



PROMISED LAND
THOUGH
PROPHETS

Term Two
Oral Bible Study Curriculum

Second Edition



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15. The Twelve Spies Numbers 13-14

Numbers 13

¹ The LORD said to Moses, ² “Send some men to explore the land of Canaan, which I am giving to the Israelites. From each ancestral tribe send one of its leaders.” ³ So at the LORD’s command Moses sent them out.

¹⁷ When Moses sent them to explore Canaan, he said, ¹⁸ “See what the land is like and whether the people who live there are strong or weak, few or many. ¹⁹ What kind of land do they live in? Is it good or bad? What kind of towns do they live in? Are they unwalled or fortified? ²⁰ How is the soil? Is it fertile or poor? Are there trees on it or not? Do your best to bring back some of the fruit of the land.” ²¹ So they went up and explored the land. ²³ When they reached the Valley of Eshcol, they cut off a branch bearing a single cluster of grapes. Two of them carried it on a pole between them, along with some pomegranates and figs. ²⁵ At the end of forty days they returned from exploring the land.

²⁶ They came back to Moses and Aaron and the whole Israelite community and reported to them and showed them the fruit of the land.

²⁷ They gave Moses this account: “We went into the land to which you sent us, and it does flow with milk and honey! Here is its fruit. ²⁸ But the people who live there are powerful, and the cities are fortified and very large.” ³⁰ Then Caleb silenced the people before Moses and said, “We should go up and take possession of the land, for we can certainly do it.” ³¹ But the men who had gone up with him said, “We can’t attack those people; they are stronger than we are.” ³² And they spread among the Israelites a bad report about the land they had explored. They said, “All the people we saw there are of great size. ³³ We seemed like grasshoppers in our own eyes, and we looked the same to them.”

Numbers 14

¹ That night all the people of the community raised their voices and wept aloud. ² All the Israelites grumbled against Moses and Aaron, and the whole assembly said to them, “If only we had died in Egypt! Or in this desert! ³ Why is the LORD bringing us to this land only to let us fall by the sword? Our wives and children will be taken as plunder. Wouldn’t it be better for us to go back to Egypt?” ⁴ And they said to each other, “We should choose a leader and go back to Egypt.”

⁵ Then Moses and Aaron fell facedown in front of the whole Israelite assembly gathered there. ⁶ Joshua and Caleb, who were among those who had explored the land, tore their clothes ⁷ and said to the entire Israelite assembly, “The land we explored is exceedingly good. ⁸ If the LORD is pleased with us, he will give it to us. ⁹ Only do not rebel against the LORD. And do not be afraid of the people of the land, because we will swallow them up. Their protection is gone, but the LORD is with us.” ¹⁰ But the whole assembly talked about stoning them. ¹¹ The LORD said to Moses, “How long will these people treat me with contempt? How long will they refuse to believe in me, in spite of all the miraculous signs I have performed among them? ¹² I will strike them down with a plague and destroy them, but I will make you into a nation greater and stronger than they.”

¹³ Moses said to the LORD, “Then the Egyptians will hear about it! By your power you brought these people up from among them. ¹⁴ And they will tell the inhabitants of this land about it. They have already heard that you, O LORD, are with these people and that you, O LORD, have been seen face to face, and that you go before them in a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night. ¹⁵ If you put these people to death all at one time, the nations who have heard this report about you will say, ¹⁶ ‘The LORD was not able to bring these people into the land he promised them on oath; so he slaughtered them in the desert.’ ¹⁷ Now may the Lord’s strength be displayed, just as you have declared: ¹⁸ ‘The LORD is slow to anger, abounding in love and forgiving sin and rebellion. Yet he does not leave the guilty unpunished; he punishes the children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation.’ ¹⁹ In accordance with your great love, forgive the sin of these people, just as you have pardoned them from the time they left Egypt until now.”

²⁰ The LORD replied, “I have forgiven them, as you asked.

²¹ Nevertheless, as surely as I live and as surely as the glory of the LORD fills the whole earth, ²² not one of the men who saw my glory and the miraculous signs I performed in Egypt and in the desert but who disobeyed me and tested me ten times— ²³ not one of them will ever see the land I promised on oath to their forefathers. ²⁴ But because my servant Caleb has a different spirit and follows me wholeheartedly, I will bring him into the land he went to, and his descendants will inherit it. ²⁵ Now turn back tomorrow and set out toward the desert along the route to the Red Sea.”

³⁶ So the men Moses had sent to explore the land, who returned and made the whole community grumble against him by spreading a bad report were struck down and died of a plague before the LORD. ³⁸ Of the men who went to explore the land, only Joshua and Caleb survived.

³⁹ When Moses reported this to all the Israelites, they mourned bitterly.

So the Israelites turned back towards the desert where they wandered for 40 years – one year for every day the spies had explored Canaan - and everyone twenty years or older died in the desert.

Study Questions: The Twelve Spies

Numbers 13-14

Introduction:

After the miraculous exodus from Egypt and the miracle of crossing the Red Sea, the Israelites follow God to Mount Sinai to receive His law. Then they were ready to enter Canaan, the land that God had promised to give to the descendants of Abraham. They followed the Lord's guidance through His servant Moses and they faced many trials along the way. Finally, they arrived at the border of their destination: the Promised Land. Faith in the Lord is what makes the difference in the two reports that are given by the two groups of spies.

Goals:

Knowledge

- To realize that the Lord desires to give us good things.
- To remember that the Lord is trustworthy and will lead us, just as He promised.
- To know that the Lord is a forgiving and gracious God, however, He will punish those who live in sin.

Attitude

- To repent of unbelief toward the Lord's promises and grumbling at the Lord's provisions.
- To trust that God is able to do anything and that we have nothing to fear when He is with us because no one can stand against us.

Actions

- To follow the Lord in faith even when it seems that the obstacles are great.
- To be faithful leaders who follow God's Word even when this brings hardship and opposition.

Memory Verse:

Numbers 14:18 "The LORD is slow to anger, abounding in love and forgiving sin and rebellion. Yet he does not leave the guilty unpunished; he punishes the children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation."

Scriptures for Further Study:

Exodus 23:2; Hebrews 11:6

Questions about the Story:

1. What was involved in the exploration of the land? (Numbers 13:1-3; 17-20; 25. God told Moses to choose one leader from each tribe of Israel. Moses sent them out at the Lord's command. The spies were told to discover information about the land, the people and the cities. They spied the land for forty days.)
2. What report did the spies give when they returned? (Numbers 13:27-28. The land is very good, but the people and cities are very strong.)
3. How was the advice of Joshua and Caleb different from the advice the other spies gave? (Numbers 13:30, 14:6-9. Caleb and Joshua reported that the land was excellent and good, and they encouraged the people that the Lord could give it to them if He was pleased with them. They encouraged the people not to be afraid and not to rebel against the Lord.)
4. How did the people respond to the reports of the spies? Joshua and Caleb? (Numbers 14:1-4, 10. The people raised their voices and wept out loud, grumbling against Moses and Aaron. The people accused God of leading them to this land only to let them die. They wanted to go back to Egypt. They talked about stoning the Joshua and Caleb.)
5. Who did the Israelites choose not to consult when the spies came back to report the problems with the land? (Numbers 14:1-4) [The Israelites chose not to consult the Lord. Instead, they grumbled among themselves about their situation.]
6. What did the Lord say about the character of the people of Israel and His desired response to them? (Numbers 14:11-12. They refused to believe in Him as their God and they treated Him with contempt. The Lord said He was going to destroy them with a plague, then build a new nation of people for Himself through Moses.)
7. What did Moses say that caused God to change his mind? (Numbers 14:13-19. Moses asked God to forgive their sin. He told the Lord that news of the destruction of the people of Israel would lead to the disgrace of God's name before the Egyptian people and the inhabitants of the Promised Land. They would hear of it and think God had killed them because He wasn't able to bring them into the Promised Land.)
8. What did Moses say about God's character concerning anger and forgiveness? (Numbers 14:18. The Lord is slow to anger, abounding in love and forgiving sin and rebellion.)

9. How did God respond to the people? (Numbers 14:20-23. The Lord forgave them as Moses asked, but He punished all the adults who had seen all His miraculous works and still did not believe Him. He did not allow them to see the Promised Land. See also Numbers 14:29.)
10. What did God observe about the 12 spies and how did he treat them accordingly? (Numbers 14:6, 24, 36. Caleb and Joshua followed after God wholeheartedly. The tens spies had contempt for God, lack of faith in God, and led others away from Him. They were struck down by a plague before the Lord.)

Discussion Questions:

1. What is God's desire for us? (Numbers 13:26-27) [The Lord desires to give us good things as He did for the Israelites.]
2. Who is the most important one to consult when we are facing problems and our situation seems hopeless? [The Lord is the most important one to consult at all times, because He is the all-wise God, and He is in control of all circumstances and all outcomes.]
3. Why do we so quickly want to turn from the challenges and go back to the life that we knew before? (Numbers 14:4) [We turn away because the good things seem too difficult to get, we don't believe that God is with us, and we are afraid.]
4. Do we get angry with our leaders like the Israelites did? (Numbers 14:10) [We also get afraid, we think our situation is hopeless and we blame our leaders rather than trust in God.]
5. In what ways do we treat the Lord with contempt and refuse to believe in Him in spite of all of the miraculous signs that He performs among us? (Numbers 14:11) [We have the knowledge of Jesus, the record of Scripture, the testimony of generations of people and yet we still doubt, we grumble against God's leaders and we want to go back to a life of slavery to sin.]
6. What does the fact that God didn't destroy the Israelites show us? (Numbers 14:18) [The Lord is slow to anger and abounding in love and forgiving sin and rebellion.]
7. How can we "follow God wholeheartedly" as Caleb did? (Numbers 14:24) [This means to obey the Lord willingly, with all of who you are, to trust in God and His Word and to see the goodness of God.]
8. What made God change his mind and forgive the people instead of destroying them? What does this teach us about

praying for other people? (Numbers 14:19-20) [God chose to forgive the people because of the intercession of Moses on their behalf. This shows us that it is very important to intercede for others, because it can really make a difference in what happens to them.]

9. What do we learn about the character of God from this story? [We learn that the Lord will fulfill His promises. We learn that the Lord forgives our sins, while at the same time He is just in dealing with sin when we are unrepentant.]
10. In what ways can we take a stand for the Lord like Caleb and Joshua did?
11. What do we learn about leadership in this story? [We learn that people can be led astray by the counsel of the wicked. It is important for leaders to trust the Lord and believe in His power, rather than putting faith in people and assuming that things really are the way they appear to be.]
12. Why is it important to follow the Lord rather than people, as seen in this story? [It is important to follow the Lord rather than people, because the Lord is faithful to those who trust in Him. The Lord is consistent and in control. It is not wise to trust the advice of people only, because they are often unstable and many times they make decisions based on fear.]

16. Joshua and the Battle of Jericho

Joshua 6

Joshua 6

¹ Now Jericho was tightly shut up because of the Israelites. No one went out and no one came in.

² Then the LORD said to Joshua, “See, I have delivered Jericho into your hands, along with its king and its fighting men. ³ March around the city once with all the armed men. Do this for six days. ⁴ Have seven priests carry trumpets of rams’ horns in front of the ark. On the seventh day, march around the city seven times, with the priests blowing the trumpets. ⁵ When you hear them sound a long blast on the trumpets, have all the people give a loud shout; then the wall of the city will collapse and the people will go up, every man straight in.”

⁶ So Joshua called the priests and said to them, “Take up the ark of the covenant of the LORD and have seven priests carry trumpets in front of it.” ⁷ And he ordered the people, “Advance! March around the city, with the armed guard going ahead of the ark of the LORD.”

⁸ When Joshua had spoken to the people, the seven priests carrying the seven trumpets before the LORD went forward, blowing their trumpets, and the ark of the LORD’s covenant followed them. ⁹ The armed guard marched ahead of the priests who blew the trumpets, and the rear guard followed the ark. ¹⁰ But Joshua had commanded the people, “Do not give a war cry, do not raise your voices, do not say a word until the day I tell you to shout. Then shout!” ¹¹ So he had the ark of the LORD carried around the city, circling it once. Then the people returned to camp and spent the night there.

¹² Joshua got up early the next morning and the priests took up the ark of the LORD. ¹³ The seven priests carrying the seven trumpets went forward, marching before the ark of the LORD and blowing the trumpets. The armed men went ahead of them and the rear guard followed the ark of the LORD, while the trumpets kept sounding.

¹⁴ So on the second day they marched around the city once and returned to the camp. They did this for six days.

¹⁵ On the seventh day, they got up at daybreak and marched around the city seven times. ¹⁶ The seventh time around, when the priests sounded the trumpet blast, Joshua commanded the people, “Shout! For the LORD has given you the city! ¹⁷ The city and all that is in it are to be devoted to the LORD. Only Rahab the prostitute and all who are with her in her

house shall be spared, because she hid the spies we sent. ¹⁹ All the silver and gold and the articles of bronze and iron are sacred to the LORD and must go into his treasury.”

²⁰ When the trumpets sounded, the people shouted, and at the sound of the trumpet, when the people gave a loud shout, the wall collapsed; so every man charged straight in, and they took the city. ²¹ They devoted the city to the LORD and destroyed with the sword every living thing in it—men and women, young and old, cattle, sheep and donkeys.

²² Joshua said to the two men who had spied out the land, “Go into the prostitute’s house and bring her out and all who belong to her, in accordance with your oath to her.” ²³ So the young men who had done the spying went in and brought out Rahab, her father and mother and brothers and all who belonged to her. They brought out her entire family and put them in a place outside the camp of Israel.

²⁴ Then they burned the whole city and everything in it, but they put the silver and gold and the articles of bronze and iron into the treasury of the LORD’s house. ²⁵ But Joshua spared Rahab the prostitute, with her family and all who belonged to her, because she hid the men Joshua had sent as spies to Jericho—and she lives among the Israelites to this day.

²⁶ At that time Joshua pronounced this solemn oath: “Cursed before the LORD is the man who undertakes to rebuild this city, Jericho: At the cost of his firstborn son will he lay its foundations; at the cost of his youngest will he set up its gates.”

²⁷ So the LORD was with Joshua, and his fame spread throughout the land.

Study Questions: Joshua and the Battle of Jericho

Joshua 6

Introduction:

After the 40 years of wandering in the desert were over, God again led the Israelites to Canaan. They were to enter the Promised Land under the leadership of Joshua. Joshua had served as Moses' helper and now he was appointed by God to be their new leader. As they approached the Promised Land, their first obstacle was the Jordan River. The Israelites trusted God and witnessed His mighty work. He held back the waters of the Jordan and allowed the Israelites to cross on dry ground. They were in the Promised Land! Joshua then sent two men to spy on the city of Jericho. While in Jericho, they were protected by a prostitute named Rahab, because she feared God and eventually she became one of Jesus' ancestors. She reported to the spies that the people of Jericho were very afraid of the Israelites and their God. She told them that she believed the Lord would give the city of Jericho to the Israelites. After the spies reported this to Joshua, he and his army marched to Jericho to take the city. They knew that the Lord would be with them.

Goals:

Knowledge

- To understand that the Lord is Holy.
- To realize that things that belong to the Lord or oaths made to the Lord are sacred, including our lives.
- To know that all people are saved through faith in God.

Attitude

- To honor the Lord and everything that is His.
- To be confident in His presence to win life's battles.
- To trust in the Lord for salvation and life itself.

Actions

- To put the Lord first in all things that we do.
- To put to death everything that belongs to our sinful nature.

Memory Verse:

Romans 10:13 "Everyone who calls on the Name of the Lord will be saved."

Scriptures for Further Study:

Joshua 1:1-9; Matthew 1:5-6; John 6:37; Hebrews 11:30-31; James 2:25-26; 1 John 1:8-9

Questions about the Story

1. How were the Israelites a different people after they had wandered in the desert for forty years? (Numbers 14:22. They were the children of the adults who had left Egypt. The adults who left Egypt had all died during the 40 years of wandering in the desert. They had seen all that God did for their people and they were now ready to believe God's promise that He would defeat their enemies and give them the land of Canaan.)
2. Why was Jericho "tightly shut up?" How much travel in and out of the city was happening? (Joshua 6:1. It was shut up because the people of Jericho were afraid of the Israelites; no one was going out or coming in.)
3. What promise did God give the Israelites before commanding them to march around Jericho? (Joshua 6:2. He promised He would deliver Jericho into their hands – He said He already had done it.)
4. What was unique about God's strategy for defeating Jericho? (Joshua 6:3-5. Marching around rather than attacking, blowing trumpets instead of weapons, priests rather than soldiers, shouting to destroy a wall. All of these were unique aspects and they pointed to this battle as the Lord's victory. God wanted to make it clear that the Israelites won because of God's strength, not because of their own strength.)
5. What is significant about the order the Israelites marched around the city? (Joshua 6:7-10. First – the armed guard; second – the seven priests with seven trumpets; third – the Ark of the Covenant; fourth – the rear guard. The Ark of the Covenant represented God's presence with the Israelites. It was a reminder that God's power would defeat Jericho and it was in the center of the army, as was the Lord.)
6. What is significant about the number of times they marched around the city? (Joshua 6:1-15. The number seven is significant to God. It is His number and it emphasized to the people that this is a holy battle.)
7. What did Joshua command the people to do after they followed the marching orders? (Joshua 6:16-19. They were to shout, to go straight in to the city, to kill every living thing, to spare Rahab, to burn the city and to make sure that all the valuables went into the treasury of the Lord.)
8. Who did they dedicate the destruction to? (Joshua 6:21. They devoted everything to the Lord.)
9. Why did Joshua spare Rahab and her family? (Joshua 6:25. Joshua spared Rahab and her household because she hid the

spies that were sent to Jericho. She did this because she believed in God and feared Him.)

Discussion Questions:

1. How do we have confidence of the Lord's presence with us in a similar way as the Israelites had the Ark of the Covenant? (Joshua 6:6) [Jesus came and lived among us. He sent the Holy Spirit to live within us. He gave us His Word be a part of our lives and we can talk with Him in prayer.]
2. God delivered the Israelites from their enemies. In what ways has God delivered us? [Through Jesus' death and resurrection, God has delivered those who believe in Him from the enemies of sin, Satan, eternal death and even ourselves.]
3. How does God bring about victory in our lives through unique ways that point to His work rather than to our own? (Joshua 6:20-21) [He brings about our victory by defeating the power of sin over our lives. It was through Jesus death that we received life. It is through dying to ourselves that we have life in the Spirit. It is in praise that we find the victory.]
4. God commanded that everything in Jericho be killed. How does that parallel our lives? (Joshua 6:17, 21) [We also are called to put to death everything that belongs to our sinful nature. (Colossians 3:5)]
5. In what ways might we take things that belong to God, or that are devoted to Him? (Joshua 6:21) [We, as Christians, often take things that are devoted to the Lord by withholding our tithes, possessions or our lives. Sometimes we have the attitude that the things we have are our own, instead they belong to God and should be used for His kingdom.]
6. How do our lives parallel Rahab's? (Joshua 2:8-14) [They do because Rahab would have died, but she believed in God and His word through the spies. It is God's mercy in Jesus that saves us from the coming judgment.]
7. What does the story of Rahab teach us about God's love for people? (Joshua 6:22-23) [The story of Rahab shows us that God is ready to receive anyone who fears Him and believes Him, even the worst of sinners. John 6:37 says if anyone comes to Jesus, He will not cast them away. Rahab became part of Israel and became the mother of Boaz and she appears in the genealogy of Jesus Christ (Matthew 1:5-6)]

17. Gideon

Judges 6-7

Judges 6

¹ Again the Israelites did evil in the eyes of the LORD, and for seven years he gave them into the hands of the Midianites. ² Because the power of Midian was so oppressive, the Israelites prepared shelters for themselves in mountain clefts, caves and strongholds. ⁴ The Midianites camped on the land and ruined the crops and did not spare a living thing for Israel, neither sheep nor cattle nor donkeys. ⁶ Midian so impoverished the Israelites that they cried out to the LORD for help.

¹² The angel of the LORD appeared to Gideon and said, “The LORD is with you, mighty warrior.” ¹³ “But sir,” Gideon replied, “if the LORD is with us, why has all this happened to us? Where are all his wonders that our fathers told us about when they said, ‘Did not the LORD bring us up out of Egypt?’ But now the LORD has abandoned us and put us into the hand of Midian.” ¹⁴ The LORD turned to him and said, “Go in the strength you have and save Israel out of Midian’s hand. Am I not sending you?” ¹⁵ “But Lord,” Gideon asked, “how can I save Israel? My clan is the weakest in Manasseh, and I am the least in my family.” ¹⁶ The LORD answered, “I will be with you, and you will strike down all the Midianites together.” ²² When Gideon realized that it was the angel of the LORD, he exclaimed, “Ah, Sovereign LORD! I have seen the angel of the LORD face to face!” ²³ But the LORD said to him, “Peace! Do not be afraid. You are not going to die.” ²⁴ So Gideon built an altar to the LORD there and called it The LORD is Peace.

²⁵ That same night the LORD said to him, “Tear down your father’s altar to Baal and cut down the Asherah pole beside it. ²⁶ Then build a proper kind of altar to the LORD your God on the top of this height. Using the wood of the Asherah pole that you cut down, offer the second bull as a burnt offering.” ²⁷ So Gideon took ten of his servants and did as the LORD told him. But because he was afraid of his family and the men of the town, he did it at night rather than in the daytime. ²⁸ In the morning when the men of the town got up, there was Baal’s altar, demolished, with the Asherah pole beside it cut down and the second bull sacrificed on the newly built altar! ²⁹ They asked each other, “Who did this?” When they carefully investigated, they were told, “Gideon son of Joash did it.” ³⁰ The men of the town demanded of Joash, “Bring out your son. He must die, because he has broken down Baal’s altar and cut down the Asherah pole beside it.” ³¹ But Joash replied to the hostile crowd around him, “Are you going to plead Baal’s cause? Are you

trying to save him? If Baal really is a god, he can defend himself when someone breaks down his altar.”³² So that day they called Gideon “Jerub-Baal,” saying, “Let Baal contend with him,” because he broke down Baal’s altar.³⁴ Then the Spirit of the LORD came upon Gideon, and he blew a trumpet, summoning the people to follow him.

Judges 7

²The LORD said to Gideon, “You have too many men for me to deliver Midian into their hands. In order that Israel may not boast against me that her own strength has saved her,³ announce now to the people, ‘Anyone who trembles with fear may turn back and leave Mount Gilead.’” So twenty-two thousand men left, while ten thousand remained.⁴ But the LORD said to Gideon, “There are still too many men. Take them down to the water, and I will sift them for you there.”

⁵So Gideon took the men down to the water. There the LORD told him, “Separate those who lap the water with their tongues like a dog from those who kneel down to drink.”⁶ Three hundred men lapped with their hands to their mouths. All the rest got down on their knees to drink.

⁷The LORD said to Gideon, “With the three hundred men that lapped I will save you and give the Midianites into your hands. Let all the other men go, each to his own place.”⁸ So Gideon sent the rest of the Israelites to their tents but kept the three hundred, who took over the provisions and trumpets of the others.

Now the camp of Midian lay below him in the valley.¹⁶ Dividing the three hundred men into three companies, he placed trumpets and empty jars in the hands of all of them, with torches inside.¹⁷ “Watch me,” he told them. “Follow my lead. When I get to the edge of the camp, do exactly as I do.¹⁸ When I and all who are with me blow our trumpets, then from all around the camp blow yours and shout, ‘For the LORD and for Gideon.’”¹⁹ Gideon and the hundred men with him reached the edge of the camp at the beginning of the middle watch, just after they had changed the guard. They blew their trumpets and broke the jars that were in their hands.²⁰ The three companies blew the trumpets and smashed the jars. Grasping the torches in their left hands and holding in their right hands the trumpets they were to blow, they shouted, “A sword for the LORD and for Gideon!”²¹ While each man held his position around the camp, all the Midianites ran, crying out as they fled.²² When the three hundred trumpets sounded, the LORD caused the men throughout the camp to turn on each other with their swords. The army fled and the Israelites were called out to pursue them and on that day the Israelites defeated the Midianites.

Study Questions: Gideon

Judges 6-7

Introduction:

Under Joshua's leadership, the Israelites defeated many of the nations living in Canaan, but they did not defeat them all. As a result, they eventually began worshipping the gods of these nations, and so they were unfaithful to the Lord. This resulted in punishment from the Lord by enemies troubling the Israelites and defeating them in battles.

However, each time the people cried out to the Lord, He would send a judge to lead them and deliver them from their enemies. Gideon was one of those judges whom the Lord called to lead His people. This happened at a very desperate time for the people of Israel, a time when the Midianites oppressed them (See also Judges 2:10-17). The angel of the Lord says to Gideon, "Peace! Do not be afraid," which is the same thing Jesus told his disciples.

Goals:

Knowledge

- To understand that God is Almighty and that He can use weak people to do His work.
- To realize that God alone gets the glory for the great things He has done.
- To acknowledge that any ability that we have or work that we do comes first from the hand of God.

Attitude

- To humble ourselves before and believe in the powerful God that we serve.
- To be encouraged that He will be with us and will fight the battle for us.

Actions

- To humbly listen to the instruction of the Lord.
- By faith to obey the Lord with boldness.

Memory Verse:

Psalm 89:8 "O LORD God Almighty, who is like you? You are mighty, O LORD, and your faithfulness surrounds you."

Scriptures for Further Study:

Proverbs 3:5-6; Hebrews 13:5; 1 John 5:18

Questions about the Story:

1. What happened to the Israelites when they did things that the Lord said were evil? (Judges 6:1-4: The Lord allowed the Midianites to oppress them.)
2. What caused the Israelites to cry out to God? (Judges 6:2-6. The Israelites cried out to the Lord because they were becoming so poor. The Midianites were destroying their crops and their animals and their land. The Israelites even hid in caves to stay away from the Midianites.)
3. How did Gideon reply after the angel said to him, “The Lord is with you...?” (Judges 6:12-13. “If the Lord is with us, why has all this happened to us? Where is He? The Lord abandoned us.”)
4. What did the Lord command Gideon to do for the people of Israel? (Judges 6:14-16. “Go in the strength you have and save Israel.”)
5. What kind of strength did Gideon see in himself? What strength was the Lord referring to that Gideon would fight with? (Judges 6:15-16. Gideon saw himself as a weak man, from the weakest clan in Israel. The Lord was referring to the strength that Gideon had from the Lord.)
6. What did Gideon call the altar that he built at that place? (Judges 6:24. The Lord is Peace.)
7. What did the Lord command Gideon to do about the idol worship of his family? (Judges 6:25-26. The Lord commanded him to tear down his father’s altar to Baal and cut down the Asherah pole. Then he was to build an altar to the Lord.)
8. When did Gideon follow the command of the Lord? Why? Did Gideon fear the wrath of Baal and Asherah? (Judges 6:27. Gideon destroyed the altar to Baal and the Asherah pole at night, because he was afraid of his family and the neighbors. Gideon did not fear these gods. Instead, he trusted God to protect him, because he knew that God is the only true God.)
9. How did the people of the town respond when they saw that the altar of Baal had been destroyed? (Judges 6:30. They wanted to kill Gideon.)
10. How was the answer that Joash gave to the angry crowd a good one? (Judges 6:31-34). Joash reminded the people that if Baal was really a god, he himself could punish Gideon and take revenge. This wise answer made the people think about which God was the true God and it kept them from killing his son Gideon.)

11. Why did God say that Gideon had gathered too many people? (Judges 7:2. The Lord said that Gideon had too many men, because if they won the battle, then the Israelites would boast that their own strength had saved them.)
12. How did God reduce the army from 32,000 people to 300? (Judges 7:3-6. God said that if anyone was afraid of the battle they could turn back. Then, He had Gideon take the remaining men for a drink of water at a river or pool. Those who drank lapping water like a dog were removed from the army. After that, only 300 men were left.)
13. What did God promise He would do with the 300 men? (Judges 7:7. The Lord promised that with the 300 men, He would save Israel.)
14. What did Gideon give the men before they went into the battle? (Judges 7:16. He gave the men trumpets and empty jars with torches inside of them.)
15. How did the Lord defeat the Midianites? (Judges 7:20-22. The Lord confused the Midianites, so they started killing each other with their swords, and they ran away to save their lives.)

Discussion Questions:

1. What happens when we choose to do things that God says are evil, like the Israelites did? (Judges 6:1-4) [God's protection and blessing leave us, like it left Israel, and then we are unprotected from the Enemy.]
2. When does it feel like "The Lord has abandoned us?" (Judges 6:13) Does the Lord ever abandon us? Do we ever abandon the Lord? [The Lord never leaves us or abandons us, (Hebrews 13:5). However, we like the Israelites constantly turn from the Lord. "We all like sheep have gone astray," (Isaiah 53:6).]
3. Why does God often choose weak people to do His work? (Judges 6:15, 7:2) [When the Lord chooses weak people for His work, they cannot boast in their own power and strength when their assignment is accomplished. God used Gideon, the least in his family, which was from the weakest clan of his tribe. God used 300 men to defeat an army of more than 120,000 men (See Judges 8:10). He received much glory from the Israelites because of the way this showed them His great power.]
4. Where do we get the ability to take on tasks that are far greater than ourselves? (Judges 7:20-22) [It is the Lord that does the work and success comes from Him. We are invited to be a part of what the Lord is doing.]

5. What is the Lord's attitude toward other "gods" that are in our lives? What are some of the "gods" that we might serve? (Judges 6:25-27) [God has no tolerance for other "gods." He is the One and Only God and He is the only one who should be worshiped and praised. Although we may not worship an idol that is made of wood or stone, etc. We worship many things that become more important than God and we put them in the center of our lives like Gideon's idols. Money, houses, possessions, people and even ourselves can become more important to us than God.]
6. How do we boast or brag about our accomplishments as if our own strength has given us success? (Judges 7:2) [God wants to receive all the praise and the glory from our lives, because He is the One who makes us able to do anything. The glory is not ours.]
7. What is our faith or confidence based on to face things that are impossibly larger than we are? (Judges 7:7) [The Word of the Lord is what Gideon put all of his trust in and that is what we also can confidently trust in.]
8. What can we learn from Gideon in this story? [To trust God and obey Him, even if His instructions are hard to understand. We can be sure that God is able to do all things, nothing is too hard for Him.]
9. How does God fight or defeat our enemies for us? (Judges 7:22) [The Lord can use a gentle answer like He did from Joash, He can send His servant like He did by sending Gideon and He can cause confusion like He did with the Midianites.]

18. Ruth

Ruth 1-4

Ruth 1

¹ In the days when the judges ruled, there was a famine in the land, and a man from Bethlehem in Judah, together with his wife and two sons, went to live for a while in the country of Moab. ² The man's name was Elimelech, his wife's name Naomi, and the names of his two sons were Mahlon and Kilion. ³ Now Elimelech, Naomi's husband, died, and she was left with her two sons. ⁴ They married Moabite women, one named Orpah and the other Ruth. After they had lived there about ten years, ⁵ both Mahlon and Kilion also died, and Naomi was left without her two sons and her husband. ⁶ When she heard in Moab that the LORD had come to the aid of his people by providing food for them, Naomi and her daughters-in-law prepared to return home from there. ⁷ With her two daughters-in-law she left the place where she had been living and set out on the road back to the land of Judah.

⁸ Then Naomi said to her two daughters-in-law, "Go back, each of you, to your mother's home. May the LORD show kindness to you, as you have shown to your dead and to me." ¹⁶ Orpah went back but Ruth replied, "Don't urge me to leave you or to turn back from you. Where you go I will go, and where you stay I will stay. Your people will be my people and your God my God." ¹⁸ When Naomi realized that Ruth was determined to go with her, she stopped urging her. ²² So Naomi returned from Moab accompanied by Ruth the Moabitess, her daughter-in-law, arriving in Bethlehem as the barley harvest was beginning.

Ruth 2

² Ruth said to Naomi, "Let me go to the fields and pick up the leftover grain behind anyone in whose eyes I find favor." Naomi said to her, "Go ahead, my daughter." ³ So she went out and began to glean in the fields behind the harvesters. As it turned out, she found herself working in a field belonging to Boaz, who was from the clan of Elimelech. ⁴ Just then Boaz arrived from Bethlehem and greeted the harvesters, "The LORD be with you!" "The LORD bless you!" they called back. ⁵ Boaz asked the foreman of his harvesters, "Whose young woman is that?" ⁶ The foreman replied, "She is the Moabitess who came back from Moab with Naomi." ⁷ She said, 'Please let me gather among the sheaves behind the harvesters.' She went into the field and has worked steadily from morning till now, except for a short rest in the shelter." ⁸ So Boaz said to Ruth, "My daughter, listen to me. Don't go and glean in another field but stay here with my servant girls. ⁹ I have told the men not to

touch you. And whenever you are thirsty, go and get a drink from the water jars the men have filled.”¹⁰ At this, she bowed down with her face to the ground. She exclaimed, “Why have I found such favor in your eyes that you notice me—a foreigner?”¹¹ Boaz replied, “I’ve been told all about what you have done for your mother-in-law since the death of your husband—how you left your father and mother and your homeland and came to live with a people you did not know before.¹² May the LORD repay you for what you have done. May you be richly rewarded by the LORD, the God of Israel, under whose wings you have come to take refuge.”

¹⁹ *When she returned home* Ruth told her mother-in-law about the one at whose place she had been working. “The name of the man I worked with today is Boaz,” she said.²⁰ “The LORD bless him!” Naomi said to her daughter-in-law. “He has not stopped showing his kindness to the living and the dead.” She added, “That man is our close relative; he is one of our kinsman-redeemers.”²¹ Then Ruth said, “He even said to me, ‘Stay with my workers until they finish harvesting all my grain.’”²² Naomi said to Ruth her daughter-in-law, “It will be good for you, my daughter, to go with his girls, because in someone else’s field you might be harmed.”²³ So Ruth stayed close to the servant girls of Boaz to glean until the barley and wheat harvests were finished. And she lived with her mother-in-law.

Ruth 3

¹ One day Naomi said to Ruth, “My daughter, should I not try to find a home for you, where you will be well provided for? ² Is not Boaz a kinsman of ours? Tonight he will be winnowing barley on the threshing floor. ³ Wash and perfume yourself, and put on your best clothes. Then go down to the threshing floor, but don’t let him know you are there until he has finished eating and drinking. ⁴ When he lies down, note the place where he is lying. Then go and uncover his feet and lie down. He will tell you what to do.” ⁵ “I will do whatever you say,” Ruth answered. ⁶ So she went down to the threshing floor and did everything her mother-in-law told her to do. ⁷ When Boaz had finished eating and drinking and was in good spirits, he went over to lie down at the far end of the grain pile. Ruth approached quietly, uncovered his feet and lay down. ⁸ In the middle of the night something startled the man, and he turned and discovered a woman lying at his feet. ⁹ “Who are you?” he asked. “I am your servant Ruth,” she said. “Spread the corner of your garment over me, since you are a kinsman-redeemer.” ¹⁰ “The LORD bless you, my daughter,” he replied. “This kindness is greater than that which you showed earlier: You have not run after the younger men,

whether rich or poor. ¹¹ And now, my daughter, don't be afraid. I will do for you all you ask. All my fellow townsmen know that you are a woman of noble character."

Ruth 4

⁹ The next day Boaz announced to the elders and all the people, "Today you are witnesses that I have bought from Naomi all the property of Elimelech, Kilion and Mahlon." ¹⁰ I have also acquired Ruth the Moabitess, Mahlon's widow, as my wife." ¹¹ Then the elders and all those at the gate said, "We are witnesses." ¹³ So Boaz took Ruth and she became his wife. Then he went to her, and the LORD enabled her to conceive, and she gave birth to a son. ¹⁴ The women said to Naomi: "Praise be to the LORD, who this day has not left you without a kinsman-redeemer. May he become famous throughout Israel!" ¹⁷ The women living there said, "Naomi has a son." And they named him Obed. He was the father of Jesse, the father of David.

Study Questions: Ruth

Ruth 1-4

Introduction:

The book of Ruth is about love, devotion, and redemption. It takes place during the time when judges were the leaders in Israel. This was a time of much immorality, idolatry, and war in Israel. The story is about a Moabite woman, named Ruth, who left her own country to join the people of Israel and serve their God, the One True God. She went with her widowed Jewish mother-in-law to the town of Bethlehem. As a result of her faithfulness to God in a time when many Israelites were faithless, God rewarded her by giving her a husband (Boaz), a son (Obed), and a privileged position as an ancestor of King David, and of Jesus Christ.

Goals:

Knowledge

- To know that God is able to use our bitterness and hardships in His perfect plan.
- To understand that as the kinsman-redeemer gives Ruth a second chance in life, so Jesus is our kinsman-redeemer.
- To acknowledge that the Lord is the one that rewards us.

Attitude

- To humble ourselves before God.
- To have patience and trust in God, believing that He works everything according to His good pleasure.

Actions

- To show kindness and love to others who need help and assistance.
- To serve others, as unto the Lord, whoever they are.

Memory Verse:

Psalm 30:5b “Weeping may remain for a night, but rejoicing comes in the morning.”

Scriptures for Further Study:

Deuteronomy 25:5-10; Matthew 1:5-16; Romans 8:28; Ephesians 4:32; Philippians 2:3-4

Questions about the Story:

1. What hardship did Naomi experience in the land of Moab? (Ruth 1:3-5. Naomi’s husband, Elimelech, died; then her two sons, Mahlon and Kilion, died too.)

2. Why was Ruth determined to leave her homeland and go with Naomi back to Israel? (Ruth 1:16. Because Ruth loved her mother-in-law and she wanted to serve the God of Israel as Naomi did.)
3. How did Ruth find food for Naomi and herself? (Ruth 2:2. She went into the fields and picked up the grain that was left on the ground after the harvest.)
4. How did Boaz show kindness to Ruth? (Ruth 2:8-9. He allowed her keep on working in his field with his servant girls; he made sure that his men did not touch her; and he told her she could drink from his servants' water jars.)
5. Why did Boaz show kindness to Ruth even though she was a foreigner? (Ruth 2:11-12. He had heard about all that she had done for her mother-in-law and how she had come to Israel to find refuge in the Lord.)
6. What was the responsibility of Boaz as the kinsman-redeemer, according to Deuteronomy 25:5-10? (The kinsman-redeemer was to marry the widow of a relative in order to produce an heir for her husband.)
7. When Naomi was looking for a husband for Ruth, what did she tell Ruth to do? (Ruth 3:3-4: She told Ruth to put on her best clothes and perfume, to go down to the threshing floor, and to lie down at Boaz's feet after he had laid down to sleep, then to wait for his instructions to her.)
8. What was the meaning of Ruth going to Boaz at night and sleeping at his feet? (Ruth 3:1-2, 9-10. According to the custom of that time, she was requesting him to marry her, since he was a close relative of Ruth's husband who had died. The law said that a close relative should marry the widow to carry on the line of the dead man.)
9. What was Ruth's reputation in the town? (Ruth 3:11. She was known as a woman of noble character.)
10. Who is the David mentioned here, that was the grandson of Obed, the son of Boaz and Ruth? (Ruth 4:17. It is King David, the great King of Israel.)
11. How did Naomi move from great sadness to great happiness in the story? (Ruth 4:14-17. Naomi was alone, a widow without children. But in the end, she was blessed with a kinsman-redeemer when Boaz married Ruth. Then she had children and grandchildren to love.)

Discussion Questions:

1. What can we learn from hardships? (Ruth 1:1-5) [We, like Naomi, can learn that famine, the death of a spouse and two children highlight our need for the Lord who comes “to the aid of His people.” Hardships teaches us that this world is not our home and that our only hope must be in the Lord.]
2. How does the Lord provide for us? [He provides trials so that we look to Him rather than ourselves. He provides aid and food to remind us that He is with us and that He does care. He allows death so that we look to Him for life. He provides children so that we praise Him as the giver of all good things.]
3. What is the significance of the kinsman-redeemer for us? (Ruth 3:9) [Jesus is our kinsman-redeemer and he has given us a new life. He is the bridegroom who has come to marry his bride, the Church.]
4. Where do our blessings come from? (Ruth 4:14) [Naomi continued to trust in the Lord and recognized that He gives blessings even though she had faced great personal hardships. It was through the lineage of Ruth and Boaz that the promised Savior would come.]
5. How do we see God’s heart for the whole world in this story? (Ruth 4:10; 1:16) [The lineage of Jesus includes “Ruth the Moabitess,” which was a foreign country with a foreign god. She too was a woman of faith and welcomed the Lord to be her God.]
6. What do we learn about how we should treat one another from this story? [We are to show kindness to others, as shown by two examples in this story. Ruth showed great kindness to Naomi, even in her own poverty and loss. Boaz showed great kindness to Naomi and Ruth by redeeming them and restoring their honor (See Ephesians 4:32).]
7. What are some ways that we can show a servant’s heart to people around us? [Whether it is with people in our family, our church, or among our friends, our attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus, who humbled Himself and became a servant (Philippians 2:2-7).]

19. Hannah

1 Samuel 1-2

1 Samuel

¹ There was a certain man whose name was Elkanah. ² He had two wives; one was called Hannah and the other Peninnah. Peninnah had children, but Hannah had none. ³ Year after year this man went up from his town to worship and sacrifice to the LORD Almighty at Shiloh.

⁴ Whenever the day came for Elkanah to sacrifice, he would give portions of the meat to his wife Peninnah and to all her sons and daughters. ⁵ But to Hannah he gave a double portion because he loved her, and the LORD had closed her womb. ⁶ And because the LORD had closed her womb, her rival kept provoking her in order to irritate her.

⁷ This went on year after year. Whenever Hannah went up to the house of the LORD, her rival provoked her till she wept and would not eat.

⁸ Elkanah her husband would say to her, "Hannah, why are you weeping? Why don't you eat? Why are you downhearted? Don't I mean more to you than ten sons?"

⁹ Once when they had finished eating and drinking in Shiloh, Hannah stood up. Now Eli the priest was sitting on a chair by the doorpost of the LORD's temple. ¹⁰ In bitterness of soul Hannah wept much and prayed to the LORD. ¹¹ And she made a vow, saying, "O LORD Almighty, if you will only look upon your servant's misery and remember me, and not forget your servant but give her a son, then I will give him to the LORD for all the days of his life, and no razor will ever be used on his head." ¹² As she kept on praying to the LORD, Eli observed her mouth. ¹³ Hannah was praying in her heart, and her lips were moving but her voice was not heard. Eli thought she was drunk ¹⁴ and said to her, "How long will you keep on getting drunk? Get rid of your wine." ¹⁵ "Not so, my lord," Hannah replied, "I am a woman who is deeply troubled. I have not been drinking wine or beer; I was pouring out my soul to the LORD. ¹⁶ Do not take your servant for a wicked woman; I have been praying here out of my great anguish and grief." ¹⁷ Eli answered, "Go in peace, and may the God of Israel grant you what you have asked of him." ¹⁸ She said, "May your servant find favor in your eyes." Then she went her way and ate something, and her face was no longer downcast.

¹⁹ Early the next morning they arose and worshiped before the LORD and then went back to their home at Ramah. Elkanah lay with Hannah his wife, and the LORD remembered her. ²⁰ So in the course of time Hannah conceived and gave birth to a son. She named him Samuel,

saying, "Because I asked the LORD for him."²⁴ After he was weaned, she took the boy with her, young as he was, along with a three-year-old bull, some flour and a skin of wine, and brought him to the house of the LORD at Shiloh.²⁵ When they had slaughtered the bull, they brought the boy to Eli,²⁶ and she said to him, "As surely as you live, my lord, I am the woman who stood here beside you praying to the LORD.²⁷ I prayed for this child, and the LORD has granted me what I asked of him.²⁸ So now I give him to the LORD. For his whole life he will be given over to the LORD." And he worshiped the LORD there.

1 Samuel 2

¹ Then Hannah prayed and said: "My heart rejoices in the LORD.² There is no one holy like the LORD; there is no one besides you; there is no Rock like our God.³ Those who were full hire themselves out for food, but those who were hungry hunger no more. She who was barren has borne seven children, but she who has had many sons pines away.⁴ The LORD sends poverty and wealth; he humbles and he exalts.⁵ He raises the poor from the dust and lifts the needy from the ash heap; he seats them with princes and has them inherit a throne of honor.⁶ The LORD will judge the ends of the earth. He will give strength to his king and exalt the horn of his anointed."

¹¹ Then Elkanah went home to Ramah, but the boy ministered before the LORD under Eli the priest.¹² Each year his mother made him a little robe and took it to him when she went up with her husband to offer the annual sacrifice.¹³ Eli would bless Elkanah and his wife, saying, "May the LORD give you children by this woman to take the place of the one she prayed for and gave to the LORD." Then they would go home.

¹⁴ And the LORD was gracious to Hannah; she conceived and gave birth to three sons and two daughters. Meanwhile, the boy Samuel grew up in the presence of the LORD.¹⁵ And the boy Samuel continued to grow in stature and in favor with the LORD and with men.

Study Questions: Hannah

1 Samuel 1-2

Introduction:

The story of Hannah takes place at the end of the time when the judges led Israel, before the Israelites had kings. Hannah desperately wanted a son, but she was barren and unable to become pregnant. She continually came before the Lord and pled with Him to give her a child, and the Lord heard her cry. She gave birth to Samuel, who grew up to be a mighty judge in Israel and a prophet of the Lord. He was a godly man whom God used to anoint both Saul and David as kings over Israel. In as much as Samuel was a gift to Hannah, so also Jesus came as a gift to us.

Goals:

Knowledge

- To understand that God does indeed answer our prayers, yet His answer isn't always according to our desire, but according to His greater will.
- To accept that as Samuel was a gift to Hannah, so Jesus came as a gift for us.

Attitude

- To trust in the faithfulness of God rather than living with revenge or hatred.
- To rejoice in the Lord for His provisions for us.

Actions

- To bring our pain to God in prayer and never give up when presenting our requests to the Lord.
- To completely dedicate our lives, hopes and dreams to the Lord, realizing that His will is good.

Memory Verses:

Psalm 34:18 "The LORD is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit."

Luke 18:1 "Then Jesus told his disciples a parable to show them that they should always pray and not give up."

Scriptures for Further Study:

Ecclesiastes 5:4-5; Isaiah 40:28-31; Luke 18:1-8; Romans 12:17; 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18; James 1:2-4; 4:2-3, 6; 1 Peter 5:7

Questions about the Story:

1. What was the rivalry between Elkanah's two wives? (1 Samuel 1:2. His wife Peninnah was able to have children. His other wife, Hannah, was barren.)
2. What was the yearly tradition of Elkanah and his family? (1 Samuel 1:3. They went to worship and sacrifice to the Lord at Shiloh.)
3. What caused Hannah to cry and refuse to eat? (1 Samuel 1:6. Hannah cried and refused to eat, because she was not able to have children. Peninnah would also tease her, because she did have children.)
4. What did Hannah do in her great sorrow? (1 Samuel 1:10-11. She wept much and prayed to the Lord, and she made a vow saying that if the Lord would give her a son then she would give him back to the Lord.)
5. What caused Eli to think that Hannah was drunk? (1 Samuel 1:12-14. She was praying in her heart and her lips were moving but her voice was not heard.)
6. What did Eli say to Hannah after she explained what she was praying for? (1 Samuel 1:17. "Go in peace, and may the God of Israel grant you what you have asked of Him.")
7. How did God answer Hannah's prayer? (1 Samuel 1:19-20. The Lord allowed her to conceive and give birth to a son.)
8. Did Hannah keep her vow that she had made before the Lord? (1 Samuel 1:24-28. Yes. She brought the boy to the house of the Lord and gave him to Eli the priest to raise him.)
9. How was Hannah's second prayer different from her first? (1 Samuel 2:1-10. She was rejoicing that the Lord had answered her prayer by His power)
10. How did the Lord bless Hannah after she gave Samuel to Him? (1 Samuel 2:21. The Lord allowed her to conceive and give birth to three sons and two daughters.)
11. How did Samuel grow up? (1 Samuel 2:21-26. Samuel grew up in the presence of the Lord and in favor with the Lord and with man.)

Discussion Questions:

1. How can we respond to the difficulties in our lives? [Hannah took her sorrow and bitterness to the Lord and asked Him to help her. In the same way, we need to go to the Lord with our prayers and requests (See 1 Peter 5:7).]
2. How can we respond to people who make our lives difficult, like Peninnah who provoked Hannah? (1 Samuel 1:7) [Hannah

did not argue with Peninnah. Instead, she reported her great sorrow to God. She allowed God to be the judge between them (See Romans 12:17).]

3. What do we learn about God and His ability to answer our prayers, even prayers that seem impossible? (1 Samuel 1:26-28) [God is able to answer all kinds of prayers and requests, because He is God Almighty and nothing is impossible for Him. He was also able to give us the miraculous gift of the child Jesus, through Mary, as a virgin.]
4. What do we learn from Hannah about keeping our vows? (1 Samuel 1:26-28) [If we make a promise to God, we need to be faithful to the Lord and do what we have promised (See Ecclesiastes 5:4-5).]
5. What response should come from our heart when we see the kindness of the Lord and His answers to prayer? (1 Samuel 2:1-10) [We, like Hannah, should overflow with praise for the Lord's goodness and His glory. If we do not have joy, then we must look again at all of the ways that the Lord blesses us.]
6. Is God ready to give us what we ask for? [When we ask God for things that will bring glory to His Name and are according to His will, He is eager to answer us; but when we pray selfishly, He does not hear our prayers (See James 4:2-3).]
7. Compare Hannah's two prayers in the story. What do you learn from them? [Hannah's first prayer was out of the emptiness of her heart as she cried out to the Lord and shared her pain with Him. Her second prayer was a prayer out of the fullness of joy in her heart expressing her thankfulness and praise to the Lord. We should also pray in both situations; when we are empty, and when we are full.]

20. Saul Rejected and David Anointed

1 Samuel 15-16

1 Samuel 15

¹ Samuel said to Saul, ² “This is what the LORD Almighty says: ‘I will punish the Amalekites for what they did to Israel when they waylaid them as they came up from Egypt. ³ Now go, attack the Amalekites and totally destroy everything that belongs to them. Do not spare them; put to death men and women, children and infants, cattle and sheep, camels and donkeys.’” ⁴ So Saul summoned the men—two hundred thousand foot soldiers and ten thousand men from Judah. ⁷ Then Saul attacked the Amalekites. ⁸ He took Agag king of the Amalekites alive, and all his people he totally destroyed with the sword. ⁹ But Saul and the army spared Agag and the best of the sheep and cattle, the fat calves and lambs—everything that was good. These they were unwilling to destroy completely, but everything that was despised and weak they totally destroyed.

¹⁰ Then the word of the LORD came to Samuel: ¹¹ “I am grieved that I have made Saul king, because he has turned away from me and has not carried out my instructions.” Samuel was troubled, and he cried out to the LORD all that night. ¹² Early in the morning Samuel got up and went to meet Saul, but he was told, “Saul has gone to Carmel. There he has set up a monument in his own honor and has turned and gone on down to Gilgal.” ¹³ When Samuel reached him, Saul said, “The LORD bless you! I have carried out the LORD’s instructions.” ¹⁴ But Samuel said, “What then is this bleating of sheep in my ears? What is this lowing of cattle that I hear?” ¹⁵ Saul answered, “The soldiers brought them from the Amalekites; they spared the best of the sheep and cattle to sacrifice to the LORD your God, but we totally destroyed the rest.” ¹⁶ “Stop!” Samuel said to Saul. “Let me tell you what the LORD said to me last night.” “Tell me,” Saul replied. ¹⁷ Samuel said, “Although you were once small in your own eyes, did you not become the head of the tribes of Israel? The LORD anointed you king over Israel. ¹⁸ And he sent you on a mission, saying, ‘Go and completely destroy those wicked people, the Amalekites.’ ¹⁹ Why did you not obey the LORD? Why did you pounce on the plunder and do evil in the eyes of the LORD?” ²⁰ “But I did obey the LORD,” Saul said. “I went on the mission the LORD assigned me. I completely destroyed the Amalekites and brought back Agag their king. ²¹ The soldiers took sheep and cattle from the plunder, the best of what was devoted to God, in order to sacrifice them to the LORD your God at Gilgal.” ²² But Samuel replied: “Does the LORD delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as much as in obeying the voice

of the LORD? To obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed is better than the fat of rams.²³ For rebellion is like the sin of divination, and arrogance like the evil of idolatry. Because you have rejected the word of the LORD, he has rejected you as king.”²⁴ Then Saul said to Samuel, “I have sinned. I violated the LORD’s command and your instructions. I was afraid of the people and so I gave in to them.”²⁵ Now I beg you, forgive my sin and come back with me, so that I may worship the LORD.”²⁶ But Samuel said to him, “I will not go back with you. You have rejected the word of the LORD, and the LORD has rejected you as king over Israel!”³⁵ Until the day Samuel died, he did not go to see Saul again, though Samuel mourned for him. And the LORD was grieved that he had made Saul king over Israel.

1 Samuel 16

¹The LORD said to Samuel, “How long will you mourn for Saul, since I have rejected him as king over Israel? Fill your horn with oil and be on your way; I am sending you to Jesse of Bethlehem. I have chosen one of his sons to be king.”² But Samuel said, “How can I go? Saul will hear about it and kill me.” The LORD said, “Take a heifer with you and say, ‘I have come to sacrifice to the LORD.’”³ Invite Jesse to the sacrifice, and I will show you what to do. You are to anoint for me the one I indicate.”⁴ Samuel did what the LORD said. When he arrived at Bethlehem, he consecrated Jesse and his sons and invited them to the sacrifice.⁶ When they arrived, Samuel saw Eliab and thought, “Surely the LORD’s anointed stands here before the LORD.”⁷ But the LORD said to Samuel, “Do not consider his appearance or his height, for I have rejected him. The LORD does not look at the things man looks at. Man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart.”⁸ Then Jesse called Abinadab and had him pass in front of Samuel. But Samuel said, “The LORD has not chosen this one either.”¹⁰ Jesse had seven of his sons pass before Samuel, but Samuel said to him, “The LORD has not chosen these.”¹¹ So he asked Jesse, “Are these all the sons you have?” “There is still the youngest,” Jesse answered, “but he is tending the sheep.” Samuel said, “Send for him; we will not sit down until he arrives.”¹² So he sent and had him brought in. He was ruddy, with a fine appearance and handsome features. Then the LORD said, “Rise and anoint him; he is the one.”¹³ So Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed him in the presence of his brothers, and from that day on the Spirit of the LORD came upon David in power.

Study Questions: Saul Rejected and David Anointed 1 Samuel 15-16

Introduction:

After Samuel had grown up, he became the Judge and Prophet of Israel. When the Israelites demanded a king to lead them, God led him to anoint Saul as their first king. Samuel frequently spoke God's words to King Saul and he was there to counsel and correct him when he went astray. However, King Saul disobeyed God's instructions, so he lost God's approval of him as king. Therefore, God directed Samuel to anoint another man to be the king over Israel. This was the young shepherd boy named David, a man after God's own heart. David was the first in the lineage of kings that led to Jesus who reigns as the eternal King.

Goals:

Knowledge

- To realize that God knows what is in our hearts and that it is impossible to hide from Him.
- To understand that when we go against the Lord's instructions, we will suffer the judgment of God.

Attitude

- To repent of our arrogance and rebellion.
- To be humble and a man after God's own heart.

Actions

- To walk in faithful uncompromising obedience to God's leading in our lives and not follow our own wisdom.
- To look at things through the Lord's perspective of the heart rather than the outward appearance.

Memory Verse:

1 Samuel 16:7 "The LORD does not look at the things man looks at. Man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart."

Scriptures for Further Study:

2 Samuel 7:12-13; Psalm 51:10; 139:23-24; Proverbs 16:18; Ezekiel 36:26; Matthew 15:17-20

Questions about the Story:

1. What did God command King Saul to do to the Amalekites? (1 Samuel 15:3. God commanded Saul to attack them and totally destroy everything that belonged to them)
2. Did Saul obey the command of God? (1 Samuel 15:8-9. No. Although he did attack them and kill most of them, he spared

king Agag and the best of the sheep and the cattle---everything that was good. He planned to sacrifice these to the Lord, which he thought would be good, but it was really disobedience to God.)

3. How did God respond to Saul's disobedience? (1 Samuel 15:11. He was grieved that He had made Saul king.)
4. To whom did Saul give the glory for the defeat of the Amalekites? (1 Samuel 15:12. Saul took the glory for himself by setting up a monument in his own honor.)
5. Why did Saul think that he had done a good thing by keeping the sheep and cattle? (1 Samuel 15:13. Saul planned to offer them as sacrifices, which he thought was a "good reason" to disobey. But, God was looking for complete obedience. "To obey is better than sacrifice" 1 Samuel 15:22b)
6. What reason did Saul give for not destroying the best sheep and cattle? (1 Samuel 15:15, 21. Saul said that they saved the best of everything to sacrifice them to the Lord.)
7. What did Samuel accuse Saul of doing? (1 Samuel 15:19. Samuel accused Saul disobeying the Lord, because he pounced on the plunder and did not destroy everything that belonged to the Amalekites.)
8. What did Samuel say was better than offering sacrifices to the Lord? (1 Samuel 15:22. Samuel told Saul that to obey is better than sacrifice.)
9. What did Saul say after realizing his error? (1 Samuel 15:24-25. Saul admitted that he had sinned and asked for forgiveness. He said that he had disobeyed the Lord's command because he was afraid of the people.)
10. What was the consequence for Saul's disobedience? (1 Samuel 15:26. The Lord rejected Saul as king over Israel.)
11. Why did God send Samuel to Jesse of Bethlehem? (1 Samuel 16:1. To anoint one of his sons as the new king over Israel.)
12. How would Samuel know which of Jesse's sons he should anoint? (1 Samuel 16:3. God said that He would indicate the one who was to be anointed.)
13. What did Samuel think of Eliab when he first saw him? (1 Samuel 16:6. "Surely the Lord's anointed stands here before the Lord.")
14. How did God reply to Samuel? (1 Samuel 16:7. The Lord does not look at the things man looks at. Man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart.)
15. Who did God chose to be king? (1 Samuel 16:12-13. David, the youngest of the sons of Jesse.)

Discussion Questions:

1. What is God's view of a heart that seeks to be better than most people? (1 Samuel 15:8-11) [God does not desire a heart that is partially devoted to Him or better than most people. God wants complete obedience.]
2. In what ways do we fail to obey the Lord completely in things that He has called us to? (1 Samuel 15:22) [We disobey the Lord when we only do a portion of what He asks, when we put ourselves before Him and when we fear people or consider what they think as if more important than the Lord.]
3. In what ways do we fear people and give in to them, or what ways do we stand for what is right, even if people hate us? (1 Samuel 15:24) [Saul said he was afraid of the people so he gave in to them. We do the same when we don't speak against sin, when we look the other way when someone is wrong or when we fail to stand up for someone who was treated wrong.]
4. What are the consequences that we face when we disobey the Lord? (1 Samuel 15:23) [Saul lost the kingdom although he continued to rule for many years. We also lose the kingdom of heaven when we continue in disobedience toward the Lord. Only the mercy of Jesus allows us to enter God's kingdom.]
5. What should our response be when we see a fellow Christian involved in sin? [We should point out their sin to them in a loving way, so that they can repent and turn to the Lord.]
6. What should we do when we recognize that our hearts are full of wickedness, greed, pride, or selfishness? (Psalm 51:10; Ezekiel 36:26) [We should repent and ask God to cleanse our hearts and free us from our sin.]
7. What does "Man looks at the outward appearance but the Lord looks at the heart" mean? (1 Samuel 16:7) [People are impressed by what a person looks like on the outside, but God sees what is in a man's heart and knows his true character. May God show us the hearts of people rather than their beauty, power, or wealth.]
8. What do we bring before the Lord that qualifies us for His service? (1 Samuel 16:13) [David did not have anything in himself that qualified him to be king except that he was a man after God's own heart. Like David, it is the Spirit of the Lord that qualifies us and gives us the power that we need.]
9. How do we see the Lord's work in our lives through judgment like Saul or blessing like David? [Through His Spirit, He is actively convicting us of sin, comforting us and giving us His power.]

21. David Spares Saul

1 Samuel 23 - 24

1 Samuel 23

¹⁴ David stayed in the desert strongholds and in the hills of the Desert. Day after day Saul searched for him, but God did not give David into his hands. ¹⁵ While David was at Horesh, he learned that Saul had come out to take his life. ¹⁶ And Saul's son Jonathan went to David at Horesh and helped him find strength in God. ¹⁷ "Don't be afraid," he said. "My father Saul will not lay a hand on you. You will be king over Israel, and I will be second to you. Even my father Saul knows this." ¹⁸ The two of them made a covenant before the LORD. Then Jonathan went home, but David remained at Horesh.

²⁵ Saul and his men began the search, and when David was told about it, he went down to the rock and stayed in the Desert of Maon. When Saul heard this, he went into the Desert of Maon in pursuit of David. ²⁶ Saul was going along one side of the mountain, and David and his men were on the other side, hurrying to get away from Saul. As Saul and his forces were closing in on David and his men to capture them, ²⁷ a messenger came to Saul, saying, "Come quickly! The Philistines are raiding the land." ²⁸ Then Saul broke off his pursuit of David and went to meet the Philistines. ²⁹ And David went up from there and lived in the strongholds of En Gedi.

1 Samuel 24

¹ After Saul returned from pursuing the Philistines, he was told, "David is in the Desert of En Gedi." ² So Saul took three thousand chosen men from all Israel and set out to look for David and his men. ³ He came to the sheep pens along the way; a cave was there, and Saul went in to relieve himself. David and his men were far back in the cave. ⁴ The men said, "This is the day the LORD spoke of when he said to you, 'I will give your enemy into your hands for you to deal with as you wish.'" Then David crept up unnoticed and cut off a corner of Saul's robe. ⁵ Afterward, David said to his men, "The LORD forbid that I should do such a thing to my master, the LORD's anointed, or lift my hand against him; for he is the anointed of the LORD." ⁷ With these words David rebuked his men and did not allow them to attack Saul. And Saul left the cave and went his way.

⁸ Then David went out of the cave and called out to Saul, "My lord the king!" When Saul looked behind him, David bowed down and prostrated himself with his face to the ground. ⁹ He said to Saul, "Why

do you listen when men say, ‘David is bent on harming you?’ ¹⁰ This day you have seen with your own eyes how the LORD delivered you into my hands in the cave. Some urged me to kill you, but I spared you; I said, ‘I will not lift my hand against my master, because he is the LORD’s anointed.’ ¹¹ See, my father, look at this piece of your robe in my hand! I cut off the corner of your robe but did not kill you. Now understand and recognize that I am not guilty of wrongdoing or rebellion. I have not wronged you, but you are hunting me down to take my life. ¹² May the LORD judge between you and me. And may the LORD avenge the wrongs you have done to me, but my hand will not touch you. ¹⁴ Against whom has the king of Israel come out? Whom are you pursuing? A dead dog? A flea? ¹⁵ May the LORD be our judge and decide between us. May he consider my cause and uphold it; may he vindicate me by delivering me from your hand.”

¹⁶ When David finished saying this, Saul asked, “Is that your voice, David my son?” And he wept aloud. ¹⁷ “You are more righteous than I,” he said. “You have treated me well, but I have treated you badly. ¹⁸ You have just now told me of the good you did to me; the LORD delivered me into your hands, but you did not kill me. ¹⁹ When a man finds his enemy, does he let him get away unharmed? May the LORD reward you well for the way you treated me today. ²⁰ I know that you will surely be king and that the kingdom of Israel will be established in your hands. ²¹ Now swear to me by the LORD that you will not cut off my descendants or wipe out my name from my father’s family.” ²² So David gave his oath to Saul. Then Saul returned home, but David and his men went up to the stronghold.

Study Questions: David Spares Saul

1 Samuel 23 - 24

Introduction:

Saul continued to rule over the land of Israel for some years after David was anointed to be the next king. David served in Saul's army and gained a high rank because of his success in battle (1 Sam 18:5). However, David became very popular with the people because of his military success, and Saul became jealous of him. As a result, Saul tried to kill David by sending him on difficult military missions, but David always won the battles. Eventually, Saul tried to kill David in person, so David was forced to run away. Saul used his army to chase after David and the men who had joined him. Saul spent years chasing after David. Throughout all of this time, David remained respectful to the Lord and to Saul as the Lord's Anointed. Saul continued to rule the land of Israel until the Lord Himself removed him when he died in battle. These hard years were the years of preparation David needed to be a good king.

Goals:

Knowledge

- To understand that God alone is the true Judge of people's hearts and we would stand condemned apart from Jesus.
- To realize that the Lord is the one that puts people in positions of authority, he is the one that gives rewards.

Attitude

- To have grace, forgiveness, patience and self-control because the Lord has shown the same to us.
- To trust the Lord as our protector.

Actions

- To forgive our enemy rather than to repay evil with evil.
- To use times of waiting as training ground for the unknown future that God has planned.

Memory Verses:

Psalm 50:15 "Call upon me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you will honor me."

Matthew 5:43-44 "You have heard that it was said, 'Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I tell you: Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you."

Scriptures for Further Study:

Deuteronomy 32:35; Matthew 5:21-22, 43-48; 7:12; Romans 12:17-21

Questions about the Story:

1. Why did David stay in the desert strongholds and in the hills of the desert? (1 Samuel 23:14-15. David was hiding from Saul, because Saul was searching for him to kill him.)
2. What did Jonathan say to David to encourage him to trust in God? (1 Samuel 23:16-17. Jonathan assured David of his own loyalty to him as his friend. He also reminded David of the anointing from God that David would be king over Israel someday.)
3. What happened that allowed David and his men to escape as Saul and his men were about to capture them? (1 Samuel 23:26-27. A messenger came saying that the army was needed immediately to fight against the Philistines.)
4. Why did Saul enter the cave where David and his men were hiding? (1 Samuel 24:3. Saul entered the cave to relieve himself.)
5. What advice did David's men give him? (1 Samuel 24:4. They said that God had delivered David's enemy to him and that David should kill him.)
6. Did David agree with the advice of his men to kill Saul? (1 Samuel 24:5-7. David refused the advice of his men and would not kill the one whom God had anointed to be king.)
7. Why did David cut off the corner of Saul's robe? (1 Samuel 24:4. He wanted to show Saul that he could have killed him, but that he chose not to.)
8. Why did David refuse to kill Saul? (1 Samuel 24:4. Even though David knew he would eventually become king, he also knew that Saul was anointed by God to be the first king of Israel, so he respected him. He knew that God could remove him when the time was right. David knew he would become king according to the Lord's timing.)
9. What did David say to Saul when he came out of the cave? (1 Samuel 24:8-15. David confronted Saul and asked why he was listening to men who were spreading lies about him. David pointed out that he could have killed Saul but chose instead to spare his life, thus showing his loyalty to the king.)
10. What was Saul's response to David's plea of innocence? (1 Samuel 24:16. He wept.)
11. What did Saul do when he realized that David did not want to kill him or cause harm to him? (1 Samuel 24:17-22. Saul left David with a blessing and returned home.)

Discussion Questions:

1. What enemy is pursuing us? (1 Samuel 23:14-15) [Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour, (1 Peter 5:8).]
2. How is the Lord able to encourage us even in the hardest times of life? (1 Samuel 23:16-17) [The Lord brought David's good friend Jonathan to encourage him to find strength in God and He brings people alongside of us to do the same.]
3. How else does God deliver us from trials or strengthen us for the trials? (1 Samuel 23:27-29; 24:5-7, 18-20) [He can deliver us through a circumstance like the messenger, or by hiding us, or He can deliver us by "judging between" us correctly. We would be judged guilty because of our sins, but He delivers us through Jesus.]
4. What does it mean for someone to be anointed? (1 Samuel 24:5, 10) [The Lord's anointed is the one that had oil poured over his head by a prophet. Samuel the prophet anointed Saul as the first king and a short time later Samuel anointed David as the next king. To be anointed means that a person is God's chosen.]
5. How does the Lord use difficult times to prepare us for the future? (1 Samuel 24:20) [They grow us in humility, dependence on the Lord, faith in His protection and His provision.]
6. How should we treat our enemies? Should we treat them badly when they treat us badly? (Read Romans 12:17-21, Luke 6:27-28) [We must love our enemies and pray for those that mistreat us. That is how the Lord has treated us. "While we were still sinners, Christ died for us." (Romans 5:8)]
7. Who are our enemies and how can we forgive them? (1 Samuel 24:10, 15) [We can forgive them because God is the final judge. To forgive someone is to return to God the judgment that is His alone.]
8. Did David do the right thing to spare Saul's life? (1 Samuel 24:4) [Yes. David let God be the Judge and did not impatiently kill the one God had anointed as king.]

22. Solomon Asks for Wisdom

1 Kings 3

1 Kings 3

³ Solomon showed his love for the LORD by walking according to the statutes of his father David, except that he offered sacrifices and burned incense on the high places. ⁴ The king went to Gibeon to offer sacrifices, for that was the most important high place, and Solomon offered a thousand burnt offerings on that altar. ⁵ At Gibeon the LORD appeared to Solomon during the night in a dream, and God said, “Ask for whatever you want me to give you.” ⁶ Solomon answered, “You have shown great kindness to your servant, my father David, because he was faithful to you and righteous and upright in heart. You have continued this great kindness to him and have given him a son to sit on his throne this very day. ⁷ Now, O LORD my God, you have made your servant king in place of my father David. But I am only a little child and do not know how to carry out my duties. ⁸ Your servant is here among the people you have chosen, a great people, too numerous to count or number. ⁹ So give your servant a discerning heart to govern your people and to distinguish between right and wrong. For who is able to govern this great people of yours?”

¹⁰ The Lord was pleased that Solomon had asked for this. ¹¹ So God said to him, “Since you have asked for this and not for long life or wealth for yourself, nor have asked for the death of your enemies but for discernment in administering justice, ¹² I will do what you have asked. I will give you a wise and discerning heart, so that there will never have been anyone like you, nor will there ever be. ¹³ Moreover, I will give you what you have not asked for—both riches and honor—so that in your lifetime you will have no equal among kings. ¹⁴ And if you walk in my ways and obey my statutes and commands as David your father did, I will give you a long life.” ¹⁵ Then Solomon awoke—and he realized it had been a dream. He returned to Jerusalem, stood before the ark of the Lord’s covenant and sacrificed burnt offerings and fellowship offerings. Then he gave a feast for all his court.

¹⁶ Now two prostitutes came to the king and stood before him. ¹⁷ One of them said, “My lord, this woman and I live in the same house. I had a baby while she was there with me. ¹⁸ The third day after my child was born, this woman also had a baby. We were alone; there was no one in the house but the two of us. ¹⁹ “During the night this woman’s son died because she lay on him. ²⁰ So she got up in the middle of the night and took my son from my side while I your servant was asleep. She put him

by her breast and put her dead son by my breast. ²¹ The next morning, I got up to nurse my son—and he was dead! But when I looked at him closely in the morning light, I saw that it wasn't the son I had borne.” ²² The other woman said, “No! The living one is my son; the dead one is yours.” But the first one insisted, “No! The dead one is yours; the living one is mine. “And so they argued before the king.

²³ The king said, “This one says, ‘My son is alive and your son is dead,’ while that one says, ‘No! Your son is dead and mine is alive.’” ²⁴ Then the king said, “Bring me a sword.” So they brought a sword for the king. ²⁵ He then gave an order: “Cut the living child in two and give half to one and half to the other.” ²⁶ The woman whose son was alive was filled with compassion for her son and said to the king, “Please, my lord, give her the living baby! Don't kill him!” But the other said, “Neither I nor you shall have him. Cut him in two!” ²⁷ Then the king gave his ruling: “Give the living baby to the first woman. Do not kill him; she is his mother.” ²⁸ When all Israel heard the verdict the king had given, they held the king in awe, because they saw that he had wisdom from God to administer justice.

Study Questions: Solomon asks for Wisdom 1 Kings 3

Introduction:

King David ruled over the land of Israel for 40 years. He was one of the best kings that Israel ever had. When King David was about to die, he chose his son Solomon to reign as the new king in his place. Being the king of Israel gave Solomon great privileges, but it also gave him many great responsibilities. Solomon now had to oversee the empire that was established by his father. Therefore, Solomon asked the Lord for the one thing that he needed to serve as king: wisdom.

Goals:

Knowledge

- To recognize that wisdom is a gift from the Lord and He is the author of the Truth.
- To realize that apart from God's gifts to us we would have no abilities or purpose, but in Him we have these.
- To realize that God wants to give good gifts to His children and He wants to prosper them.

Attitude

- To love justice and honor those that judge well.
- To believe that God is faithful in providing for us, even when we are in great need.

Actions

- To speak the truth, defend the truth, and judge wisely in the responsibilities that God has given to us.

Memory Verses:

1 Kings 3:9 "So give your servant a discerning heart to govern your people and to distinguish between right and wrong. For who is able to govern this great people of yours?"

James 1:5 "If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him."

Scriptures for Further Study:

Proverbs 17:23; 24:23-25; 29:4; 31:8-9; Philippians 2:3-4; James 1:5-8

Questions about the Story:

1. How did Solomon show his love for the Lord? (1 Kings 3:3. Solomon showed his love for the Lord by living according to the principles of his father, King David, who was a man after God's own heart.)

2. What did Solomon go to do at the high place in Gibeon? (1 Kings 3:4. Solomon went to offer sacrifices to God.)
3. How many sacrifices did Solomon offer at Gibeon? (1 Kings 3:4. Solomon offered 1,000 burnt offerings on the altar at Gibeon.)
4. What did God say to Solomon in a dream? (1 Kings 3:5. “Ask for whatever you want me to give you.”)
5. What did Solomon ask for? (1 Kings 3:9. Solomon asked God for “a discerning heart to govern your people and to distinguish between right and wrong.”)
6. Was Solomon’s request pleasing to God? Did God grant his request? (1 Kings 3:10-14. The Lord was delighted in Solomon’s request because his request was not a selfish one to benefit himself, but a request that would help him to lead the people well.)
7. What did God give Solomon that he had not asked for? (1 Kings 3:13. The Lord gave Solomon riches and honor in addition to the wisdom he asked for.)
8. God told Solomon he would have a long life if he did what? (1 Kings 3:14. If he would continue to walk in the ways of the Lord and obey His laws.)
9. What was the case that the two prostitutes brought before Solomon? (1 Kings 3:16-22. One of the prostitutes accused the other of stealing her own living baby boy and replacing it with her own dead one. Both claimed to be the mother of the living son.)
10. How did Solomon determine which of the two women was the mother of the living child? (1 Kings 3:23-27. Solomon ordered that they cut the child in two and give half to one woman and half to the other. The baby’s mother had compassion on her son begged that he not be killed. This revealed her to be the true mother of the child.)
11. What made the people realize that Solomon had been given wisdom from God? (1 Kings 3:28. He was able to properly and precisely administer justice.)

Discussion Questions:

1. What would you ask God for if you were given the choice that Solomon was given?
2. What can we learn from Solomon’s attitude? (1 Kings 3:7-9) [He was a ruler, yet humble enough to realize his weakness and ask God for help to rule well. His request was not selfish. He desired the best for the people and for the Lord.]

3. What can we learn about God's ability and desire to give gifts? (1 Kings 3:5, 10) [The Lord invited Solomon to ask for anything and was pleased when he asked for that which would benefit others. The Lord is able to give anything we ask, but He waits for us to seek Him with pure motives and according to His will. (James 1:5, 4:3)]
4. Where do the abilities that we have come from? (1 Kings 3:7-14) [Everything that we have is a gift from the Lord. Solomon showed that by referring to himself as a servant and the people as God's. He requested discernment from the Lord and the Lord promised to give him riches, honor and a possible long life.]
5. What ways do we also need discerning hearts in our lives? (1 Kings 3:9, 22) [We also need discernment from the Lord in every area of our lives. We need the Lord to show us right from wrong, to settle disputes or govern those under us. Truth comes from God and He is Truth. Jesus is that Truth. (John 14:6)]
6. What do we learn from Solomon's wisdom as he settled the case of the two prostitutes? How do we live that out? (1 Kings 3:16-27) [Solomon wanted to know the truth. He did not give the baby to the woman who gave him the most money or argued the loudest, but he worked to find the baby's true mother (Proverbs 17:23).]
7. What kind of people should we be? What have you learned from this story? [We should be humble and seek to learn what the truth is. We should not be greedy and selfish, only looking for our own gain, but we should defend the poor and needy (Proverbs 31:8-9).]
8. What does it mean to "administer justice" (1 Kings 3:28)? [To judge the people fairly, punishing the wrongdoer and setting the innocent free.]
9. Why is justice important to the Lord? [The Lord loves all people equally and upholds truth and honesty (See Proverbs 24:23-25; 29:4).]

23. Elijah on Mt. Carmel

1 Kings 17 & 18

1 Kings 17

¹ Now Elijah said to Ahab, “As the LORD, the God of Israel, lives, whom I serve, there will be neither dew nor rain in the next few years except at my word.” ² Then the word of the LORD came to Elijah: ³ “Leave here, turn eastward and hide in the Kerith Ravine, east of the Jordan. ⁴ You will drink from the brook, and I have ordered the ravens to feed you there.” ⁵ So he did what the LORD had told him. ⁶ The ravens brought him bread and meat in the morning and bread and meat in the evening, and he drank from the brook.

1 Kings 18

¹ After a long time, in the third year, the word of the LORD came to Elijah: “Go and present yourself to Ahab, and I will send rain on the land.” ² So Elijah went to present himself to Ahab. ¹⁷ When he saw Elijah, he said to him, “Is that you, you troubler of Israel?” ¹⁸ “I have not made trouble for Israel,” Elijah replied. “But you and your father’s family have. You have abandoned the LORD’s commands and have followed the Baals. ¹⁹ Now summon the people from all over Israel to meet me on Mount Carmel. And bring the four hundred and fifty prophets of Baal and the four hundred prophets of Asherah.”

²⁰ So Ahab sent word throughout all Israel and assembled the prophets on Mount Carmel. ²¹ Elijah went before the people and said, “How long will you waver between two opinions? If the LORD is God, follow him; but if Baal is God, follow him.” But the people said nothing. ²² Then Elijah said to them, “I am the only one of the LORD’s prophets left, but Baal has four hundred and fifty prophets. ²³ Get two bulls for us. Let them choose one for themselves, and let them cut it into pieces and put it on the wood but not set fire to it. I will prepare the other bull and put it on the wood but not set fire to it. ²⁴ Then you call on the name of your god, and I will call on the name of the LORD. The god who answers by fire—he is God.” Then all the people said, “What you say is good.”

²⁶ So they took the bull given them and prepared it. Then they called on the name of Baal from morning till noon. “O Baal, answer us!” they shouted. But there was no response; no one answered. And they danced around the altar they had made. ²⁷ At noon Elijah began to taunt them. “Shout louder!” he said. “Surely he is a god! Perhaps he is deep in thought, or busy, or traveling. Maybe he is sleeping and must be awakened.” ²⁸ So they shouted louder and slashed themselves with

swords and spears, as was their custom, until their blood flowed.

²⁹ Midday passed, and they continued their frantic prophesying until the time for the evening sacrifice. But there was no response, no one answered, no one paid attention.

³⁰ Then Elijah said to all the people, “Come here to me.” They came to him, and he repaired the altar of the LORD, which was in ruins ³² and he dug a trench around it large enough to hold two seahs of seed. ³³ He arranged the wood, cut the bull into pieces and laid it on the wood.

Then he said to them, “Fill four large jars with water and pour it on the offering and on the wood.” ³⁴ “Do it again,” he said, and they did it again. “Do it a third time,” he ordered, and they did it the third time.

³⁵ The water ran down around the altar and even filled the trench. ³⁶ At the time of sacrifice, the prophet Elijah stepped forward and prayed: “O LORD, God of Abraham, Isaac and Israel, let it be known today that you are God in Israel and that I am your servant and have done all these things at your command. ³⁷ Answer me, O LORD, answer me, so these people will know that you, O LORD, are God, and that you are turning their hearts back again.” ³⁸ Then the fire of the LORD fell and burned up the sacrifice, the wood, the stones and the soil, and also licked up the water in the trench.

³⁹ When all the people saw this, they fell prostrate and cried, “The LORD—he is God! The LORD—he is God!” ⁴⁰ Then Elijah commanded them, “Seize the prophets of Baal. Don’t let anyone get away!” They seized them, and Elijah had them brought down to the Kishon Valley and slaughtered there. ⁴¹ And Elijah said to Ahab, “Go, eat and drink, for there is the sound of a heavy rain.” ⁴² So Ahab went off to eat and drink, but Elijah climbed to the top of Carmel, bent down to the ground and put his face between his knees. ⁴³ “Go and look toward the sea,” he told his servant. And he went up and looked. “There is nothing there,” he said. Seven times Elijah said, “Go back.” ⁴⁴ The seventh time the servant reported, “A cloud as small as a man’s hand is rising from the sea.” So Elijah said, “Go and tell Ahab, ‘Hitch up your chariot and go down before the rain stops you.’” ⁴⁵ Meanwhile, the sky grew black with clouds, the wind rose, a heavy rain came on and Ahab rode off to Jezreel. ⁴⁶ The power of the LORD came upon Elijah and, tucking his cloak into his belt, he ran ahead of Ahab all the way to Jezreel.

Study Questions: Elijah on Mt. Carmel

1 Kings 18

Introduction:

After Solomon's reign, Israel was divided into two separate nations: the northern kingdom, which kept the name Israel, and the southern kingdom, which was called Judah. Many of the kings of the two nations were very evil, so God sent prophets to speak to them in hope that some people might repent and turn back to Him. Elijah was one of those prophets God sent during this time of rebellion and confusion. He lived during the reign of the wicked king Ahab of the Northern Kingdom. Elijah was a mighty man of God and was used by God to direct many people to the Lord. This contest on Mount Carmel points to a future contest between Satan and Jesus on Mount Golgatha.

Goals:

Knowledge

- To acknowledge that there is no God like the Lord God. His ways are opposite of man's ways.
- To recognize that the battle won on Mount Carmel is parallel to the battle won on the cross. He alone seeks to turn our hearts back again.
- To understand that God is faithful, both in times of blessing and in times of judgment.

Attitude

- To repent of hearts that waver between opinions.
- To fear and love the Lord. He is all-powerful.

Actions

- To return to the Lord's commands.
- To pray to the Lord with faith and confidence.

Memory Verses:

James 5:17-18 "Elijah was a man just like us. He prayed earnestly that it would not rain, and it did not rain on the land for three and a half years. Again he prayed, and the heavens gave rain, and the earth produced its crops."

Scriptures for Further Study:

Exodus 34:14; Matthew 6:24; Hebrews 5:7; Revelation 3:15-16

Questions about the Story:

1. What punishment did Elijah announce to King Ahab? (1 Kings 17:1. That there would be no dew or rain in the next few years.)
2. How did God provide for Elijah during the drought? (1 Kings 17:2-6. The Lord provided for Elijah by leading him to a small stream for water and by sending ravens to bring him bread and meat.)
3. What did Ahab say to Elijah when he saw him again? (1 Kings 18:17. "Is that you, you troubler of Israel?")
4. What did Elijah say was the reason that trouble had come to Israel? (1 Kings 18:18. The trouble had come to Israel because the king and his family had sinned and turned away from the Lord.)
5. How did Elijah rebuke the lifestyle of the people? (1 Kings 18:21. Elijah called out to the people saying, "How long will you waver between two opinions? If the Lord is God, follow Him; but if Baal is God, follow him.")
6. Why was Elijah's contest a good one for determining who was the true God? (1 Kings 18:22-24. Both Baal and God were thought to be powerful. The contest gave both God and Baal the same chance to show their power, and the people would all see who won.)
7. What did the prophets of Baal do to try to get Baal to hear them? (1 Kings 18:26-29. They shouted loud and danced wildly around the altar. When that didn't work, they slashed themselves with swords and spears until their blood flowed.)
8. Why did the 450 prophets of Baal fail to get Baal to produce fire for them? (1 Kings 18:26-29. The prophets of Baal failed to receive fire because the Lord God is the only true God.)
9. Why did Elijah dig a trench around the altar and pour water over the sacrifice? (1 Kings 18:30-35. He wanted there to be no doubt about how powerful God is, and that the fire that fell was truly from Him.)
10. What happened after Elijah prayed? (1 Kings 18:36-38. After Elijah prayed, the Lord sent down fire from heaven that burned up everything: the altar, the sacrifice, and even the water in the trench)
11. What was the response of the people who saw this happen? (1 Kings 18:39. The people fell flat on the ground and cried: The Lord, He is God.)

12. What happened to the 450 prophets of Baal? (1 Kings 18:40. The prophets of Baal were killed.)
13. How many times did Elijah pray for the rains before they came? (1 Kings 18:43. Elijah prayed seven times for the rain to come.)
14. Once the rain came in its fury, what did Elijah do by the power of the Lord? (1 Kings 18:46. Elijah tucked his cloak into his belt, and ran ahead of Ahab's chariot all the way to Jezreel.)

Discussion Questions:

1. Why did God send the long drought on Israel? (1 Kings 18:18, 37; see also Exodus 34:14) God sent the drought because Israel had abandoned the Lord's commands and followed after Baal. Verse 37 says that He was "turning their hearts back again."]
2. The people "wavered between two opinions." What does this mean? (1 Kings 18:21) [They would worship God, but then they would also go back and worship Baal. They were trying to serve God and Baal at the same time. The two opinions were that they believed in the Lord Almighty, but they also thought they needed to worship the local gods. They didn't believe in God enough to trust Him alone.]
3. What is God's response when we try to serve Him and another god as well? What is our response? (Matthew 6:24; Revelation 3:15-16) [God hates it when we go after other gods, not only considering it sin, but also letting it bring destruction into our lives. We must repent of any double-minded thoughts.]
4. How did the Lord display His power in dramatic ways? What response does that call for? [He allowed for 3 years of drought, ravens to feed Elisha, fire that burned the water, the heavy rain AND the hearts of the crowd turning back to God. We must fear and love God above all other gods.]
5. How can we know whether God will do what He says He will do as seen in this story? [The drought was as He said it would be, He provided food for Elisha, He sent down the fire and He sent the rain.]
6. How will people today realize that the Lord is the true God and begin to worship him instead of man's idols? [They must see that the Lord God is powerful and can change lives. He is able to do more than we could ever expect, but other gods do not satisfy the true desires of a person's heart.]

7. How does the battle at Mount Carmel parallel the battle on the cross at Golgotha. (1 Kings 18:37-39) [The battle for the hearts of people was at stake. The unbelief at Mount Carmel cost the life of a bull and the fire of God consumed the offering. The unbelief on Mount Golgotha cost the life of Jesus and the wrath of God was satisfied. Both times, Satan and his demons were defeated and the hearts of the people were turned back to God.]
8. What do we learn from Elijah about the power of prayer? (James 5:17-18) [We learn that the Lord listens to those who call to Him. He receives glory when He answers our prayers and provides for us.]

24. Elisha Blinds the Arameans

2 Kings 6:8-23

2 Kings 6

⁸ Now the king of Aram was at war with Israel. After conferring with his officers, he said, "I will set up my camp in such and such a place."

⁹ The man of God sent word to the king of Israel: "Beware of passing that place, because the Arameans are going down there." ¹⁰ So the king of Israel checked on the place indicated by the man of God. Time and again Elisha warned the king, so that he was on his guard in such places.

¹¹ This enraged the king of Aram. He summoned his officers and demanded of them, "Will you not tell me which of us is on the side of the king of Israel?"

¹² "None of us, my lord the king," said one of his officers, "but Elisha, the prophet who is in Israel, tells the king of Israel the very words you speak in your bedroom."

¹³ "Go, find out where he is," the king ordered, "so I can send men and capture him." The report came back: "He is in Dothan." ¹⁴ Then he sent horses and chariots and a strong force there. They went by night and surrounded the city.

¹⁵ When the servant of the man of God got up and went out early the next morning, an army with horses and chariots had surrounded the city. "Oh, my lord, what shall we do?" the servant asked.

¹⁶ "Don't be afraid," the prophet answered. "Those who are with us are more than those who are with them." ¹⁷ And Elisha prayed, "O LORD, open his eyes so he may see." Then the LORD opened the servant's eyes, and he looked and saw the hills full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha.

¹⁸ As the enemy came down toward him, Elisha prayed to the LORD, "Strike these people with blindness." So he struck them with blindness, as Elisha had asked.

¹⁹ Elisha told them, "This is not the road and this is not the city. Follow me, and I will lead you to the man you are looking for." And he led them to Samaria.

²⁰ After they entered the city, Elisha said, "LORD, open the eyes of these men so they can see." Then the LORD opened their eyes and they looked, and there they were, inside Samaria.

²¹ When the king of Israel saw them, he asked Elisha, "Shall I kill them, my father? Shall I kill them?"

²² “Do not kill them,” he answered. “Would you kill men you have captured with your own sword or bow? Set food and water before them so that they may eat and drink and then go back to their master.”

²³ So he prepared a great feast for them, and after they had finished eating and drinking, he sent them away, and they returned to their master. So the bands from Aram stopped raiding Israel’s territory.

Study Questions: Elisha Blinds the Arameans

2 Kings 6

Introduction:

Elisha was trained by Elijah until Elijah was taken to heaven. Then Elisha became the prophet who spoke God's messages in the Northern Kingdom of Israel. Elisha received a double portion of the Holy Spirit, who had given power to Elijah. The Holy Spirit led him, gave him understanding, and gave him power to do miracles. Elisha did many mighty things for the Lord, even though his own life was often in danger. He gave glory to the Lord in everything that he did and he taught the people about the grace and mercy of the Lord. That grace and mercy of the Lord comes to us as well through the cross.

Goals:

Knowledge

- To realize that God is able to protect us from our enemies in any situation we may face.
- To understand that God's presence is all around us and His power is greater than the physical or spiritual world.

Attitude

- To be confident in the Lord God Almighty.
- To trust in God's mercy to forgive us.

Actions

- To be kind to our enemies and show them the mercy of Jesus that we have received.
- To live without fear of what the world or the devil might do to us.

Memory Verse:

Psalm 46:1 "God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble."

Scriptures for Further Study:

Luke 6:27-28; Ephesians 6:10-12; James 4:7; 1 John 4:4

Questions about the Story:

1. What was the relationship between Aram and Israel during this time? (2 Kings 6:8. Aram was a country that was at war with Israel.)
2. What made the King of Aram so angry? (2 Kings 6:11. The king of Aram was angry because every time he tried to make a surprise attack on the Israelites, they were warned of his plan

and did not fall into his trap. The king thought one of his officials was helping Israel by sharing battle information with them.)

3. What did the officials tell the King of Aram when he demanded to know who was helping Israel? (2 Kings 6:12. The officials told him that Elisha, the prophet in Israel, told the king of Israel everything, even the words spoken in his own bedroom.)
4. What did the King of Aram decide to do to Elisha? (2 Kings 6:13-14. The king decided to send men to capture him.)
5. What kind of military force did the king send to capture Elisha? (2 Kings 6:14. A strong army of horses and chariots.)
6. Why wasn't Elisha afraid of the large army that had come to capture him? (2 Kings 6:15-17) [He was aware that God also had His army surrounding him, and that God's army was much stronger than the army that the King of Aram had sent.]
7. What happened when Elisha asked God to open the servant's eyes? (2 Kings 6:16-17. The servant was able to see the armies of God that were there to protect Elisha – God's horses and chariots of fire.)
8. How did God save Elisha from the army? (2 Kings 6:18. The Lord saved Elisha by answering his prayer and blinding those who had come to capture him.)
9. Where did Elisha lead the horses and chariots of Aram that had come to capture him? (2 Kings 6:19-20. Elisha led them to the city of Samaria in Israel.)
10. What did Elisha tell the King of Israel to do with the soldiers he had captured? (2 Kings 6:21-22. Elisha told the king not to kill them, but rather to give them food and water and then send them back to their master.)
11. What was the result of the kindness that the King of Israel showed to the Arameans that day? (2 Kings 6:23. The bands from Aram stopped raiding Israel's territory.)

Discussion Questions:

1. In what ways do you feel like you are surrounded or threatened by an attacking enemy?
2. What is our tendency when we see an enemy surrounding us? What should our response be? (2 Kings 6:15) [Although our natural response may be one of fear, 'what shall we do?' we must cry out to the Lord. He is the One who can save us.]
3. How can we be confident of God's presence all around us when we face enemies? (2 Kings 6:15-17) [We can be

confident that the God who made all things is greater than all things. The one who knows where the enemy hides can protect us from that same enemy. We can be reminded of His presence through the many stories in the Bible.]

4. How can we trust with certainty in the Lord when problems come to us like they did to Elisha? (2 Kings 6:16) [We can be sure that there are more on the Lord's side than there are on the side of our enemy. We can also be confident that the Lord our God is listening to us as we pray to Him and we can be sure that the one who died for us will show mercy beyond what Elisha showed the Arameans.]
5. How can we be prepared to fight the spiritual forces that oppose us, the servants of God, who do His work? (Ephesians 6:10-12) [We must be strong in the Lord and not in our own strength. Even the physical battles of this world have a spiritual side to them. The Lord is God over both sides!]
6. How should we treat our enemies? (Luke 6:27-28) [We should love our enemies and show them kindness.]

25. Isaiah

Isaiah 6; 53

Isaiah 6

¹ In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord seated on a throne, high and exalted, and the train of his robe filled the temple. ² Above him were seraphs, each with six wings: With two wings they covered their faces, with two they covered their feet, and with two they were flying. ³ And they were calling to one another: “Holy, holy, holy is the LORD Almighty; the whole earth is full of his glory.” ⁴ At the sound of their voices the doorposts and thresholds shook and the temple was filled with smoke. ⁵ “Woe to me!” I cried. “I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips, and my eyes have seen the King, the LORD Almighty.” ⁶ Then one of the seraphs flew to me with a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with tongs from the altar. ⁷ With it he touched my mouth and said, “See, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away and your sin atoned for.”

⁸ Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, “Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?” And I said, “Here am I. Send me!” ⁹ He said, “Go and tell this people: “Be ever hearing, but never understanding; be ever seeing, but never perceiving.” ¹⁰ Make the heart of this people calloused; make their ears dull and close their eyes. Otherwise they might see with their eyes, hear with their ears, understand with their hearts, and turn and be healed.” ¹¹ Then I said, “For how long, O Lord?” And he answered: “Until the cities lie ruined and without inhabitant, until the houses are left deserted and the fields ruined and ravaged, ¹² until the LORD has sent everyone far away and the land is utterly forsaken. ¹³ And though a tenth remains in the land, it will again be laid waste. But as the terebinth and oak leave stumps when they are cut down, so the holy seed will be the stump in the land.”

Isaiah 53

² He grew up before him like a tender shoot, and like a root out of dry ground. He had no beauty or majesty to attract us to him, nothing in his appearance that we should desire him. ³ He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows, and familiar with suffering. Like one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not. ⁴ Surely he took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows, yet we considered him stricken by God, smitten by him, and afflicted. ⁵ But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed.

⁶We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all. ⁷He was oppressed and afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth; he was led like a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth. ⁸By oppression and judgment he was taken away. And who can speak of his descendants? For he was cut off from the land of the living; for the transgression of my people he was stricken. ⁹He was assigned a grave with the wicked and with the rich in his death, though he had done no violence, nor was any deceit in his mouth.

¹⁰Yet it was the LORD's will to crush him and cause him to suffer, and though the LORD makes his life a guilt offering, he will see his offspring and prolong his days, and the will of the LORD will prosper in his hand. ¹¹After the suffering of his soul, he will see the light of life and be satisfied; by his knowledge my righteous servant will justify many, and he will bear their iniquities. ¹²Therefore I will give him a portion among the great, and he will divide the spoils with the strong, because he poured out his life unto death, and was numbered with the transgressors. For he bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.

Study Questions: Isaiah

Isaiah 6; 53

Introduction:

Isaiah was one of the prophets who ministered to the people in the Southern Kingdom (Judah) in the years before the Babylonians conquered them. He preached a message of repentance, comfort and hope. He told people to repent to avoid the coming destruction, He comforted them with the fact that God would be with them and he promised them that the Messiah would come to save them. Even though Isaiah lived 700 years before Christ, he accurately described Christ's birth by a virgin and Christ's suffering to pay for the sins of all mankind. Isaiah did not do this by his own strength or power, but by the Lord speaking through Him.

Goals:

Knowledge

- To acknowledge that standing before a holy God leaves us ruined like Isaiah, yet the Lord can still cleanse us.
- To understand that God sent His Son to take the punishment for our sins by His wounds we are healed.
- To see that the calling of the Lord comes from Him and He alone can prepare us for that calling.
- To realize that the Lord has been preparing for our salvation and told us it was coming through Isaiah.

Attitude

- To stand in awe of the holiness of God.
- To praise the Lord for taking the punishment that we deserved upon Himself.

Actions

- To repent of our sins that caused Jesus death.
- To respond to His call and go wherever he sends us.

Memory Verses:

Isaiah 53:12 "Therefore I will give him a portion among the great, and he will divide the spoils with the strong, because he poured out his life unto death, and was numbered with the transgressors. For he bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors."

Hebrews 10:19-22 "Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain, that is, his body, and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith."

Scriptures for Further Study:

Romans 5:1, 19; 8:1; 10:14-15; 1 Timothy 1:15; Hebrews 10; 1 Peter 3:15

Questions about the Story:

1. How did Isaiah describe the seraphs that he saw in his vision? (Isaiah 6:2. The seraphs in Isaiah's vision each had six wings. With two they covered their faces, with two they flew, and with two they covered their feet.)
2. What were the seraphs saying as they flew before the throne of God? (Isaiah 6:3. They were singing and crying out, "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty.")
3. What was Isaiah's response when he realized he had seen the Lord? (Isaiah 6:5. Isaiah said, "Woe to me! I am ruined, for I am a man of unclean lips and my eyes have seen the King, the Lord Almighty." In the presence of a Holy God, our sins cannot be hidden.)
4. What questions did God ask? (Isaiah 6:8. "Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?") What was Isaiah's response? (Verse 8: Isaiah said, "Here am I, send me.")
5. Would the people listen to Isaiah's message? (Isaiah 6:9-12. No, they would not listen to him and would end up being punished by God.)
6. What was God's answer to Isaiah's question, "How long (should I preach)?" (Isaiah 6:11-12. Isaiah was to preach the Word to the people until the land had been destroyed and the people were carried away.)
7. What hope was given to Isaiah together with the heavy message he was being asked to preach? (Isaiah 6:13. The tree would be cut down, but the holy seed (the future birth of the Messiah) would be like a stump that would remain and grow again.)
8. Isaiah 53 is a prophecy about a living branch that would grow from the dead stump of Israel. This branch represents Jesus, the Messiah, who would be born many years later. What kind of a man was he, as described here? (Isaiah 53:2-3. The man described had no physical beauty or majesty; he was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows.)
9. What did this man take onto himself for us? (Isaiah 53:3. He took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows.)
10. What was going to happen to this man because of our sins and iniquities upon this man? (Isaiah 53:4-5. Because of our sins,

He was to be smitten by God, pierced for our transgressions, and crushed by our guilt. As a result of His suffering we receive peace.)

11. How was our sinfulness described in this passage? (Isaiah 53:6. We all like sheep have gone astray, each to his own way.)
12. How was he like a lamb? (Isaiah 53:7. He was led away to be slaughtered like a lamb going to be sacrificed, yet He remained silent.)
13. Why was He treated in such a terrible way? (Isaiah 53:6, 10. It was the Lord's will to crush Him to pay for all our iniquities that were heaped on Him.)
14. What wrong had this man done? (Isaiah 53:9. No wrong was found in Him. He had done no violence and had not deceived anyone.)
15. What will His death accomplish? (Isaiah 53:11-12. He will justify many and make intercession for their transgressions.)

Discussion Questions:

1. God is described as holy. What does holy mean? [Set apart, sacred; God is separated from all other beings by His infinite being, perfections, wisdom, power, justice, love, goodness and truth, the glory of which fill the earth.]
2. Like the seraphs that sang praises in the presence of the Lord, what response can we have as we encounter the glory of the Lord? (Isaiah 6:3) [Our response can be one of adoration and praise, giving Him the glory from our life and actions.]
3. When we stand before a Holy God, what does that show about ourselves? (Isaiah 6:5) [In the presence of a holy God, we like Isaiah would have to cry out, "Woe is me. I am ruined." We can only confess our sins and repent of our way of life.]
4. Is God still asking the question, "Who will go for us?" today? (Isaiah 6:8) [Yes! God is still seeking people who will go and tell others of the good news – Romans 10:14-15.]
5. Does our sharing the message of God depend on the response of the people who hear? (Isaiah 6:8-12) [No, our responsibility is to share and proclaim the Word of the Lord at all times and in all seasons no matter what the response.]
6. What does the living branch mean for us today? (Isaiah 6:13; 53:2) [The stump which was dead came back to life. It is a picture of Jesus coming out of Israel, but it is also a picture of Jesus coming up out of our lives. The same one that was prophesied, who took our sins, now lives in us.]

7. What does the work of the suffering servant described in Isaiah 53 mean for us? [It means that Jesus would suffer and be despised by men for us. He would carry our sins upon Himself and by His wounds we would be healed. The punishment that we deserved, He took.]
8. What is meant by these words found in Isaiah 53:5, “The punishment that brought us peace was upon Him.” [Because of the punishment that Jesus took, I am forgiven of my sins and at peace with God – Romans 5:1.]
9. How do we see the fulfillment of Isaiah’s prophecy in Jesus’ suffering? [He was pierced (Isaiah 53:5; John 19:34), He did not open His mouth (Isaiah 53:7; John 19:9), He had committed no sin (Isaiah 53:9; 1 John 3:5), He will justify many (Isaiah 53:11; Romans 5:19.)
10. “He bore the sins of many” (Isaiah 53:12). What kind of hope does this bring for us? [We can be forgiven of our sins because Jesus took them upon Himself on the cross!]
11. How should we respond to Jesus in light of what He has done for us? [Believe in Him and live a life for Him by telling others of such a great salvation. Like Isaiah we can say, “Here am I, send me.” See Matthew 22:37-38.]

26. Daniel and the Lions

Daniel 6

Daniel 6

¹ It pleased Darius to appoint 120 satraps to rule throughout the kingdom, ² with three administrators over them, one of whom was Daniel. ³ Now Daniel so distinguished himself among the administrators and the satraps by his exceptional qualities that the king planned to set him over the whole kingdom. ⁴ At this, the administrators and the satraps tried to find grounds for charges against Daniel in his conduct of government affairs, but they were unable to do so. They could find no corruption in him, because he was trustworthy and neither corrupt nor negligent. ⁵ Finally these men said, “We will never find any basis for charges against this man Daniel unless it has something to do with the law of his God.”

⁶ So the administrators and the satraps went as a group to the king and said: “O King Darius, live forever! ⁷ The royal administrators, prefects, satraps, advisers and governors have all agreed that the king should issue an edict and enforce the decree that anyone who prays to any god or man during the next thirty days, except to you, O king, shall be thrown into the lions’ den. ⁸ Now, O king, issue the decree and put it in writing so that it cannot be altered.” ⁹ So King Darius put the decree in writing.

¹⁰ Now when Daniel learned that the decree had been published, he went home to his upstairs room where the windows opened toward Jerusalem. Three times a day he got down on his knees and prayed, giving thanks to his God, just as he had done before. ¹¹ Then these men went as a group and found Daniel praying and asking God for help. ¹² So they went to the king and spoke to him about his royal decree: “Did you not publish a decree that during the next thirty days anyone who prays to any god or man except to you, O king, would be thrown into the lions’ den?” The king answered, “The decree stands.” ¹³ Then they said to the king, “Daniel, who is one of the exiles from Judah, pays no attention to you, O king, or to the decree you put in writing. He still prays three times a day.” ¹⁴ When the king heard this, he was greatly distressed; he was determined to rescue Daniel and made every effort until sundown to save him. ¹⁵ Then the men went as a group to the king and said to him, “Remember, O king, that no decree or edict that the king issues can be changed.”

¹⁶ So the king gave the order, and they brought Daniel and threw him into the lions' den. The king said to Daniel, "May your God, whom you serve continually, rescue you!" ¹⁷ A stone was brought and placed over the mouth of the den, and the king sealed it with his own signet ring and with the rings of his nobles, so that Daniel's situation might not be changed. ¹⁸ Then the king returned to his palace and spent the night without eating and without any entertainment being brought to him. And he could not sleep. ¹⁹ At the first light of dawn, the king got up and hurried to the lions' den. ²⁰ When he came near the den, he called to Daniel in an anguished voice, "Daniel, servant of the living God, has your God, whom you serve continually, been able to rescue you from the lions?" ²¹ Daniel answered, "O king, live forever! ²² My God sent his angel, and he shut the mouths of the lions. They have not hurt me, because I was found innocent in his sight. Nor have I ever done any wrong before you, O king." ²³ The king was overjoyed and gave orders to lift Daniel out of the den. And when Daniel was lifted from the den, no wound was found on him, because he had trusted in his God. ²⁴ At the king's command, the men who had falsely accused Daniel were brought in and thrown into the lions' den, along with their wives and children. And before they reached the floor of the den, the lions overpowered them and crushed all their bones.

²⁵ Then King Darius wrote to all the peoples, nations and men of every language throughout the land: "May you prosper greatly! ²⁶ "I issue a decree that in every part of my kingdom people must fear and reverence the God of Daniel. For he is the living God and he endures forever; his kingdom will not be destroyed, his dominion will never end. ²⁷ He rescues and he saves; he performs signs and wonders in the heavens and on the earth. He has rescued Daniel from the power of the lions." ²⁸ So Daniel prospered during the reign of Darius.

Study Questions: Daniel and the Lions

Daniel 6

Introduction:

Daniel, as a young boy, was taken to Babylon when Nebuchadnezzar conquered the Southern Kingdom of Judah. He entered Nebuchadnezzar's service and quickly became a well-respected leader as he followed the Word of the Lord. Daniel also served under King Belshazzar and King Darius. Throughout all of his involvement with the governments of Babylon and Persia, Daniel remained faithful to the Lord. The testimony of Daniel's life was that he had an unwavering faith in the Lord and that God repeatedly saved him.

Goals:

Knowledge

- To remember that God is the living God who rescues and saves. That is the purpose of the cross.
- To understand that we do not need to fear people, because they have no power over us. God is the only one to fear.

Attitude

- To trust in the Lord in the lion's den of this world.
- To be trustworthy and honest so God will be glorified through our lives.

Actions

- To pray for the Lord's protection and for His glory.
- To work as for the Lord and not for men.
- To be a living testimony of God's greatness so that others will see, hear and know Him.

Memory Verse:

Psalm 18:3 "I call to the LORD, who is worthy of praise, and I am saved from my enemies."

Scriptures for Further Study:

Joshua 1:9; Proverbs 11:20-21; Acts 27:1– 28:16

Questions about the Story

1. What was Daniel's reputation? (Daniel 6:4, 16. He had exceptional qualities. He was trustworthy, honest and diligent. He was devoted to the Lord and served Him faithfully.)
2. Why did the other administrators and satraps try to bring charges against Daniel? (Daniel 6:3-4. They were jealous of Daniel because the king planned to set him over the whole

- kingdom. He planned to do this because of Daniel's character; he was much better than any of the other administrators.)
3. Why did the other administrators fail when they tried to bring charges against Daniel? (Daniel 6:4. They were unable to find any corruption in him; he was trustworthy, honest, and diligent in his work.)
 4. After failing to find fault in Daniel's character, what plan did Daniel's enemies make to arrest him? (Daniel 6:5-9. They planned to bring charges against Daniel by means of Daniel's devotion to God. Knowing that Daniel prayed to the Lord, they encouraged the king to make a decree that for 30 days, no man was to pray to any god or man except to the king.)
 5. Daniel did not fight corruption with corruption. What did Daniel do when he learned of the decree of the king forbidding him to pray? (Daniel 6:10. According to his custom, he went right back to praying and trusted God to protect him.)
 6. What did the satraps report to the king about Daniel's behavior? (Daniel 6:13. The satraps reported that Daniel disregarded the king's orders and continued to pray three times a day in order to get Daniel thrown to the lions.)
 7. What was the king's response when he found out that Daniel was still devoted to prayer? Why? (Daniel 6:3, 14. The king was greatly distressed and tried to find a way to rescue Daniel. He respected Daniel and had plans to give him a position over the whole kingdom.)
 8. What did the king say to Daniel when they threw him into the lions' den? (Daniel 6:16. "May your God, whom you serve continually, rescue you.")
 9. How did God rescue Daniel from the lions? (Daniel 6:21-22. God sent an angel to shut the mouths of the lions.)
 10. Why was Daniel saved from the lions? (Daniel 6:23. Daniel was saved from the lions because he was found innocent and he trusted in God.)
 11. What happened to the men who wanted to kill Daniel? (Daniel 6:24. They were thrown into the lions' den, along with their families, and the lions crushed them before they even reached the floor of the den.)
 12. Did Darius have faith in God? (Daniel 6:7-9, 26. In the beginning he did not because he issued a decree commanding the people to pray to him, but in the end, he issued a new decree commanding the people to fear and reverence the God of Daniel.)

13. What caused Darius to put his faith in God? (Daniel 6:23-24. He saw God's power to protect Daniel from the hungry lions.)

Discussion Questions

1. **Personal Questions:** What is your reputation? What kind of a man / woman are you? How do the people talk about you? Are you trustworthy and without corruption? What do people know about your relationship with God? Can people tell you're a Christian or do they have to ask you first?
2. How does a person get a reputation like Daniel? (Daniel 6:10-11) [It comes from God. He is the one that gave Daniel the fear of God and the desire for prayer. He gave Daniel a humble and thankful heart, which knew that the Lord was his source of help.]
3. What options do we have when laws or people plot against us? (Daniel 6:10, 21-22) [We can like Daniel continue to trust in the Lord and pray to him. We can be a living testimony of faith in action. We can praise the Lord who saves us.]
4. How can we like Daniel show respect for the authorities over us, but continue to trust in God above all things. (Daniel 6:10, 21) [We can recognize that God is King over all Kings and He alone rescues and saves us from all things.]
5. What lion's dens, or fearful places where faith is tested, do we face? (Daniel 6:4) [Like Daniel we can be tested by people around us who desire to harm us or by situations in our own lives. We can be tempted with unlawful governmental affairs, corruption and negligence. We can also be tested in the degree of our faith in God, our attitude toward authority, our own positions of authority and our reputation.]
6. In what ways does God's hand protect us in our lives? (Daniel 6:22, 6:3) [God saves us from sin, which would lead to death for everyone of us. He can also shut the mouths of people intent to harm us, cause our work to be of exceptional quality, and the testimony of our life to be pure.]
7. How can our lives bring glory to God like Daniel's? (Daniel 6:26-27) [Our lives bring glory to God when we fear and reverence the Lord, when we recognize Him as the living God, when our lives are about His kingdom and dominion, when we point to the salvation that He has done and when we point to the wonder of His world.]

27. Esther

Esther 2-7

Esther 2

²¹ During the time Mordecai was sitting at the king's gate two of the king's officers who guarded the doorway became angry and conspired to assassinate King Xerxes. ²² But Mordecai found out about the plot and told Queen Esther, who in turn reported it to the king, giving credit to Mordecai. ²³ And when the report was investigated and found to be true, the two officials were hanged on a gallows. All this was recorded in the book of the annals in the presence of the king.

Esther 3

¹ After these events, King Xerxes honored Haman, elevating him and giving him a seat of honor higher than that of all the other nobles. ² All the royal officials at the king's gate knelt down and paid honor to Haman, for the king had commanded this concerning him. But Mordecai would not kneel down or pay him honor. ⁵ When Haman saw that Mordecai would not kneel down or pay him honor, he was enraged. ⁶ Yet having learned who Mordecai's people were, he scorned the idea of killing only Mordecai. Instead Haman looked for a way to destroy all Mordecai's people, the Jews, throughout the whole kingdom of Xerxes. ⁸ Then Haman said to King Xerxes, "There is a certain people dispersed and scattered among the peoples in all the provinces of your kingdom who do not obey the king's laws; it is not in the king's best interest to tolerate them. ⁹ If it pleases the king, let a decree be issued to destroy them, and I will put ten thousand talents of silver into the royal treasury." ¹¹ "Keep the money," the king said to Haman, "and do with the people as you please." ¹³ A decree was sent by couriers to all the king's provinces with the order to destroy, kill and annihilate all the Jews—young and old, women and little children—on a single day, the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, and to plunder their goods.

Esther 4

¹ When Mordecai learned of all that had been done, he tore his clothes, put on sackcloth and ashes, and went out into the city, wailing loudly. ⁸ He sent *a messenger with* a copy of the text of the edict for their annihilation to show to Esther, and he told him to urge her to go into the king's presence to beg for mercy and plead with him for her people. ¹⁰ After the messenger reported everything, Esther instructed him to say to Mordecai, ¹¹ "All the king's officials know that for any man or woman who approaches the king without being summoned the king has but one law: that he be put to death. The only exception to this is for the king to extend the gold scepter to him and spare his life. But thirty days have passed since I was called to go to the king." ¹² When Esther's words were reported to Mordecai, ¹³ he sent back this answer: "Do not think that because you are in the king's house you alone of all the Jews will escape. ¹⁴ For if you remain silent at this time, relief and deliverance for the Jews will arise from another place, but you and your father's family will perish. And who knows but that you have come to royal position for such a time as this?" ¹⁵ Then Esther sent this reply to Mordecai: ¹⁶ "Go, gather together all the Jews

who are in Susa, and fast for me. Do not eat or drink for three days, night or day. I and my maids will fast as you do. When this is done, I will go to the king, even though it is against the law. And if I perish, I perish.”¹⁷ So Mordecai went away and carried out all of Esther’s instructions.

Esther 5

¹ On the third day Esther put on her royal robes and stood in the inner court of the palace. ² When the king saw Queen Esther standing in the court, he was pleased with her and held out to her the gold scepter that was in his hand. So Esther approached and touched the tip of the scepter. ³ Then the king asked, “What is it, Queen Esther? What is your request? Even up to half the kingdom, it will be given you.” ⁴ “If it pleases the king,” replied Esther, “let the king, together with Haman, come today to a banquet I have prepared for him.” ⁵ “Bring Haman at once,” the king said, “so that we may do what Esther asks.” So the king and Haman went to the banquet Esther had prepared. ⁶ As they were drinking wine, the king again asked Esther, “Now what is your petition? It will be given you. And what is your request? Even up to half the kingdom, it will be granted.” ⁷ Esther replied, “My petition and my request is this: ⁸ Let the king and Haman come tomorrow to the banquet I will prepare for them. Then I will answer the king’s question.” ⁹ Haman went out that day happy and in high spirits. But when he saw Mordecai at the king’s gate and observed that he neither rose nor showed fear in his presence, he was filled with rage against Mordecai. ¹⁰ Nevertheless, Haman restrained himself and went home. Calling together his friends and Zeresh, his wife, ¹¹ Haman boasted to them about his vast wealth, his many sons, and all the ways the king had honored him and how he had elevated him above the other nobles. ¹² “And that’s not all,” Haman added. “I’m the only person Queen Esther invited to accompany the king to the banquet she gave. And she has invited me along with the king tomorrow. ¹³ But all this gives me no satisfaction as long as I see that Jew Mordecai sitting at the king’s gate.” ¹⁴ His wife Zeresh and all his friends said to him, “Have a gallows built, seventy-five feet high, and ask the king in the morning to have Mordecai hanged on it. Then go with the king to the dinner and be happy.” This suggestion delighted Haman, and he had the gallows built.

Esther 6

¹ That night the king could not sleep; so he ordered the book of the chronicles, the record of his reign, to be brought in and read to him. ² It was found recorded there that Mordecai had exposed two of the king’s officers who guarded the doorway, who had conspired to assassinate King Xerxes. ³ “What honor and recognition has Mordecai received for this?” the king asked. “Nothing has been done for him,” his attendants answered. ⁴ The king said, “Who is in the court?” Now Haman had just entered the outer court of the palace to speak to the king about hanging Mordecai on the gallows he had erected for him. ⁵ His attendants answered, “Haman is standing in the court.” “Bring him in,” the king ordered. ⁶ When Haman entered, the king asked him, “What should be done for the man the king delights to honor?” Now Haman thought to himself, “Who is there that the king would rather honor than me?” ⁷ So he answered the king, “For the man the king delights to honor, ⁸ have them bring a royal robe the king has worn and

a horse the king has ridden. ⁹ Then let the robe and horse be entrusted to one of the king's most noble princes. Let them robe him, and lead him on the horse through the city streets, proclaiming before him, "This is what is done for the man the king delights to honor!" ¹⁰ "Go at once," the king commanded Haman. "Get the robe and the horse and do just as you have suggested for Mordecai the Jew, who sits at the king's gate. Do not neglect anything you have recommended." ¹¹ So Haman got the robe and the horse. He robed Mordecai, and led him on horseback through the city streets, proclaiming before him, "This is what is done for the man the king delights to honor!" ¹² Afterward Mordecai returned to the king's gate. But Haman rushed home, with his head covered in grief, ¹³ and told Zeresh his wife and all his friends everything that had happened to him. His advisers and his wife Zeresh said to him, "Since Mordecai, before whom your downfall has started, is a Jew, you cannot stand against him—you will surely come to ruin!" ¹⁴ While they were still talking with him, the king's eunuchs arrived and hurried Haman away to the banquet Esther had prepared.

Esther 7

¹ So the king and Haman went to dine with Queen Esther, ² and as they were drinking wine on that second day, the king again asked, "Queen Esther, what is your petition? It will be given you. What is your request? Even up to half the kingdom, it will be granted." ³ Then Queen Esther answered, "If I have found favor with you, O king, and if it pleases your majesty, grant me my life—this is my petition. And spare my people—this is my request. ⁴ For I and my people have been sold for destruction and slaughter and annihilation." ⁵ King Xerxes asked Queen Esther, "Who is he? Where is the man who has dared to do such a thing?" ⁶ Esther said, "The adversary and enemy is this vile Haman." Then Haman was terrified before the king and queen. ⁷ The king got up in a rage, left his wine and went out into the palace garden. But Haman, realizing that the king had already decided his fate, stayed behind to beg Queen Esther for his life. ⁸ Just as the king returned from the palace garden to the banquet hall, Haman was falling on the couch where Esther was reclining. The king exclaimed, "Will he even molest the queen while she is with me in the house?" ⁹ Then one of the eunuchs attending the king said, "A gallows seventy-five feet high stands by Haman's house. He had it made for Mordecai, who spoke up to help the king." The king said, "Hang him on it!" ¹⁰ So they hanged Haman on the gallows he had prepared for Mordecai. Then the king's fury subsided. *The edict commanding the destruction of the Jews was reversed and a day of mourning became a day of great celebration for the Jews.*

Study Questions: Esther

Esther 2-7

Introduction:

Nebuchadnezzar, King of Babylon, conquered the Southern Kingdom (Judah) and most of the Israelites (or Jews) were taken to Babylon as captives. One of those captives was Mordecai, who grew up as a Jew in Babylon. Different kings came and went, and after 70 years the Persians conquered Babylon. They allowed the Jews to return to Israel, but many still stayed in Babylon. Mordecai was one who stayed there. He adopted his young cousin Esther after both of her parents died (2:5-7). Esther became a very beautiful young woman and was chosen by King Xerxes to become his queen. Esther discovered that the Lord had put her in the position of queen for a much greater purpose than she could ever have imagined. She became the one to intercede to the King on behalf of the people even as Jesus intercedes on our behalf.

Goals:

Knowledge

- To consider that we all have a death warrant set for our lives, but because Jesus interceded on our behalf, we are saved.
- To understand that God puts people into positions of honor and brings them down as well. He opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble.

Attitude

- To be humble, honest and faithful in the positions where God places us so that we may bring Him glory.
- To trust in His perfect timing of the circumstances of our lives.

Actions

- To believe in God alone instead of trusting in people.
- To speak against and oppose evil in a respectful way.

Memory Verse:

Proverbs 16:5 “The LORD detests all the proud of heart. Be sure of this: They will not go unpunished.”

Scriptures for Further Study:

Genesis 50:20; 1 Peter 5:5

Questions about the Story:

1. What did Mordecai discover that was reported to King Xerxes? (Esther 2:21-23. Mordecai discovered that two of King Xerxes officers were plotting to assassinate him.)
2. What led Haman to be extremely angry at Mordecai? (Esther 3:2, 5. Haman was extremely angry with Mordecai because he would not kneel down to honor Haman.)
3. What was Haman's plan to get revenge on Mordecai for not honoring him? (Esther 3:6. He looked for a way to destroy not only Mordecai, but also Mordecai's people: the Jews.)
4. What decree did Haman suggest to the king, offering to pay for it himself? (Esther 4:8-9. Haman suggested that the king make an edict to have the Jewish people killed and their belongings plundered.)
5. How did Mordecai respond after hearing about this decree against the Jews? (Esther 4:1. Mordecai tore his clothes, wailed loudly, and decided to contact Esther for assistance.)
6. What did Mordecai ask Esther to do? (Esther 4:8. He urged her to go to the king and beg for mercy for the sake of her people, the Jews.)
7. What danger did Esther face in going to the king? (Esther 4:11. Esther knew that, if she went to the king without his calling for her, she would be killed unless he received by holding his scepter out to her.)
8. What did Mordecai say to remind Esther of the nature of her purpose for being in the position of queen? (Esther 4:14. Mordecai suggested that perhaps she had come to the position of queen for such a time as this, so that she could defend her people.)
9. What did Esther request Mordecai to do before she went to the king? (Esther 4:16. Esther asked Mordecai to have all the Jews in the city of Susa fast for three days and nights on her behalf.)
10. After the king extended his scepter to Esther, what did she request of him? (Esther 5:4. Esther requested that the king and Haman come to a banquet that she had prepared for them.)
11. What kind of man was Haman? (Esther 5:11-12; 6:6. Haman was self-seeking, greedy, conceited and proud.)
12. How did God humble Haman? (Esther 6:7-11. He was forced to lead the man that he hated most on a horse through the city honoring him before the people.)
13. What did Haman's wife, Zeresh, and his friends suggest that he do so that he could go to Esther's second banquet in peace? (Esther 5:14. Haman's wife, Zeresh, suggested that Haman

have a gallows built seventy-five feet high and ask the king to have Mordecai hung on it.)

14. How did God change Haman's plan to kill Mordecai into Haman having to honor Mordecai? (Esther 6:1-11. God caused King Xerxes to not be able to sleep that night. The king asked for someone to read to him from the records of the history of his reign, thinking that would help get him to sleep. While the reading was being done, the king was reminded of the time when Mordecai saved his life. He realized that Mordecai had not been honored for this, so he ordered Haman to lead Mordecai throughout the streets of the city in honor. Mordecai was clothed with the king's robe and rode on the king's horse, with Haman leading it and announcing loudly that the king wanted to honor Mordecai.)
15. What did Esther request of the king at the second banquet? (Esther 7:3-4. Esther asked that her own life and the lives of her people be spared.)
16. What was Haman's end? (Esther 7:9-10. Haman was hung on the gallows that he had built for Mordecai the Jew.)

Discussion Questions:

1. What does Mordecai's attitude toward the government of Babylon teach us? (Esther 2:21-23) [Mordecai respected the government leaders, especially the king, because he realized that God is the One who had put them in their government positions.]
2. What does Mordecai's attitude toward Haman teach us about honoring and "worshipping" people? (Esther 3:2-5) [Mordecai would not bow down to Haman, because this would be like worshipping him. Mordecai knew that God is the only One who should be revered and worshiped.]
3. What meaning can we take from Mordecai's words to Esther in 4:14, "And who knows but that you have come to royal position for such a time as this?" [God had placed Esther in the position of queen so that she would be able to save the Jews from all being killed by Haman's edict. God knew what they would need and He had her in that position just at the right time to save them.]
4. What should our attitude be about the positions where God has placed us? [Just as God had placed Esther in the position of queen for the exact time when the Jews would need an influential person to save them, God places us in the positions

where He wants us to fulfill His purposes, to bring glory to His name, and to do His work.]

5. How are we similar to the Jews who had a death threat over their heads? (Esther 3:13) Who is the one that speaks on our behalf? [We like the Jews have the sentence of death because of our sin. Jesus is the one that goes before the King to plead for our lives on our behalf. He offered His life to save ours.]
6. In what subtle ways can we be like Haman? (Esther 3:2-6; 5:11-12; 6:6) [We can seek power and revenge; we can find pride in what we have, what others say about us or our position.]
7. How does God humble us? (Esther 6:7-11) [We, like Haman, can find that things turn out the opposite of the way we might expect.]
8. What do we learn about God's attitude towards the proud? (Proverbs 16:5; 1 Peter 5:5) What kind of attitude do you have?
9. Why do we need to trust in the Lord as Mordecai and Esther did? [We need to trust in the Lord because He always has a plan for every situation.] How can we show that we are trusting in God?
10. What kind of risk was Esther willing to take for her people? (Esther 4:11-16) [Esther had great faith in God and loved other people more than herself, so she was willing to risk her life to try and save her people, the Jews.]
11. In what ways can we see God's presence throughout this story? [His perfect timing of events, His protection of His people, His justice for proud Haman, and the courage He gave both to Mordecai and Esther.]

28. Nehemiah

Nehemiah 1-6

Nehemiah 1

¹The words of Nehemiah. While I was in the citadel of Susa, ²Hanani, one of my brothers, came from Judah with some other men, and I questioned them about the Jewish remnant that survived the exile, and also about Jerusalem. ³They said to me, “Those who survived the exile are in great trouble and disgrace. The wall of Jerusalem is broken down, and its gates have been burned with fire.” ⁴When I heard these things, I sat down and wept. For some days I mourned and fasted and prayed before the God of heaven. ⁵Then I said: “O LORD, God of heaven, the great and awesome God, who keeps his covenant of love with those who love him and obey his commands, ⁶let your ear be attentive and your eyes open to hear the prayer your servant is praying before you day and night for your servants, the people of Israel. I confess the sins we Israelites, including myself and my father’s house, have committed against you. ⁷We have acted very wickedly toward you. We have not obeyed the commands, decrees and laws you gave your servant Moses. ¹¹O Lord, let your ear be attentive to the prayer of your servants who delight in revering your name. Give your servant success today by granting him favor in the presence of this man.” I was cupbearer to the king.

Nehemiah 2

¹In the twentieth year of King Artaxerxes, when wine was brought for him, I took the wine and gave it to the king. I had not been sad in his presence before; ²so the king asked me, “Why does your face look so sad when you are not ill? This can be nothing but sadness of heart.” I was very much afraid, ³but I said to the king, “May the king live forever! Why should my face not look sad when the city where my fathers are buried lies in ruins, and its gates have been destroyed by fire?” ⁴The king said to me, “What is it you want?” Then I prayed to the God of heaven, ⁵and I answered the king, “If it pleases the king and if your servant has found favor in his sight, let him send me to the city in Judah where my fathers are buried so that I can rebuild it.” ⁶Then the king asked me, “How long will your journey take, and when will you get back?” It pleased the king to send me; so I set a time. ⁸And because the gracious hand of my God was upon me, the king granted my requests.

¹⁰When Sanballat and Tobiah heard about this, they were very much disturbed that someone had come to promote the welfare of the

Israelites. ¹¹ I went to Jerusalem, and after staying there three days ¹² I set out during the night with a few men. I had not told anyone what my God had put in my heart to do for Jerusalem. ¹³ By night I went out to examine the walls of Jerusalem, which had been broken down, and its gates, which had been destroyed by fire. ¹⁷ Then I said to them, “You see the trouble we are in: Jerusalem lies in ruins, and its gates have been burned with fire. Come, let us rebuild the wall of Jerusalem, and we will no longer be in disgrace.” ¹⁸ I also told them about the gracious hand of my God upon me and what the king had said to me. They replied, “Let us start rebuilding.” So they began this good work. ¹⁹ But when Sanballat and Tobiah heard about it, they mocked and ridiculed us. “What is this you are doing?” they asked. “Are you rebelling against the king?” ²⁰ I answered them by saying, “The God of heaven will give us success. We his servants will start rebuilding.”

Nehemiah 4

¹ When Sanballat heard that we were rebuilding the wall, he became angry. He ridiculed the Jews, ² and said, “What are those feeble Jews doing? Will they restore their wall? Will they finish in a day?” ³ Tobiah said, “What they are building—if even a fox climbed up on it, he would break down their wall of stones!” ⁴ Hear us, O our God, for we are despised. Turn their insults back on their own heads. Give them over as plunder in a land of captivity. ⁶ So we rebuilt the wall till all of it reached half its height, for the people worked with all their heart. ⁷ But when Sanballat, Tobiah, the Arabs, the Ammonites and the men of Ashdod heard that the repairs to Jerusalem’s walls had gone ahead and that the gaps were being closed, they were very angry. ⁸ They all plotted together to come and fight against Jerusalem. ⁹ But we prayed to our God and posted a guard day and night to meet this threat. ¹¹ Our enemies said, “Before they see us, we will be right there among them and will kill them and put an end to the work.” ¹² Then the Jews who lived near them came and told us ten times over, “Wherever you turn, they will attack us.”

¹³ Therefore I stationed some of the people behind the lowest points of the wall at the exposed places, with their swords, spears and bows.

¹⁴ After I looked things over, I stood up and said to the nobles, the officials and the rest of the people, “Don’t be afraid of them. Remember the Lord, who is great and awesome, and fight for your brothers, your sons and your daughters, your wives and your homes.”

¹⁵ When our enemies heard that we were aware of their plot, we all returned to the wall. ¹⁶ From that day on, half of my men did the work, while the other half were equipped with spears, shields, bows and

armor. ¹⁹ Then I said to the nobles, the officials and the rest of the people, “The work is extensive and spread out, and we are widely separated from each other along the wall. ²⁰ Wherever you hear the sound of the trumpet, join us there. Our God will fight for us!” ²¹ So we continued the work with half the men holding spears, from the first light of dawn till the stars came out.

Nehemiah 6

¹⁰ One day I went to the house of Shemaiah who was shut in at his home. He said, “Let us meet inside the temple and let us close the temple doors, because men are coming to kill you by night.” ¹¹ But I said, “Should a man like me run away? Or should one like me go into the temple to save his life? I will not go!” ¹² I realized that God had not sent him, but that he had prophesied against me because Tobiah and Sanballat had hired him. ¹³ He had been hired to intimidate me so that I would commit a sin by doing this, and then they would give me a bad name to discredit me. ¹⁴ Remember Tobiah and Sanballat, O my God, because of what they have done. ¹⁵ So the wall was completed in fifty-two days. ¹⁶ When all our enemies heard about this, all the surrounding nations were afraid and lost their self-confidence, because they realized that this work had been done with the help of our God.

Study Questions: Nehemiah

Nehemiah 1-6

Introduction:

Nehemiah, like Esther and Daniel, was an exile from Israel who served under the kings of Babylon and Persia. He was the cupbearer to King Artaxerxes, which meant that Nehemiah was the personal attendant of the king. Therefore, Nehemiah had daily contact with the king. While many would have looked on this as simply a job, God looked on it as a part of His perfect plan for His people. The ruins of Jerusalem could easily represent our own lives, yet the Lord is in the rebuilding business and the transformation that takes place when a life is rebuilt could only be done by the help of God.

Goals:

Knowledge

- To understand that the Lord is in the rebuilding business and he rebuilds lives one section at a time.
- To remember that seeking the Lord in prayer is the first step in the building project.

Attitude

- To be encouraged with the work the Lord has done in our lives knowing that he isn't finished yet.
- To reject those things that would distract or discourage the Lord's on-going progress.

Actions

- To run with perseverance the race that God has set before us. The impossible task points to the Lord's provision.
- To trust in the Lord and work with all of our strength.

Memory Verse:

Colossians 3:23 "Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men."

Scriptures for Further Study:

Jeremiah 17:5-8; Romans 12:19; Hebrews 12:1-2

Questions about the Story

1. What news did Nehemiah receive from Jerusalem that caused him to be sad? Why? (Nehemiah 1:3. Nehemiah received news that the walls of Jerusalem were broken down and the gates were burned with fire. This made him sad because his people had been defeated and disgraced.)

2. What did Nehemiah do immediately after hearing the news? (Nehemiah 1:4-11. Nehemiah sat down and cried; then he mourned, fasted, and prayed.)
3. What sins did Nehemiah confess to the Lord? (Nehemiah 1:6. The sins of the whole nation, his father's house, and his own personal sins.)
4. What caused the king to realize that something was disturbing Nehemiah? (Nehemiah 2:1-2. Nehemiah was sad in the presence of the king, something he had never done before.)
5. How did God open a way for Nehemiah to go back to Jerusalem? (Nehemiah 2:1-8. The king valued Nehemiah and noticed that he was sad. When he found out about Nehemiah's sorrow for Jerusalem, the king granted Nehemiah's request to return and he even funded the expedition.)
6. Why did the king grant Nehemiah's request? (Nehemiah 2:8. Nehemiah's requests were answered because the gracious hand of the Lord was on him – that is, because God helped him.)
7. Who were the two men who opposed Nehemiah and the workers? Why did they do this? (Nehemiah 2:10. Sanballat and Tobiah opposed Nehemiah because they were disturbed that someone had come to promote the welfare of the Israelites.)
8. What methods did these enemies use to try to stop the work on the wall? (Nehemiah 2:19; 4:1-3, Ridicule and mockery. Nehemiah 4:8, Fighting. Nehemiah 6:10, Fear.)
9. What was Nehemiah's response to the threat of his enemies? (Nehemiah 4:9. Nehemiah prayed to the Lord, and posted guards day and night.)
10. What was Nehemiah's response to the fear all around him? (Nehemiah 4:12-20. Nehemiah trusted that God would fight for them (Nehemiah 4:14, 20). He had the workers arm themselves (Nehemiah 4:16-18), guard the weakest places in the walls (Nehemiah 4:13), and sleep at their work places so they could be guards at night (Nehemiah 4:22). So they continued the work.)
11. In how many days was the wall completed? (Nehemiah 6:15. The wall was completed in 52 days.)
12. What was the response of the surrounding nations when the wall was completed? (Nehemiah 6:16. The surrounding nations lost their self-confidence because they realized that the work had been done by the help of the Lord God.)

Discussion Questions

1. What walls are broken down in people's lives? What is your attitude when you hear about the broken down lives all around you? (Nehemiah 1:3-11) [Nehemiah responded by weeping, fasting, prayer and repentance. He loved his people and did not want God looked down on because of his people.]
2. What can we learn from the prayer that Nehemiah prayed in Nehemiah 1:5-11? [Nehemiah humbly confessed the sins of his whole nation, his family, and the sin in his own life before asking God to be attentive to his prayer. He sought the Lord's solution to the problem.]
3. How can we respond like Nehemiah did when he spoke to the King? (Nehemiah 2:4-8) [Nehemiah prayed to the Lord before responding to the King. He responded respectfully to the King yet trusted in the Lord for the answer and he volunteered to take on the responsibility himself.]
4. What does our confidence come from when we are attacked? (Nehemiah 2:18; 4:9, 14, 20; 6:16) [Nehemiah believed that God was more powerful than his enemies and that God could protect him from whatever schemes were being plotted against him. See Jeremiah 17:5-8.]
5. Why can we have strength to keep on when the task seems impossible? (Nehemiah 2:20; 4:14) [The Lord alone is the one that can give us success. He will fight for us. He is the One who is great and awesome.]
6. The people worked with all their hearts to complete the work on the wall (Nehemiah 4:6). Do you work with all of your heart, to bring glory to the Lord (Colossians 3:23)?
7. What can we learn from Nehemiah's response to Sanballat and Tobiah? (Nehemiah 4:4, 9; 6:12, 14). How should we respond to our distractions or our enemies? [We should look to the Lord and leave the judgment in God's hands. See Romans 12:19. We are also told to love and pray for them. See Matthew 5:44]
8. Who is the one we most need to help us so that our goals may be accomplished? (Nehemiah 6:16) [We need to be sure that we are doing what the Lord wants us to do. Then we can be sure He is working for us in everything we do, and then we can be successful with His help. The Lord is the most important One we need to help us.]