when Quirinius was governor of Syria. And all went to be registered, each to his own town. And Joseph also went up from Galilee, from the town of Nazareth, to Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and lineage of David, to be registered with Mary, his betrothed, who was with child. And while they were there, the time came for her to give birth. And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in swaddling cloths and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn." (Luke 2:1-7)

Joseph took his wife Mary with him to Bethlehem to pay his taxes, as ordered by the emperor. They got there but found no place to stay in the inn; so they had to camp outside in a stable with the animals. While they were there, Mary gave birth to the baby Jesus. She wrapped him in swaddling clothes and laid him in a manger, using the feeding trough for a makeshift crib.

It is hard for us to imagine that the very Son of God, the Holy One sent from Heaven on a

mission to save the human race from sin, would enter the world in such a humble setting, but it is God's habit to do things in ways that human beings don't expect and often don't understand. One explanation might be that God wanted us to see just how much He truly loved us, to lower Himself down to our lowest level in order to later exalt us up into heavenly heights with Him.

"And in the same region there were shepherds out in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And an angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were filled with great fear. And the angel said to them, 'Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. And this will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger.' And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying, 'Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased!' When the angels went away from them into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, 'Let us go over to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has made known to us.' And they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby lying in a manger." (Luke 2:8-16)

The story of how the angels appeared to the shepherds out in the fields is one of the most beloved parts of the Christmas

traditions associated with the celebration of Jesus's birth. Hymns based on the account in Luke 2:14 have been sung to different tunes for centuries, associated with the phrase *Gloria in Excelsis Deo*, which is Latin for "glory to God in the highest." So, God sent forth his angelic host to bear supernatural witness to the birth of Jesus.

SOMETHING TO THINK ABOUT:
Can you imagine being a shepherd out in a field, on a clear quiet night, watching over your flocks? Suddenly, a bright light splits the sky, and a glowing angel appears, heralding the birth of the Savior of the world. Next, the whole sky erupts into a brilliant light show, and a symphony of angelic sound, all praising God and promising peace on earth and good will toward men. Would you have believed something extra special had just happened?

DAY FOUR LESSON

Read the story of the wise men coming from the East. (Matthew 2:1-23)

"Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, wise men from the east came to Jerusalem, saying, 'Where is he who has been born king of the Jews? For we saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him.' " (Matthew 2:1-2)

Everything about the birth of Jesus was supernatural. It was predicted in advance by the ancient Hebrew prophets. It was announced in advance by angels. It occurred miraculously by means

of a supernatural virgin birth; it was heralded to shepherds by a heavenly light show outside Bethlehem; and it was signaled to the entire world by a special star in the sky.

The story of the Magi, or Wise Men from the East, is important. These were pagan astrologers who practiced occult magic and studied the patterns of the stars and planets to predict the future. They came from far away because they realized that the unusual signs they were seeing in the heavens were of extraordinary significance.

They traveled a long way, and by the time they reached Jerusalem, the birth of Jesus had already taken place. As they inquired where they might find the newborn King of the Jews, the wicked King Herod heard of their quest. He pretended to befriend them so he could find the baby Jesus and destroy him, all in order to protect his own worldly kingdom.

Herod asked the religious experts if they could tell him where the predicted Messiah was supposed to be born. Those who knew the Scriptures had a quick answer: the Messiah would be born in Bethlehem. Sure enough, that's where the star in the sky led the Wise Men, and it stopped directly above the house in which Joseph, and Jesus were living. Notice that this was a year or more after Jesus's birth, as he is described as being a young child, not a baby.

The Magi brought their gifts, worshipped the child, and departed. However, God warned them not to go back the same

way they came. God also warned Joseph to take his family and flee to Egypt; so Joseph left secretly and slipped away at night. It's a good thing he did, because when Herod realized that he had been tricked by the Wise Men, he sent soldiers to kill every male child age two or younger. There was a great bloody slaughter and weeping by distraught mothers.

Here is a sobering truth for us to realize. Even though God has all power in heaven and in earth; and even though He had planned from before the foundation of the world to send His Son into the world as the Savior; and even though God had orchestrated all kinds of supernatural events to make these things happen...despite all of this, there were STILL great and powerful forces of evil working to defeat God's eternal purpose.

Satan was determined to kill the rightful king and to thwart God's plan to save mankind. This is a real battle, and it is still going on; it will continue right up until the moment when Jesus returns from Heaven in power and glory and banishes Satan once and for all.

SOMETHING TO THINK ABOUT: What do you think would have happened if Joseph had ignored God's warning to flee quickly into Egypt? What if Joseph and Mary had still been in Bethlehem when King Herod's assassins arrived and began slaughtering the little boy babies?

We know that God is good and that He has Omnipotent power. That means God can do anything he wants to do. So, why do you

think God allows bad things like the murder of babies to happen? This is a tough question for us to ponder as we continue to trust in God's goodness.

DAY FIVE LESSON

Read about how the Word of God was made flesh in the earth. (John 1:1-18)

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made. In him was life, and the life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it." (John 1:1-5)

The beginning of the Gospel of John is one of the most profound passages in the Bible. This passage in John 1 is powerful, lyrical, and mysterious, yet plain to understand.

It doesn't talk about shepherds or mangers or Wise Men, but it is specifically talking about the birth of Jesus. It is describing what is called the incarnation, or the physical entrance of God into the world in human form. This passage is also clearly identifying Jesus Christ as the living Word of God, and as Himself being God, the Creator of all things. Verse 3 specifically declares: "All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made."

Thus the all-powerful God, who created the world way back in Genesis 1, is the same God who created all things in John 1, and

that God is clearly identified as being Jesus Christ.

"He was in the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world did not know him. He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him. But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God. And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth." (John 1:10-14)

The Word was God. The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us. The Word created all things. The Word was Jesus Christ, who was born of the Virgin Mary according to the plan of God.

Just as some people stumble over the doctrine of a virgin birth, many also stumble over the claim that the baby born in a stable was actually the Creator of the universe. They can accept Jesus as God's messenger, perhaps God's prophet, maybe even God's Son; but they can't quite bring themselves to accept that Jesus is, in fact, THE very same God that made the earth. Yet, this is indisputably what the Bible declares and teaches repeatedly.

However, there is more. Not only did God come into the earth in the form of human flesh, in order to save men from their sins, He also did something even more remarkable. He made a way for sinful men to actually become transformed forever into the Sons of God.

How can men do that? According to this Scripture, there is only one way - by believing on the name of the Son of God, the Living Word of God. His name is Jesus. This process of spiritual transformation from mortal human flesh to eternal divine Spirit is called being "born again". This process of the new birth is described more fully in John 3, but for now, it is sufficient to affirm that it comes about by the will of God when a person truly believes on the name of Jesus Christ and receives Him as Savior.

Not everyone will understand; not everyone will believe; but for anyone who does, they will become a child of God and will live forever in heaven with Jesus. That is God's promise in His Word.

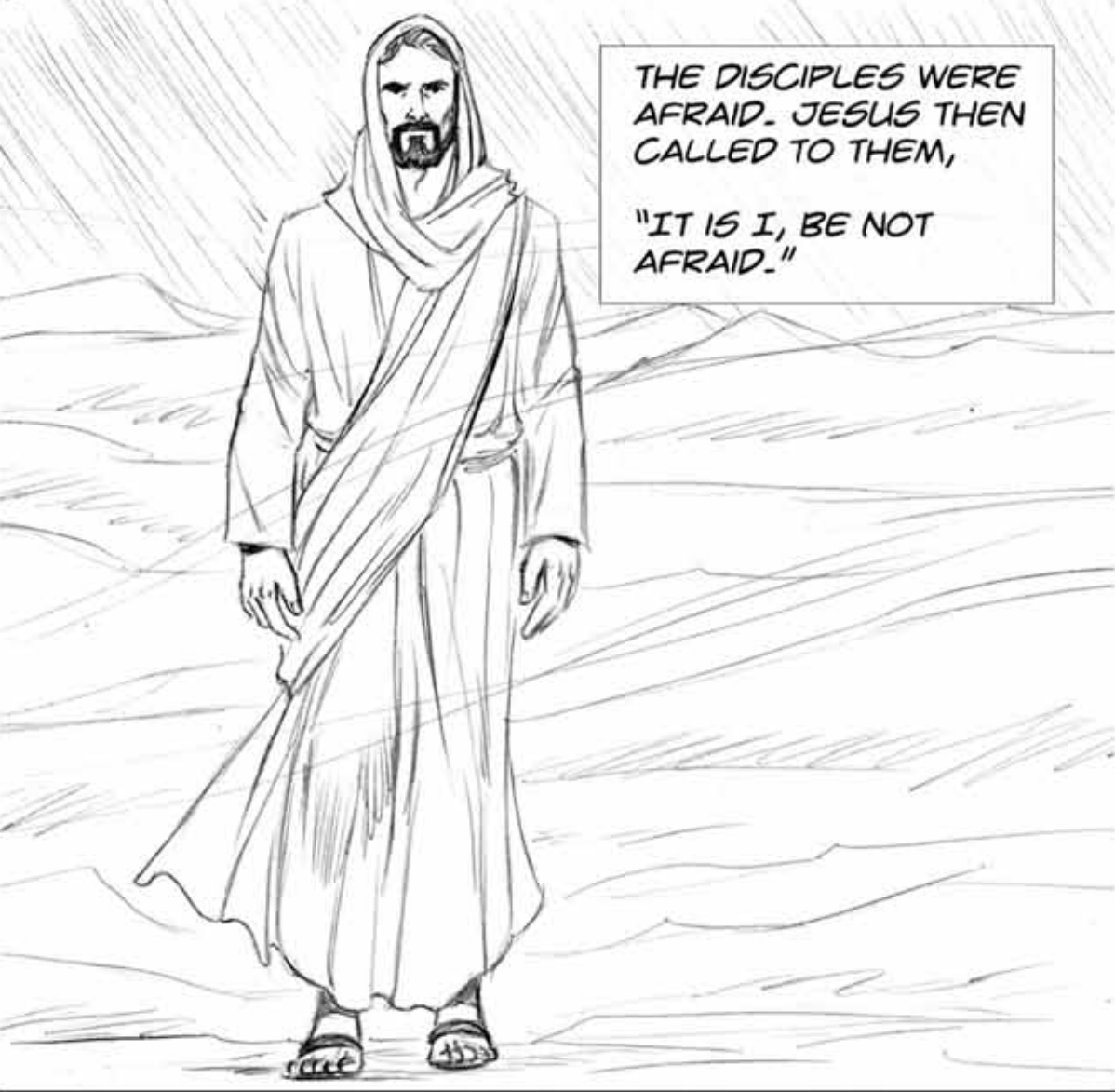
SOMETHING TO THINK ABOUT:
Do you think it is strange that God has set things up the way He has, so that people can get to heaven simply by believing in Jesus, not by doing great and noble achievements? Would you like to believe on the name of Jesus and have eternal life?

JESUS WALKS ON WATER - MATTHEW 14

THE DISCIPLES WERE CROSSING THE SEA WHEN A STORM CAME UPON THEM.



THE DISCIPLES SAW JESUS WALKING ON THE WATER. THEY THOUGHT HE WAS A GHOST.



THE DISCIPLES WERE AFRAID. JESUS THEN CALLED TO THEM,

"IT IS I, BE NOT AFRAID."

JESUS TOLD PETER TO COME TO HIM.



BECAUSE THE WIND WAS BLOWING HARD, PETER BECAME AFRAID. HE BEGAN TO SINK INTO THE WATER AND CRIED OUT TO JESUS.



JESUS TOOK PETER'S HAND.

JESUS WALKED WITH PETER BACK TO THE BOAT.



MORAL OF THE STORY - KEEP YOUR EYES ON JESUS.

Lesson 8

Jesus Walks on the Water

Matt. 14:22-36; Mark 6:45-36; John 6:15-21

DAY ONE LESSON

Read about Jesus walking on the water in the Gospel of Matthew. (Matthew 14:22-36)

"Immediately he made the disciples get into the boat and go before him to the other side, while he dismissed the crowds. And after he had dismissed the crowds, he went up on the mountain by himself to pray. When evening came, he was there alone, but the boat by this time was a long way from the land, beaten by the waves, for the wind was against them. And in the fourth watch of the night he came to them, walking on the sea. But when the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they were terrified, and said, 'It is a ghost!' and they cried out in fear." (Matthew 14:22-26)

The Bible story about Jesus walking on the water is a sequel to Jesus feeding the 5,000 men with 5 loaves and 2 fish. So, what happened next was merely a continuation of a day of ministry that had already been filled with supernatural miracles.

After Jesus had miraculously fed the huge crowd and sent them away, He also sent the disciples away and retreated into a mountain alone to pray. Jesus needed to recharge His own spiritual batteries by spending time alone with his Father God in prayer.

It is clear from the text of Scripture that Jesus intended for the disciples to go across the

water without Him. He told them to do it. We don't know if Jesus planned what happened next, in advance, or if it just happened; but there was no other boat available, and no other way across the water. So, during the dark of night, Jesus started walking across the waves to the other side.

The disciples were struggling to row their boat because they were fighting a strong headwind, and the waves were rough. Yet, Jesus walked across the turbulent water with no problem. He caught up with the disciples in the midst of the storm, and His sudden appearance frightened them. They didn't recognize Jesus and thought He was some ghostly spirit floating above the waves in the stormy night. That is when Jesus identified Himself to them saying, "Take heart; it is I. Do not be afraid."

That is the same message that Jesus extends to His disciples today: Don't be afraid. No matter what storms may arise in our lives as we are trying to do what Jesus has instructed us to do, we can take comfort in knowing that Jesus is right there with us. Jesus is not constrained by the forces of nature, the laws of physics, or the limitations of human ability. Jesus has mastery over everything that He has created.

This encounter in the stormy sea was not just something spectacular that Jesus did to show off His power. It was meant to bolster the

faith of the disciples. No one else was there to see it, but those who experienced it personally would never forget it. This is the only recorded instance in the Bible where Jesus walked on the water, although the same story is retold in three different Gospel accounts.

SOMETHING TO THINK ABOUT:

It is human nature to wonder why we sometimes encounter such intense opposition and difficult obstacles as we are striving to do what God has told us to do. The disciples were rowing mightily, but they could make no headway against the stormy wind and waves. Out there on the rough water, alone in the dark, they must have been tired, frustrated, and discouraged. Then, when they least expected it, Jesus showed up.

Have you ever been in a similar situation, where you felt that you couldn't overcome the storms in your life? That's when Jesus can demonstrate His presence and power.

DAY TWO LESSON

Read about Peter walking on the water. (Matthew 14:27-36)

"And Peter answered him, 'Lord, if it is you, command me to come to you on the water.' He said, 'Come.' So Peter got out of the boat and walked on the water and came to Jesus. But when he saw the wind, he was afraid, and beginning to sink he cried out, 'Lord, save me.' Jesus immediately reached out his hand and took hold of him, saying to him, 'O you of little faith, why did you doubt?' " (Matthew 14:28-31)

We know that Jesus walked on

the water. How did He do it? We aren't sure, but the fact is, Jesus was not the only one to walk on the water. Peter walked on the water, too. Peter was bold and impetuous, and when he saw Jesus through the storm, he cried out, "Lord, if that's really you, call me to come to you on the water." Jesus did exactly that.

Peter stepped out of the boat by faith and started walking across the waves to Jesus. Jesus had told him to come; so Peter just assumed he could do it, and he didn't give a lot of thought to the mechanics of it. He just started walking across the water to Jesus. As long as Peter kept his eyes locked on Jesus, he was doing fine. However, when Peter let his focus get diverted from Jesus to the raging storm, he suddenly realized how big a challenge he was facing. He comprehended the danger. He began to fear the storm, and his doubts sunk him.

Fortunately, as he was sinking beneath the water, Peter called out to Jesus to save him, and Jesus responded instantly. He stretched out His hand and rescued Peter and took him back to the boat. "O you of little faith, why did you doubt?" Jesus asked Peter.

The implication of the question is clear. Jesus taught that nothing is impossible with God, and that if you can believe, all things are possible to you. Even walking on water.

So, Peter sank, and Peter was rescued. Despite all of that, Peter had walked on the water. Peter knew that he had walked on the water. Whether anybody else saw

it or believed it, Peter had walked on the water. Whether Peter ever walked on water again, nothing could change the fact that Peter had walked on the water.

For the rest of his life, whatever else might happen to him, Peter would never forget the experience of walking on the water with Jesus. It would become a defining experience in his life, and one that nobody could ever take away from him. Out of the 12 disciples, only Peter walked on the water. Was that because his faith was greater than that of the others? Maybe. Furthermore, Peter is the only one who asked Jesus to call him.

There is another spiritual principle of faith that Jesus taught: "Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you" (Matthew 7:7, Luke 11:9, John 16:24). So many times in our lives, we have not because we ask not. (James 4:2)

SOMETHING TO THINK ABOUT:
Can you imagine what a thrill Peter must have experienced as he was walking across the stormy sea by faith, heading toward Jesus?

Even though he eventually sank, which part do you think Peter always remembered more: the fact that he had failed and sunk, or the fact that for a brief time he had walked on the water? Have you ever had a supernatural encounter with Jesus that defined the rest of your life?

DAY THREE LESSON

Read about what happened when Jesus got across the sea. (Matthew 14:34-36)

"And when they had crossed over,

they came to land at Gennesaret. And when the men of that place recognized him, they sent around to all that region and brought to him all who were sick and implored him that they might only touch the fringe of his garment. And as many as touched it were made well." (Matthew 14:34-36)

When Jesus and Peter got back into the boat, the storm ceased raging on the sea. "And those in the boat worshiped him, saying, 'Truly you are the Son of God.' " (Matthew 14:33)

This is what always happens when the supernatural power of God shows up. It jolts people out of their lethargy. It opens up their eyes to who Jesus Christ really and truly is.

Was Jesus a great moral teacher? Of course. Did He live a noble life and set a good example for us to follow? Sure He did. Did Jesus communicate spiritual principles for effective living? Yes.

However, none of that defines who Jesus actually was. It is only when the supernatural power of God is made manifest, impacting the lives of people up close and personal, that they come to see the overarching truth - that Jesus is the very Son of God. It is that moment of clarity and revelation that brings men into a saving relationship with Christ. The rest is just formalism and tradition.

That is what had happened the day before, when Jesus had miraculously fed the 5,000 men with just 5 loaves and 2 fish.

That is what happened this day, when Jesus got to the other side of the water with His disciples.

There they found that Jesus's reputation had preceded Him. People sent out word throughout the entire countryside, and everyone that was sick came to see Jesus.

Jesus did not conduct an elaborate healing crusade that day. Jesus just came and dwelt among the people, and the people flocked around Him. The anointing of the Spirit of God was so strong on Jesus that day that people were healed if they merely touched the hem of His garment. It was a tremendous flow of miraculous power that continued over a certain span of time.

Later, after Jesus had gone back up into heaven, there were certain times when that kind of anointing was present in ministry of the Apostles. We know that at one point in time, people were instantly healed when just the shadow of Peter fell upon them. (Acts 5:12-16)

Throughout history, God has demonstrated His supernatural power to confirm the salvation message that He wanted men to hear and believe.

SOMETHING TO THINK ABOUT:
A lot of people know many facts about Jesus, but not so many people actually know Jesus as the Son of God sent from heaven. Have you ever seen something so miraculous happen that you know it could only have been done by the supernatural power of God?

Have you ever had a moment in your life when you realized with certainty and clarity that Jesus is not just any ordinary person, but is really and truly the Son of God?

DAY FOUR LESSON

Read the same account in the Gospel of Mark. (Mark 6:45-56)

"And he got into the boat with them, and the wind ceased. And they were utterly astounded, for they did not understand about the loaves, but their hearts were hardened." (Mark 6:51-52)

Here in the Gospel of Mark, we find the same basic story being told, but in a more sparse form. Some of the details are omitted. Mark doesn't mention the part about Peter walking on the water, for example. That account is only found in the Gospel of Matthew.

There are a couple of added elements in Mark's version, though. In Mark 4:38, the Scripture says that Jesus came walking on the sea while the disciples were toiling in the boat, and He "would have passed by them", but they called out to Him.

Does this mean that Jesus never intended to stop and help the disciples, but only did it as sort of an afterthought when they called to Him? Was it perhaps merely their perception that Jesus was going to pass by them but changed His mind when they called to Him? Either way, the fact is that they did call, and Jesus did answer their cry for help.

The core message to us is that we should always call out to Jesus whenever any storm comes up and threatens our lives. Jesus will always be faithful to answer and to save us.

Another point that is unique to Mark's account is the statement in verses 51-52 that when Jesus

came into the boat, the disciples were, "utterly astounded, for they did not understand about the loaves, but their hearts were hardened."

The basic idea here is that after seeing Jesus feed 5,000 men with 5 loaves the very day before, they disciples should not have been surprised at anything Jesus did, but their hearts were hardened by their pervasive unbelief, which is the natural human condition. Jesus was repeatedly rebuking even his closest disciples for the sin of unbelief.

SOMETHING TO THINK ABOUT: Why do you think people's hearts get hardened against having an active faith in God? What can we do to prevent that unbelief from happening to us? Why is unbelief so common and vital dynamic faith so rare? Do you know anyone who has a vital faith in God that is real to them?

DAY FIVE LESSON

Read about Jesus walking on the water in the Gospel of John. (John 6:15-21)

"When they had rowed about three or four miles, they saw Jesus walking on the sea and coming near the boat, and they were frightened. But he said to them, 'It is I; do not be afraid.' Then they were glad to take him into the boat, and immediately the boat was at the land to which they were going." (John 6:19-21)

This account in the Gospel of John is the third time this story gets told in the Bible. Here, another new fact is introduced that wasn't mentioned in the other versions.

John records that after Jesus had walked across the water and had come into the boat with the disciples, "immediately the boat was at the land to which they were going." The boat was far out at sea during the storm, and the disciples were struggling in vain against the wind and waves. They couldn't make any headway in trying to get across the water because the wind was against them. That is where Jesus found them as He was walking on the water, in the midst of the sea.

Miraculously, as soon as Jesus stepped into their boat, the storm stopped raging around them. The very presence of Jesus in their midst calmed the storm. That tells us that no matter what we are trying to do for God, it is important to have Jesus right there with us all the time, rather than trying to persevere in our own strength.

Additionally, as soon as Jesus arrived on the scene, not only did the storm dissipate, the distance did, too. The disciples found themselves instantly transported to their destination. We believe that what the Bible says about this is literally true. The boat was moved through space and time to the place on the other shore that the disciples were striving toward, but there is also a spiritual truth here that applies to any situation.

It is accurate to say that all of our struggles in life will diminish drastically whenever we do what the disciples did, and "willingly accept" Jesus into every part of our daily lives. It is also accurate to say that whenever we have Jesus personally present with us,

alive in our midst, we have already arrived at the destination we were seeking to reach. When Jesus is with us, and we are living by faith in Him, nothing is impossible to us. Not even walking on the water.

SOMETHING TO THINK ABOUT:
Do you feel like you are struggling

on your own, fighting against all the raging storms in your life? Or do you feel the peace of God that passes all understanding, a peace that only comes when Jesus is present in your heart? If you don't have that peace that only comes with Jesus, do you want it?

SHADRACH, MESHACH AND ABEDNEGO- DANIEL 3

THE KING OF BABYLON MADE A GOLDEN IDOL AND TOLD THE PEOPLE THEY WOULD BE BURNED IN A FURNACE IF THEY DID NOT PRAY TO IT.



SHADRACH, MESHACH, AND ABEDNEGO WOULD NOT PRAY TO THE IDOL. THEY WOULD ONLY PRAY TO THE ONE TRUE GOD.

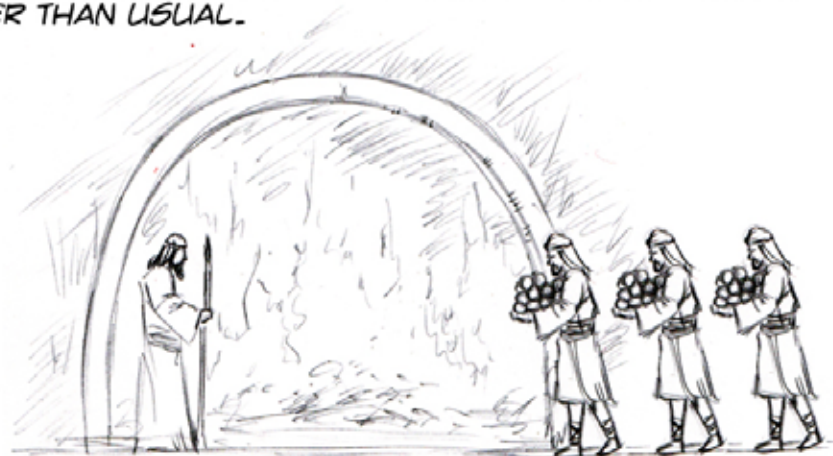


SOMEONE TOLD THE KING AND HE BECAME FURIOUS WITH RAGE. HE SENT FOR SHADRACH, MESHACH, AND ABEDNEGO. THE GUARDS BROUGHT THEM BEFORE THE KING.

THE KING TOLD THEM THEY WOULD BE BURNED IN THE FIERY FURNACE. SHADRACH, MESHACH, AND ABED-NEGO WERE NOT AFRAID. THEY KNEW GOD WOULD SAVE THEM.



THE KING'S SERVANTS BUILT A FIRE IN THE FURNACE, SEVEN TIMES HOTTER THAN USUAL.



THEY TIED SHADRACH, MESHACH, AND ABED-NEGO WITH ROPES. THE SERVANTS THREW THEM INTO THE FURNACE. THE FIRE WAS SO HOT THE SERVANTS DIED.



THE KING LOOKED INTO THE FURNACE. HE SAW FOUR MEN WALKING IN THE FIRE. UNHARMED AND NOT EVEN SINGED BY THE FLAMES.



THE KING COULD NOT BELIEVE WHAT HE SAW. FOUR MEN WERE IN THE FIRE NOT THREE.



AND THE FOURTH LOOKED LIKE THE SON OF GOD.



THE KING THEN MADE A LAW. THE LAW SAID NO ONE SHOULD SAY BAD THINGS ABOUT GOD. ONLY GOD COULD SAVE MEN FROM FIRE.



Lesson 9

King Nebuchadnezzar's Fiery Furnace

Book of Daniel, Chapters 1 & 3

DAY ONE LESSON

Read the history of the captured Hebrew children in Babylon.
(Daniel 1:1-21)

"As for these four youths, God gave them learning and skill in all literature and wisdom, and Daniel had understanding in all visions and dreams. At the end of the time, when the king had commanded that they should be brought in, the chief of the eunuchs brought them in before Nebuchadnezzar. And the king spoke with them, and among all of them none was found like Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah. Therefore they stood before the king. And in every matter of wisdom and understanding about which the king inquired of them, he found them ten times better than all the magicians and enchanters that were in all his kingdom." (Daniel 1:17-20)

King Nebuchadnezzar ruled the ancient Babylonian Empire, and he was the most powerful king on earth during his time. The various Hebrew kings of Judah made military alliances with Egypt but couldn't withstand the armies of Babylon. In 605 BC, the Babylonians defeated Pharaoh Necho at Carchemish, and after that King Jehoiakim had to pay tribute to Babylon.

As part of that tribute, the children of noble Hebrew families were sent to Babylon as servants. Daniel and his three friends

(Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah) were among the first contingent of captives deported to Babylon, but they did not have hard lives there. In fact, these four teenage boys were selected to eat at the king's table and receive special education and training. They were being groomed to fill high positions in Babylonian government.

Daniel and his friends objected to eating the king's rich foods and drinking the king's wine because that violated their religious customs. They asked the chief eunuch to let them eat a diet of plain vegetables and drink water instead. He was skeptical, but after a trial period, their countenances were glowing, and they were healthier than all the rest. So these four boys were allowed to observe their Jewish customs, and they continued to flourish in the king's court.

When it came time for the king to examine all the trainees, to see what progress they were making, he found these four Hebrew children were wiser than all the others in his court. So, Daniel and his friends were given favor by the king and served in important positions.

As part of their adjusting into Babylonian culture, the Hebrew boys were given new names. Thus Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah became Shadrach, Meshach and Abegnego, and this is the way they are commonly known today. We read about all of this in Chapter 1

of the Book of Daniel. In Chapter 2, Daniel is challenged to interpret a dream for King Nebuchadnezzar, and with God's help, he is able to do that successfully, after all the wise men and magicians had failed. This further solidified Daniel's position in the kingdom and gained promotions for his three friends.

This brings us to Daniel chapter 3, which tells about how King Nebuchadnezzar set up his giant golden statue, and that will be the main topic of our Bible study over the next few days.

SOMETHING TO THINK ABOUT: The Babylonians were fierce warriors and cruel victors who often brutally tortured their captives. In fact, a few years later in 587 BC, after Judah had rebelled again, King Nebuchadnezzar captured Jerusalem and destroyed both the Temple and the city, and he carried their entire people away captive to serve as slaves in Babylon (Jeremiah 52:10). There was little tolerance for individual rights and liberties. The people were the subjects of the king, who wielded absolute power and did whatever he wanted. People who disobeyed were severely punished or killed. We aren't used to seeing such tyrannical attitudes in America. Would you like to live in a country that operates that way?

DAY TWO LESSON

Read about King Nebuchadnezzar's giant golden statue. (Daniel 3:1-7)

"King Nebuchadnezzar made an image of gold, whose height was sixty cubits and its breadth six cubits. He set it up on the plain of Dura, in the province of Babylon."

(Daniel 3:1)

King Nebuchadnezzar was a proud and vain man who was gloating over the vast power he possessed as ruler of the mightiest empire on earth. His ego was so big that he had a giant golden statue erected to symbolize his own importance. The huge statue was 90 feet tall and 9 feet wide. Nebuchadnezzar held a dedication ceremony for the giant golden statue, and he required everyone that served in his government must attend to hear his royal decree.

"And the herald proclaimed aloud, 'You are commanded, O peoples, nations, and languages, that when you hear the sound of the horn, pipe, lyre, trigon, harp, bagpipe, and every kind of music, you are to fall down and worship the golden image that King Nebuchadnezzar has set up.' " (Daniel 3:4-5)

King Nebuchadnezzar had set up a statue representing himself, and then he had commanded that everybody must worship the statue as if it were a god. This was an act of idolatry, and it was a direct violation of the very first commandment, which says: "I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery. You shall have no other gods before me. You shall not make for yourself a carved image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is on the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. You shall not bow down to them or serve them; for I the Lord your God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and fourth generation of

those who hate me, but showing steadfast love to thousands of those who love me and keep my commandments." (Deuteronomy 5:6-10)

If the three Hebrew children had felt compelled by their consciences to refuse the food at the king's table because it violated their religious dietary laws how much more would they be opposed to worshipping an idol in direct violation of their God's moral laws? It should come as no surprise to us to learn that when everyone else bowed down and worshipped the idol as the king had commanded, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego did not.

SOMETHING TO THINK ABOUT: God's Word teaches us that under normal circumstances, God wants us to be law-abiding citizens and to obey the laws of our country. Generally speaking, those laws have been put in place for the common good of the people and to protect us from evildoers (Romans 13:1-6). However, what about when the laws of our land violate the higher laws of God?

In the New Testament, for example, the Apostles were told not to preach in the Name of Jesus, but they did it anyway. Peter told the Jewish leaders who opposed the Gospel: "But Peter and John answered them, 'Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you rather than to God, you must judge, for we cannot but speak of what we have seen and heard.' " (Acts 4:19-20)

Do you think that any king or government has the right to pass any law that forces people to violate their consciences and to

break their obligations to obey God first?

DAY THREE LESSON

Read how the three Hebrew children refused to bow down to the statue. (Daniel 3:8-18)

"Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego answered and said to the king, 'O Nebuchadnezzar, we have no need to answer you in this matter. If this be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of your hand, O king.' " (Daniel 3:16-17)

Once again, we see that there were jealous men working in the government of King Nebuchadnezzar. They rushed to report to the king that the three Hebrews had not bowed down and worshipped the king's idolatrous golden statue. In this case, these men had not plotted against the three Hebrew children, nor had they influenced the king to pass his oppressive new law. No, King Nebuchadnezzar had done that all on his own, driven by his own pride and inflated sense of self-importance. However, in their eagerness to advance themselves at someone else's expense, they made sure the king heard the news.

" 'There are certain Jews whom you have appointed over the affairs of the province of Babylon: Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. These men, O king, pay no attention to you; they do not serve your gods or worship the golden image that you have set up.' Then Nebuchadnezzar in furious rage commanded that Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego

be brought. So they brought these men before the king." (Daniel 3:12-13)

Notice that the accusers played on the king's ego. They accused the Hebrews of "not regarding" the king's decree. So they positioned it as an act of disrespect toward the king, not an act of personal conscience toward God for the Hebrews.

The king responded predictably, with rage and fury. Nebuchadnezzar was so full of himself that he could not tolerate the slightest show of rebellion toward his authority. He commanded the offenders be brought before them. The fact that they held high positions in his government did not matter to Nebuchadnezzar. He also didn't care why they had disobeyed.

Nebuchadnezzar wanted to know just one thing: Will you bow down to my idol, or not? He warns them, if not you are surely going to die, and asks, "who is the god who will deliver you out of my hands?"

"Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego answered and said to the king, 'O Nebuchadnezzar, we have no need to answer you in this matter. If this be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of your hand, O king.' " (Daniel 3:16-17)

The Hebrew boys gave the king what would have to be a perfect faith answer: "Yes, our God is able to deliver us. Yes, we believe that He will deliver us. Whether He does or not, either way, No, we still will NOT bow down to your idol." These three

courageous young men were not afraid to stand up to the king. They understood the concept of speaking truth to power, even if it costs you something. They were determined to honor and obey their God, even if it cost them their lives.

SOMETHING TO THINK ABOUT: Was King Nebuchadnezzar right to be so angry with the three young boys who had willfully disobeyed his law? Should he have punished them so severely?

Have you ever had a situation in your own life, where you had to take a stand for something you knew was right, even if it meant taking a big personal risk?

DAY FOUR LESSON

Read how the three Hebrew children were cast into the fiery furnace. (Daniel 3:19-25)

"Then King Nebuchadnezzar was astonished and rose up in haste. He declared to his counselors, 'Did we not cast three men bound into the fire?' They answered and said to the king, 'True, O king.' He answered and said, 'But I see four men unbound, walking in the midst of the fire, and they are not hurt; and the appearance of the fourth is like a son of the gods.' " (Daniel 3:24-25)

King Nebuchadnezzar had a really bad temper. He didn't like the defiant answer he got from the boys. The king got so angry that his face was twisted up in rage. The king ordered the furnace to be heated seven times hotter than it normally was.

Then he had his mightiest soldiers tie the boys up so tightly they

couldn't move and cast them into the fiery furnace. The flames were so intensely hot that they leapt out of the furnace and killed the soldiers who threw the boys in. The king expected the Hebrews to perish instantly for their insubordination, but as he peered into the furnace to watch them die, the king got a big surprise.

He saw the three boys walking around freely inside the furnace, apparently feeling no pain whatsoever. Moreover, he saw another figure in the flames with them, a fourth man who had the appearance of the Son of God. The king was astonished!

"Then Nebuchadnezzar came near to the door of the burning fiery furnace; he declared, 'Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, servants of the Most High God, come out, and come here!' Then Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego came out from the fire. And the satraps, the prefects, the governors, and the king's counselors gathered together and saw that the fire had not had any power over the bodies of those men. The hair of their heads was not singed, their cloaks were not harmed, and no smell of fire had come upon them." (Daniel 3:26-27)

So, God had miraculously protected and honored the faith and courage of the three brave Hebrew boys who took a stand for what was right and put their trust in God. Nothing but a direct miracle from God could have preserved the boys in the flames. So everybody in Babylon got to witness the supernatural power of the Most High God.

SOMETHING TO THINK

ABOUT: What does this story teach us about the character and faithfulness of God? Can we trust God to protect and defend us when we honor Him?

Who do you think the fourth man in the fire really was? All throughout the Bible, God's Word is filled with promises of divine protection for God's people, especially the nation of Israel. What do you think about the verses quoted below?

"But now thus says the Lord, he who created you, O Jacob, he who formed you, O Israel: 'Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you; when you walk through fire you shall not be burned, and the flame shall not consume you.' " (Isaiah 43:1-2)

DAY FIVE LESSON

Read how the three Hebrew children were vindicated and promoted. (Daniel 3:28-30)

"Nebuchadnezzar answered and said, 'Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, who has sent his angel and delivered his servants, who trusted in him, and set aside the king's command, and yielded up their bodies rather than serve and worship any god except their own God.' " (Daniel 3:28)

The most obvious primary result of the fiery furnace incident was that the three Hebrew boys were vindicated by God and delivered from death. After that, they

were also justified, honored, and promoted by the king.

King Nebuchadnezzar was willing to admit that he had been wrong - although in the face of such overwhelming evidence, it is hard to see how he could do otherwise. Ultimately, the true and living God was recognized and glorified, even by the king.

" 'Therefore I make a decree: Any people, nation, or language that speaks anything against the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego shall be torn limb from limb, and their houses laid in ruins, for there is no other god who is able to rescue in this way.' " Then the king promoted Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego in the province of

Babylon." (Daniel 3:29-30)

King Nebuchadnezzar still had his personal problems with pride and anger, which God was going to deal with in a drastic way a little later, but at least at this point, the king was beginning to acknowledge that there was a heavenly power greater than his earthly realm. He was willing to acknowledge the Most High God who had the power to deliver when nothing else could.

SOMETHING TO THINK ABOUT: Again and again in the Bible, we see that God is faithful, and He comes to the defense and to the rescue of people who put their trust in Him. Can you think of ways in which this spiritual truth might apply to your own life?

SAMSON - JUDGES 13-16

THERE ONCE WAS AN INCREDIBLE STRONG MAN NAMED SAMSON WHO FOUGHT LIONS AND WON!



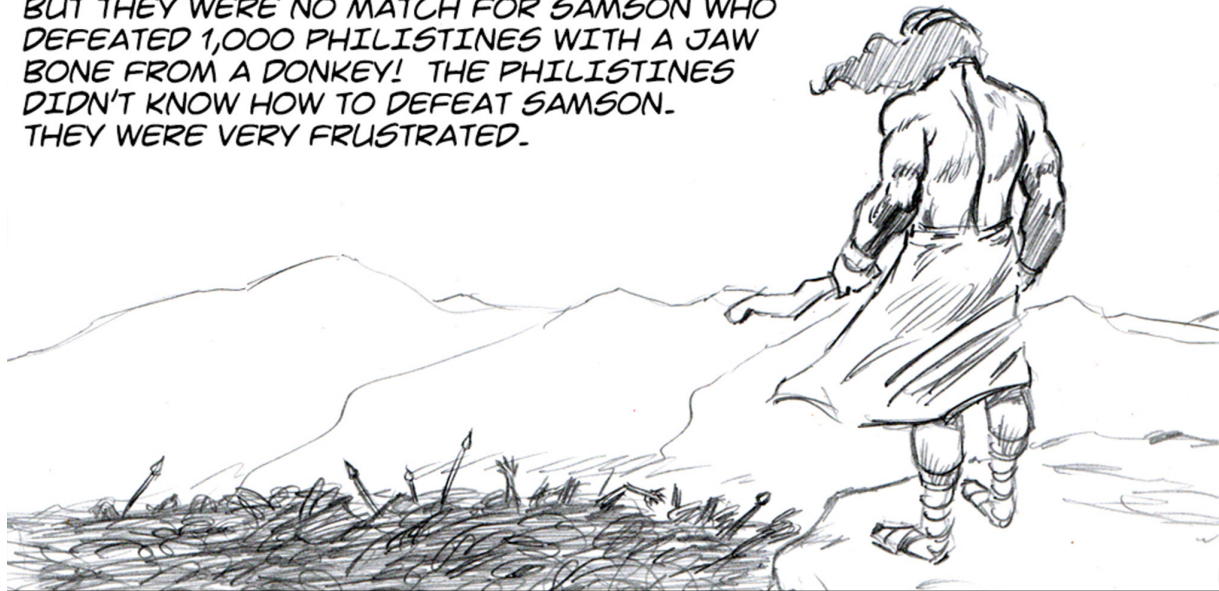
HIS STRENGTH WAS A GIFT FROM GOD. THERE WAS ONLY ONE RULE. SAMSON COULD NEVER CUT HIS HAIR.



BECAUSE SAMSON LOVED THE LORD AND DID HIS WORK THE PHILISTINES TRIED TO KILL HIM.



BUT THEY WERE NO MATCH FOR SAMSON WHO DEFEATED 1,000 PHILISTINES WITH A JAW BONE FROM A DONKEY! THE PHILISTINES DIDN'T KNOW HOW TO DEFEAT SAMSON. THEY WERE VERY FRUSTRATED.



SAMSON MEET A GIRL NAMED DELILAH AND FEEL IN LOVE WITH HER. WHAT HE DIDN'T KNOW IS DELILAH JUST WANTED TO FIND OUT WHY HE WAS SO STRONG.



ONCE SHE FOUND OUT SHE BETRAYED SAMSON BY TELLING THE PHILISTINES

ONE NIGHT WHILE SAMSON WAS ASLEEP DELILAH CUT SAMSON'S HAIR.



BECAUSE SAMSON HAD DISOBEYED GOD THE PHILISTINES WERE ABLE TO CAPTURE HIM. THEY EVEN BLINDED HIM.



SAMSON WAS A SLAVE TO HIS ENEMIES. HE PRAYED TO GOD FOR FORGIVENESS AND HIS HAIR BEGAN TO GROW.

ONE DAY THEY CHAINED SAMSON IN FRONT OF THE TEMPLE AND MOCKED HIM AND HIS GOD. SAMSON PRAYED GOD WOULD GIVE HIM ENOUGH STRENGTH TO PUSH THE PILLARS APART AND DESTROY THE TEMPLE ...



GOD GAVE SAMSON STRENGTH ONCE AGAIN AND THE TEMPLE CAME CRASHING DOWN!!! THE PHILISTINES WERE CRUSHED.



Lesson 10

Sampson & Delilah

Judges 13-16

DAY ONE LESSON

Read about Samson's birth and early life. (Judges 13:1-25)

"And the people of Israel again did what was evil in the sight of the Lord, so the Lord gave them into the hand of the Philistines for forty years. There was a certain man of Zorah, of the tribe of the Danites, whose name was Manoah. And his wife was barren and had no children. And the angel of the Lord appeared to the woman and said to her, 'Behold, you are barren and have not borne children, but you shall conceive and bear a son. Therefore be careful and drink no wine or strong drink, and eat nothing unclean, for behold, you shall conceive and bear a son. No razor shall come upon his head, for the child shall be a Nazirite to God from the womb, and he shall begin to save Israel from the hand of the Philistines.' " (Judges 13:1-5)

Samson was a mighty man of God who had been given a special anointing of the Holy Spirit. He had superhuman strength, and God had chosen him to fight against the Philistines, who were a tribe of wicked pagans oppressing the Hebrews in the land of Canaan.

God had sent an angel to Samson's mother before Samson was even born, to tell her that she was going to bear a special son. The angel also told her that the boy had to be raised as a Nazirite, which was a man set apart for service to God. Being a Nazirite meant that a man

had to always eat healthy foods, not drink wine or liquor, and never cut his hair. He was supposed to be set apart to serve only God.

This was a time when there was no king in Israel. A series of judges led the 12 separate Hebrew tribes, different judges for the different tribes, and they had to fight against the various pagan tribes who were still living in the Promised Land.

The Children of Israel were supposed to drive the pagan tribes out of the land and completely destroy them, but they never did. When God's people honored God and obeyed His laws, God blessed and protected them, but when they sinned and worshipped idols and acted like the wicked tribes around them, God took down His hedge of protection and let their enemies win and rule over them. Then, in desperation because they were so miserable, God's people would repent and turn back to Him, and God would rescue them again. This cycle of sin, judgment, and deliverance happened seven times over a period of about 350 years, all of which is recorded in the book of Judges.

Samson lived during the last 40 years of this time, when God's people had sinned again for the seventh time; even worse than before when God had let the Philistines rule over the Hebrews who lived to the west of the city of Jerusalem, over toward the seacoast. God intended for Samson

to use his great strength and to "begin to deliver Israel out of the hand of the Philistines," but that intended deliverance didn't happen all at once.

SOMETHING TO THINK ABOUT: Not every bad thing that happens in life is because of some specific sin we have committed. We don't always know why bad things happen to good people; but we do know that there is a pattern revealed throughout the Bible; and the spiritual principles are plain to understand. When people obey and honor God, then God will bless, protect, and honor them. However, when people forsake and turn away from God, then God will remove His divine protection and allow evil consequences to occur. Since we know these things, why do you think people so often turn away from God?

DAY TWO LESSON

Read about Samson's marriage and his mysterious riddle. (Judges 14:1-20)

"And he said to them, 'Out of the eater came something to eat. Out of the strong came something sweet.' And in three days they could not solve the riddle.

On the fourth day they said to Samson's wife, 'Entice your husband to tell us what the riddle is, lest we burn you and your father's house with fire. Have you invited us here to impoverish us?' And Samson's wife wept over him and said, 'You only hate me; you do not love me. You have put a riddle to my people, and you have not told me what it is.' And he said to her, 'Behold, I have not told my father nor my mother, and shall I tell

you?' " (Judges 14:14-16)

When Samson was 20 years old, he went to the city of Timnah and found a Philistine woman that he wanted to marry. Samson's parents wanted him to marry a Hebrew girl instead, but Samson had to have the Philistine. So, a wedding was arranged.

One day, while Samson was on his way to see the girl, a young lion attacked him. Samson was so strong that he killed the lion with his bare hands.

The next time he passed by that way, Samson found that bees had made a hive inside the lion's carcass, and he reached in and took out a handful of sweet honey to eat.

At the wedding feast, Samson posed a riddle to his new bride's 30 Philistine male friends. It was a riddle about the honey hidden inside the lion. "Out of the eater came something to eat. Out of the strong came something sweet." He made a bet with the men because he knew they could never guess his riddle.

The men didn't want to lose their bet. They threatened Samson's wife and demanded that she discover the answer from Samson. So she cried every day, until finally Samson told her the answer to the secret riddle. She told her friends, and they won the bet at the last minute.

Samson knew that the men could never have guessed his riddle unless his wife had told them his secret. This trickery by the men and betrayal by his new bride made Samson extremely angry. He went to the city of Ashkelon

and killed 30 men there, and he brought their garments back to pay his debt to the 30 men at the feast.

Then, Samson left the feast before the wedding was over, because he was still angry with his wife. He went away and stayed at his parents' house until his anger had cooled off, but he didn't explain why or what he was doing to anyone.

The bride's father thought that Samson intended to call off the wedding, since he had left and never stayed with his new wife. So, to save the girl's reputation, the father gave her to be the wife of the best man at the wedding. However, Samson didn't know about any of this at the time, because he had left the wedding.

SOMETHING TO THINK ABOUT: Samson was chosen by God and anointed with the Holy Spirit to fight the enemies of God; but it seems that Samson brought a lot of problems on himself by his own bad choices. He couldn't seem to resist the pagan women around him. Why do you think Samson chose to go after pagan women when there were plenty of young Hebrew girls his own age that would have made a good wife for him?

Samson also displayed a tendency to get angry quickly and to seek violent revenge on those who crossed him. Is "getting even" a desirable character trait? God's Word says, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord" (Romans 12:19). Did Samson seem to understand this aspect of God's nature?

DAY THREE LESSON

Read about Samson's great slaughter of the Philistines. (Judges 15:1-20)

"When he came to Lehi, the Philistines came shouting to meet him. Then the Spirit of the Lord rushed upon him, and the ropes that were on his arms became as flax that has caught fire, and his bonds melted off his hands. And he found a fresh jawbone of a donkey, and put out his hand and took it, and with it he struck 1,000 men." (Judges 15:14-15)

When Samson had calmed down and came back later to stay with his wife, her father stopped him from going in the bedroom. This is when Samson found out that the bride's father had given her to the best man. This act of treachery made Samson even angrier than before.

Samson caught 300 foxes and tied their tails together and set them on fire, and then he turned them all loose in the Philistines' grain fields at harvest time. All of the Philistines' crops were destroyed, and they were enraged. They got their revenge by burning Samson's wife and her family to death with fire.

Well, once again, this just made Samson even angrier. Samson attacked the Philistines, and "And he struck them hip and thigh with a great blow, and he went down and stayed in the cleft of the rock of Etam," in the land of Judah.

The Philistines raised an army and came to attack the people of Judah, who were their tribute servants, because of Samson's

rebellion. However, the Jews didn't want any trouble with the Philistines. They made a deal and promised to deliver Samson to the Philistines. Then the Jews sent 3,000 men out to capture Samson from the rock.

Samson didn't mind killing Philistines, but he didn't want to fight against his own Hebrew countrymen, even though they were from Judah and he was of the tribe of Dan. Samson surrendered peacefully after the Jews promised that they wouldn't kill him themselves. Samson let them bind him with new ropes and deliver him to the Philistines.

The Philistines began to shout for joy because they thought they were about to get revenge on Samson, but when he was in their midst, suddenly Samson snapped the ropes off his arms and broke free. He grabbed the closest thing he could find to fight with, which happened to be the jawbone of a donkey that was lying on the ground. With that crude weapon, Samson brutally slew 1,000 men. Then he cast the jawbone aside and moved on. He was so thirsty that he prayed to God, and God sent water to a round basin in the ground. Thus, God saved Samson after he prayed.

After this time, Samson served as a judge in Israel for 20 years.

SOMETHING TO THINK ABOUT: Why did the men of Judah send an army of 3,000 men out to capture Samson and turn him over to the Philistines? Was that the right thing for them to do?

Was Samson's calling from God, which was to deliver the people

of Israel from the oppression of the Philistines, helped or hindered by his own personal vendettas to avenge himself against the people he felt had done him wrong?

DAY FOUR LESSON

Read the Story of Samson and Delilah. (Judges 16:1-20)

"After this he loved a woman in the Valley of Sorek, whose name was Delilah. And the lords of the Philistines came up to her and said to her, 'Seduce him, and see where his great strength lies, and by what means we may overpower him, that we may bind him to humble him. And we will each give you 1,100 pieces of silver.' So Delilah said to Samson, 'Please tell me where your great strength lies, and how you might be bound, that one could subdue you.' " (Judges 16:4-6)

Samson was a mighty warrior with tremendous strength and great courage, and he was blessed with a powerful anointing from the Spirit of God whenever he went into battle. Unfortunately, Samson had a serious flaw. His weakness was a lust for pagan women.

Samson went down to Gaza, a Philistine city, and stayed with a harlot there. The Philistines knew he was with her, so they locked the city gates and planned to capture Samson when he came out in the morning, but Samson rose at midnight and went to the gates. He pulled the posts up out of the ground and carried the gates on his back to the Hebron, 40 miles away.

Later, Samson began another affair with a pagan woman named

Delilah, who lived in the valley of Sorek. Samson trusted Delilah, and he spent a lot of time with her. Delilah was an evil and treacherous woman, and she did not really love Samson.

The lords of the Philistines came to Delilah and offered her an attractive deal. If she could discover why Samson had such great strength and how they could weaken and capture him, they would pay her large amounts of silver. Delilah was greedy, and she accepted their offer. She began to seduce Samson and then tried to persuade him to tell her the secret of his strength.

Three times he lied to Delilah with different stories, and three times she tested him; but each time he quickly proved that he was still just as strong as before. This made Delilah angry. "And she said to him, 'How can you say "I love you" when your heart is not with me? You have mocked me these three times, and you have not told me where your great strength lies.' And when she pressed him hard with her words day after day, and urged him, his soul was vexed to death. And he told her all his heart, and said to her, 'A razor has never come upon my head, for I have been a Nazirite to God from my mother's womb. If my head is shaved, then my strength will leave me, and I shall become weak and be like any other man.' " (Judges 16:15-17)

Delilah sent for the Philistines, and they came and brought her the money they had promised. She got Samson to go to sleep on her lap, and as he slept, the Philistines cut off his hair. When he awoke,

Samson's strength was gone. At first, he didn't realize what had happened, and he tried to fight. However, it was too late, and the Philistines captured Samson and took him away.

SOMETHING TO THINK ABOUT: Samson had a history of hanging out with untrustworthy women of bad character. Why did he continue to tell them his secrets after being betrayed?

What lessons can we learn from Samson's bad experiences? We read that after Samson's hair was cut off and his strength was gone, Samson did not realize at first that God had departed from him. So he was vulnerable to his enemies, yet he didn't even realize it. This is what sin can do to us; it can weaken us physically and spiritually and also blind our eyes to the fact that God has moved away from us.

DAY FIVE LESSON

Read about revenge on the Philistines, and his death. (Judges 16:21-31)

"Then Samson called to the Lord and said, 'O Lord God, please remember me and please strengthen me only this once, O God, that I may be avenged on the Philistines for my two eyes.' And Samson grasped the two middle pillars on which the house rested, and he leaned his weight against them, his right hand on the one and his left hand on the other. And Samson said, 'Let me die with the Philistines.' Then he bowed with all his strength, and the house fell upon the lords and upon all the people who were in it. So the dead whom he killed at his death

were more than those whom he had killed during his life." (Judges 16:28-30)

The Philistines blinded Samson by putting out his eyes. Then they chained him in the prison to a gristmill where he ground grain for them. It was a menial task intended to humiliate the once proud and mighty warrior. Finally, over a period of time, Samson's hair began to grow back out, and the Philistines were too careless to notice. So, gradually Samson's strength returned.

One day the Philistines had a great celebration with 3,000 people in the temple of their fish god Dagon. They credited the power of Dagon with helping them to capture Samson. As the celebration was going on, they sent for Samson and brought him from the prison to the temple, so they could make fun of him. This was a big mistake for the Philistines.

Samson prayed and asked God to strengthen him one last time, and to give him revenge on the Philistines who had blinded his eyes. "Let me die with the Philistines," he prayed.

Samson put his hands around the two central pillars that held up the roof of the temple, and he pulled with all his might. The temple roof came crashing down, crushing to death all those beneath it. That included Samson, who also died that day. He killed more Philistines in that one moment than he had in all the rest of his entire life.

Samson was a man with serious flaws and shortcomings. Despite that, he was also a man of great faith in God, and one who was

greatly used by God to accomplish God's plans. Because of this, Samson was mentioned by name in Chapter 11 of the book of Hebrews, which is commonly referred to as the list of "faith heroes" in the Bible. Here is the Scripture: "And what more shall I say? For time would fail me to tell of Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, of David and Samuel and the prophets...And all these, though commended through their faith, did not receive what was promised, since God had provided something better for us, that apart from us they should not be made perfect. (Hebrews 11:32, 39-40)

Notice that Samson's name appears in the very same verse with that of heroes like Gideon, King David, and Samuel the prophet. The Scripture says that all of these men "obtained a good report through faith." So, if God's Word says that Samson was a Faith Hero, we surely must agree.

SOMETHING TO THINK ABOUT:
In many ways, we see the story of Samson as a tragedy, because he brought so many problems on himself by his poor choices. Could Samson have been even greater than he was if he had not yielded constantly to his weakness for pagan women?

The fact that Samson was able to repent and pray to God at the end of his life shows that despite his failures, Samson was still a man of faith. No matter where we may find ourselves, or how desperate our situation may be, we can always turn back to God in faith and pray.

PRAY THIS PRAYER WITH ME IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO RECEIVE THE GIFT OF ETERNAL LIFE GOD HAS GIVEN YOU.



DEAR HEAVENLY FATHER,

I BELIEVE YOU SENT YOUR SON TO DIE FOR ME ON THE CROSS SO THAT I MIGHT BE SAVED. I ASK YOU TO FORGIVE ME OF ALL MY SINS.

I TAKE THIS VERY MOMENT IN MY LIFE TO RECEIVE YOU, JESUS, AS MY PERSONAL LORD AND SAVIOR AND ACCEPT YOU INTO MY HEART.

LET MY LIFE BE DEDICATED TO YOU JESUS, AND HELP ME BE THE KIND OF PERSON YOU WANT ME TO BE.

IN JESUS NAME, AMEN!
