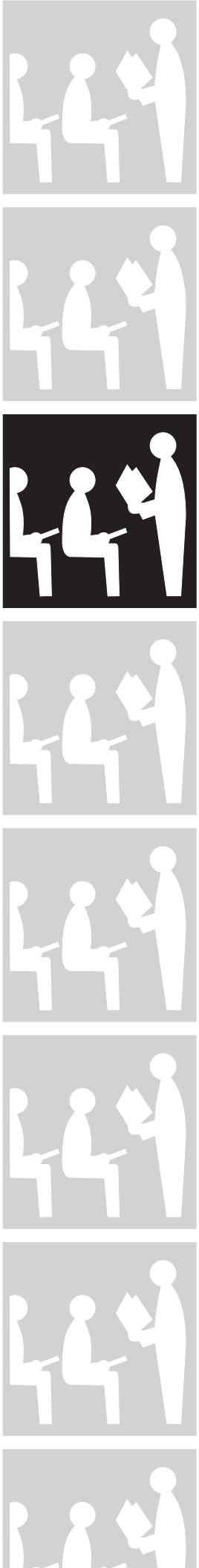

DISCOVERY TEACHER'S GUIDE

Judges, Ruth, 1 & 2 Samuel, 1 Kings

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Discovery is a Bible study course for the high school and adult levels. Bible references are taken from the King James Version. The companion to these Sunday school lessons is Daybreak, a daily devotional and personal Bible study continuum. All of the material is available on our website, as well as in printed form. The print version is designed to be stored in a binder; subsequent modules can then be easily inserted. Discovery is an official publication of the Apostolic Faith Church. All rights are reserved.

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DISCOVERY

Teacher's Guide

1st Era of Judges: Deborah

SOURCE FOR QUESTIONS

Judges1:1 through 5:31

KEY VERSE FOR MEMORIZATION

"Nevertheless the LORD raised up judges, which delivered them out of the hand of those that spoiled them." (Judges 2:16)

BACKGROUND

The Book of Judges covers the period between the death of Joshua and the birth of Samuel—a time span of approximately 300 years.

Several cycles of sin, oppression, repentance, and deliverance occur throughout this book. The first phase involves sin or backsliding, in which the people began to compromise with their enemies, and allowed them to coexist in the conquered land. This ultimately led to gross disobedience to God through Israel's adoption of the pagan worship of Baal and Ashtaroth.

The second phase of the cycle is oppression. In His wrath and displeasure, God sent or allowed hostile nations (those Israel should have driven out) to oppress Israel by means of war, taxation, or occupation. When the people grew weary of the hardship and distress produced by the enemy, they cried out to God.

Phase three is marked by the repentance of God's people. When their repentance was genuine, God heard their cry.

Deliverance is the fourth and final phase of this cycle. In His mercy, God answered their prayers and raised up a leader or "judge," which "delivered them out of the hand of those that spoiled them" (Judges 2:16). Unfortunately, the repentance of the people tended to last only as long as their judge lived, and then they lapsed into rebellion, initiating the first phase of the cycle all over again. The most prominent aspect of their rebellion was found in their acceptance and worship of false gods—primarily Baal.

Baalism was a religion that deified various aspects of nature. Worship was tied to the seasons and natural phenomena such as rain and harvest. Baal, whose name means "lord" or "owner," was the god of rain and thunder. Ashtaroth, his female counterpart, was the patroness of sex and war. Ritual prostitution was practiced by both men and women worshipers, in a desire to increase fertility in their lives. Because the Canaanites were farmers, the fertility of their land, wives, and herds was of utmost importance to them. In times of famine or drought, the people would sacrifice their children to Baal "through the fire," in an effort to appease this god of rain and harvest.

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Not only did the Canaanites take extreme measures to please their gods, they took extra measures to ensure success over their enemies. Canaanite chariots were equipped with sharp iron blades on their axles, which would have been terrifying to foot soldiers such as the Israelites. In addition, the horses' hooves and bridles were also covered with sharp spikes, making them a formidable foe.

SUGGESTED RESPONSE TO QUESTIONS

1. In Judges 2:1-3, an angel of the Lord told the Israelites that their covenant with God had been broken. What were the reasons for this? Judges 1:21-36; 2:10-23

God declared that His covenant had been nullified due to their disobedience. First of all, the Israelites failed to drive out all the inhabitants of the land and were making alliances with those nations God had instructed them to destroy; second, as a result of these sympathies and intermarriages, the Israelites had rejected God and begun to serve Baal and Ashtaroth. Discuss with your class how we keep our covenant with God.

2. Othniel, Israel's first judge, is described in Judges 3:9-11. What was his relationship to Caleb? How do you think Caleb may have influenced Othniel?

Othniel was Caleb's nephew, and may have enjoyed a rich, godly heritage. Caleb's faithfulness and courageous stand may have influenced Othniel to trust God implicitly. How can we take advantage of the godly heritage that is available to us? If you are teaching a class of seniors, discuss with them how we can influence those younger in age. In a class of younger students, discuss how they can look to older saints for mentoring, guidance, example, etc.

3. How did Ehud, Israel's second judge, overthrow the oppression of Moab?

After delivering a "present" of tribute money to King Eglon, Ehud swiftly assassinated him with his dagger. Sometimes God's directions are plain and simple. Ehud obeyed the Lord without question, quickly and quietly, and the Israelites enjoyed eighty years of peace under his administration. Ask your class for examples of times when the Lord spoke plainly to them about something He wanted them to do, and what the results were of their actions.

4. After Ehud died, the Israelites again backslid into rebellion and idolatry, and God allowed Jabin, king of Canaan, to oppress them (Judges 4:1-3). Why do you think the Israelites waited twenty years before crying to the Lord for deliverance?

Pride and stubbornness are the marks of a backslidden heart. No doubt the Israelites tried to solve this problem in their own strength, using their own ingenuity and weapons of war. However, God's

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purpose in allowing the Canaanites to oppress them was to bring the nation of Israel to a place of repentance for their sin. Discuss with your class some possible rationalizations for the Israelites failure to overcome their oppressors—we don't have the right weapons, we are too few in number, at least we know what to expect, etc.

5. Who was Deborah, and what role did she have in Israel's government? Judges 4:4-5

Deborah was the fourth judge of Israel, but was also a prophetess. She spoke God's Word to the people and judged in civil and religious matters. She possessed the gifts and skills necessary for leadership, and made herself available to God. Under her faithful leadership, the Israelites enjoyed forty years of peace.

6. What was Deborah's message to Barak (Judges 4:6-7)? What did God promise Deborah He would do?

After receiving directions from the Lord, Deborah called Barak, the military leader, to her. She told him that God said that he should go to Mount Tabor with ten thousand men from the tribes of Naphtali and Zebulun. Sisera would learn of this and be drawn into battle at the Kishon River. God promised Deborah victory if the people followed His instructions.

7. Why do you think Barak wanted Deborah to go with him into battle? How can the support of a fellow Christian be an encouragement to us in our spiritual battles?

Although Barak is listed in the eleventh chapter of Hebrews as a hero of faith, he initially needed the reassurance of Deborah's physical presence with him in battle before he would agree to go. It is unlikely that he was timid in nature, since he was the general of their army. More likely, he was frightened by the thought of facing those 900 chariots of iron, and wanted Deborah's prayers right with him.

In response to the second question, class discussion should bring out that the support of a fellow Christian can motivate us to continue on, give us courage, provide us with examples of others who have fought and won, and give us strategies that will help us defeat the enemy.

8. Barak's army of foot soldiers was, in the natural, no match for Sisera's 900 chariots of iron. What did God do to defeat Sisera and the army?
(See Judges 5:4, 15-16, 20-22)

Not only did God send great courage to Barak and the Israelite army, but God sent thunder and rain (5:4) and a flash flood (5:21) which immobilized the heavy chariots and allowed the infantrymen of Israel to overtake and annihilate the army of Jabin. Only Sisera escaped, on foot, and sought refuge in the tent of Jael, a Kenite woman. Sisera no doubt assumed that, being a Kenite, her politics would be neutral;

but they were not and she deceived and slew him. The army of Jabin was completely destroyed.

9. In five words or less, describe the character of each of the following people: Ehud, Deborah, Barak, and Jael.

Your students responses may include some of the following thoughts:

Ehud—
Man of action and courage

Deborah—
Strong advisor and counselor, dedicated

Barak—
Courageous, obedient to God's instructions

Jael—
Courageous, woman of action,
dedicated to cause

The words "brave" and "obedient" should be foremost in your students' descriptions. Although most of us are not faced with physical battles such as these Bible characters were, we do face spiritual battles. Discuss with your students how we can cultivate more faith in our lives.

10. What must we do in order to be the recipients of God's help and favor, as were Othniel, Ehud, Deborah, and Barak?

God is looking for those who will trust Him completely, not looking at the circumstances or trusting in their own abilities, but trusting in God's ability. As we have seen, the Israelites began to backslide when they failed to fully obey God and drive out the inhabitants of the land. Their disobedience, neglect, and self-reliance brought them into close association with the idolatry of the Canaanites, and then into sin. Only when they maintained a humble and obedient spirit were they the recipients of God's help and grace.

CONCLUSION

God's promises have always been conditional upon man's obedience. If we choose to rebel and disobey, we will certainly face the consequences; however, if we trust God and obey Him, we can be equally certain of inheriting His promises.

DISCOVERY

Teacher's Guide

2nd Era of Judges: Gideon

SOURCE FOR QUESTIONS

Judges 6:1 through 12:15

KEY VERSE FOR MEMORIZATION

"And Gideon said unto God, Let not thine anger be hot against me, and I will speak but this once: let me prove, I pray thee, but this once with the fleece; let it now be dry only upon the fleece, and upon all the ground let there be dew. And God did so that night: for it was dry upon the fleece only, and there was dew on all the ground." (Judges 6:39-40)

BACKGROUND

The period of the Judges forms an important link in the history of the Israelites, carrying on the history of God's chosen people through a period of roughly three centuries—the era from the death of Joshua to when Saul became Israel's first king. The Book of Judges also demonstrates that defecting from God incurs severe punishment. Only by turning back to God can restoration be enjoyed. The judges were notable leaders, able to motivate the Israelites to turn back to God, and were used by God to deliver His chosen people. Only by heeding the judge's Spirit-directed message and following it in withstanding their enemies could restoration be accomplished.

These Old Testament judges performed two functions. By divine power and Spirit-anointed leadership, they delivered the Israelites from enemy oppression. Having secured the freedom for these people, they then ruled over them and governed them in the name of Israel's God. Although there were several judges during this period in history, Scripture provides details of only a few—Gideon being one of them.

The cycle of victory-apostasy-punishment-deliverance covered in this portion of text had lasted for seven years. Occurring more than a century after Joshua had conquered the land, this generation had not experienced the miracles of the past. Still, they cried out to God for deliverance from the invading desert horde.

Gideon, the man chosen by God to bring about deliverance, was also known as Jerubbaal. He was the youngest son of Joash, of the clan of Abiezer in the tribe of Manasseh. His home was at Ophrah, and his family an obscure one. Gideon was called to leadership through the message of an angel. Though slow to be convinced of his call and his ability to perform what God required, Gideon was persuaded through divine means, and eventually obeyed. He became the

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chief leader of Manasseh and the fifth recorded judge of Israel. He is mentioned as a hero of faith in Hebrews 11.

SUGGESTED RESPONSE TO QUESTIONS

1. Who was oppressing the Israelites as detailed in Chapter 6 of Judges? How did they execute their oppression?

The Midianites, along with the Amalekites, were oppressing the nation of Israel. Midian was south of Edom, near the Gulf of Acaba. They were desert nomads who had learned to domesticate camels and were using them for the purpose of long-distance raids into more settled areas. The implication is that the Midianites made annual raids on the agricultural produce of the Israelites. They destroyed their crops and allowed their cattle and herds to overcome the land thus causing widespread poverty throughout the land of Israel.

2. What indication is given as to why the Midianites may have been allowed to oppress the Israelites? Judges 6:1

The Israelites were not following God's will and did evil in the sight of the Lord. God, in His divine mercy, sometimes allows difficulties to come a person's way to cause him to realize his spiritual need. Discussion could lead to ways in which God gets a person's attention today—illness, financial reversals, persecution, etc.

3. Why do you think Gideon asked God to let him put out a fleece? (Judges 6:37-40) For what purpose should a fleece be used?

Gideon wanted to be very sure that he correctly understood God's will. The second fleece confirmed what he already knew in his heart. Allow your students to discuss the carefulness needed in the use of a fleece. Guide them to understand that if one is used at all, a fleece should be used to confirm God's will, rather than to find it. The error of using a fleece is that we run the risk of manipulating the fleece to bring an answer in accordance with our personal desires.

4. In God's use of Gideon to defeat the Midianites, how large was Israel's "original" army? (Judges 7:3) What measure did God use to whittle down this number to ten thousand? Why do you suppose this was an issue to God?

The original army numbered 32,000. This number was whittled down to 10,000 when those who were fearful and afraid were told to go home. Answers to the final question may include that God needs people who will believe in His power to deliver. The faithless and unbelieving rarely benefit from the blessings of God.

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5. What final test did the Lord direct Gideon to use to determine which of the remaining ten thousand would go into battle against the Midianites? (Judges 7:5-6) What possible explanation could be given for this separation?

Those that lapped (drank) by putting their hands to their mouth were chosen—not those who bowed down on their knees and lapped directly from the water like a dog. Possibly, the 9,700 who got down on their knees to drink were lax in their attitude. They were heading into battle, but were more concerned with getting a good drink of water rather than remaining watchful and alert, as the three hundred were able to do by lapping water from their hand.

6. Why do you think God wanted Gideon to use such a small army to go against the very large Midianite army, and to employ such an unorthodox battle plan?

The use of such a small army made sure that the victory (against such tremendous odds) was credited to God, and not to the army. A possible class activity would be to have students list in two columns the pros and cons of such a battle plan when compared to the Midianite military strength. The point should be made that with God, all things are possible, and His plans are guaranteed to work.

7. How is our fight against the devil much like Gideon's fight against the Midianites?

Similarities could include: We are not able to overcome the devil in our own strength, but if we rely on God, He will cause us to prevail. We must remain on the alert. We must not let incredible odds against us cause us to despair and fall short of the victory.

CONCLUSION

God does not depend on large numbers of people to accomplish His goals. As in the case of Gideon and the Midianites, all spiritual victories occur because of God's power, not our power.

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DISCOVERY

Teacher's Guide

3rd Era of Judges: Samson

SOURCE FOR QUESTIONS

Judges 13:1 through 21:25

KEY VERSE FOR MEMORIZATION

"And Samson called unto the LORD, and said, O LORD GOD, remember me, I pray thee, and strengthen me, I pray thee, only this once, O God, that I may be at once avenged of the Philistines for my two eyes." (Judges 16:28)

BACKGROUND

By this time, the nation of Israel had been living in the Promised Land for a number of years. During those years, they had spiritual highs and lows. The spiritual low point in today's lesson was brought on by disobedience. As a consequence God allowed the people to fall under the rule of the Philistines in the longest oppression Israel experienced during the time of the judges.

The Children of Israel cried out to God because of the oppression of the Philistines, and once again God raised up a deliverer. Samson was chosen before his birth to do a great work for God, and it was pronounced by the angel of the Lord that he would be a "Nazarite unto God" from his birth. To help him accomplish God's plan, Samson was given enormous physical strength. He became the thirteenth Judge of Israel.

In spite of his godly heritage, Samson's record was anything but exemplary. He grieved his godly parents, made friends with the Philistines, married a heathen woman, and alienated himself from those of his own nation.

Samson paid a great price for not following God's perfect plan. He shared the secret of his great strength: his Nazarite vow to not cut his hair. Due to more of his poor choices, he found himself in the arms of his enemy (Delilah) who cut his hair. Immediately his strength was gone. Captured and blinded by the Philistines, he was forced to work turning a human-powered gristmill in a Philistine prison.

The Philistines credited their victory over Samson to their god Dagon, and they gathered at Gaza for a great feast to praise their god. (Dagon was a god of fertility whom the Philistines had borrowed from the Canaanites.) Samson's hair had grown long again. In a final dramatic act, and through the help of God, Samson pulled down a building destroying many of the main people in the Philistine government and military.

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These chapters also record instances of idolatry, a disturbing account of a rape, murder, and the civil war between Israel's tribes. It is hard to believe that these were God's chosen people, but this passage serves as a warning to us that sometimes what is right in a person's own eyes can be far from God's will, and even outright sin.

SUGGESTED RESPONSE TO QUESTIONS

1. At Samson's birth, how long had the Israelites been under the rule of the Philistines? (Judges 13:1) What are some possible reasons for such a long period of oppression?

The oppression by the Philistines lasted for at least 40 years. Students' answers regarding possible reasons may include: the evil in Israel (verse 1), a lack of unity among the people, acceptance of how things were, a lack of strong spiritual leadership to guide the people back to God.

2. What special instructions were given to Samson's parents regarding his upbringing? Judges 13:7

He was to be raised as a Nazarite (the details of taking a Nazarite vow are found in chapter 6 of Numbers). The term Nazarite *meant "consecrated or set apart for the Lord's use." In most cases the vow was voluntary and was taken for a specified period of time, typically 30 days, though durations of 60 and 90 days were not uncommon. In Samson's case, God chose the Nazarite vow for him for his whole life.*

The one who took the vow had to do three main things: 1) Refrain from eating or drinking anything that came from the grape plant. 2) Refrain from cutting his hair or beard. 3) Refrain from going near a dead body. Nazarites could go about their normal lives as long as they observed these three main points. If somehow they violated their vow, the time period started over. At the successful end of their vow, there was a ceremony conducted by a priest at the Tabernacle.

3. Under the dispensation of grace, which of our three foundational experiences is most like a Nazarite's vow? Why?

Various aspects of the Nazarite vow are similar to salvation, sanctification, and the baptism of the Holy Ghost. But the experience that is closest would be sanctification. Both sanctification and the Nazarite's vow require the individual to be consecrated and set apart for God's service.

4. What are some of the heartaches Samson could have avoided if he had married a godly woman? (Judges 16:4-21) What are some contemporary parallels we can draw from this aspect of his life?

Your students' answers could include betrayal, lack of support, deception, difference of goals, and loss of God's blessing. Allow time for your class to

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generate a list of similar heartaches people experience today when they take ways of their own.

5. After Samson failed God, he was given another chance right at the end of his life to follow God's will. Does everyone get another chance? How can we best accomplish God's plan for our lives?

No one is guaranteed multiple opportunities, but we do serve a merciful God. We can best accomplish God's plan by always staying close enough to God to not fail Him in the first place. Discussion should lead to how one can stay close to God on a daily basis: prayer, reading God's Word, associating with like-minded people, remaining honest before God, etc.

6. Judges 17 and 18 record a dispute between Micah and the soldiers from the tribe of Dan. What was it about? What sort of things do we see in our world today that parallels this kind of dispute?

Both Micah and the soldiers from the tribe of Dan wanted the idols and the renegade Levite for their worship.

It has been said that those who stand for nothing will fall for anything. Micah and the tribe of Dan were so far from God that they were arguing over idol worship. In this day and age, people of the world are constantly saying, "Don't talk to us about God, place no limits, we will do as we please." That creates arguments like whether or not a same-sex couple has the right to marry. Like Micah and the tribe of Dan, they seem to have completely missed the main point: that God condemns sin. They would not have to address these side issues if they kept the line where God placed it.

7. In Judges 19, we read of a horrible crime that was committed by members of the tribe of Benjamin. What was the nation of Israel's response when the word got out? Judges 20:1-2

A 400,000 man army was assembled, and marched to confront the tribe.

8. What did the army ask of the tribe of Benjamin? What happened as a result of their response? Judges 20:13

The army asked the tribe of Benjamin to turn over those that committed the crime. The Benjamites refused and thus brought about their near extinction. The emotional duress of the other tribes blinded their judgment in their harsh treatment of the tribe of Benjamin.

9. In an effort to salvage the tribe of Benjamin, what additional wrongs did the Israelites do as a means of trying to correct an earlier wrong?

After all but annihilating the tribe of Benjamin, the men of Israel made a vow to not give their daughters to the remaining men from the tribe of Benjamin. As they lamented the loss of one of the tribes, they

discovered that there was one tribe that did not fight against Benjamin. They destroyed Jabesh-gilead and saved only the young women to give to the Benjamite men. Discussion could lead to how committing another wrong to fix a previous wrong is not God's way. Was there another way to resolve the terrible situation? Answers could include: the Levite in chapter 19 could have stood against the men of Gibeah, etc.

10. What does this lesson teach us about the dangers of "toying" with wrong?

Class discussion should bring out that dabbling with sin will have terrible consequences. The suffering that the Israelites went through during this period was not caused by God, but resulted from the fact that the people ignored God and went their own way. The warning is clear: if one chooses his own way and goes against God's instructions, he will not escape the consequences of his decision.

CONCLUSION

A key point that can be drawn from this lesson is the need to constantly seek God's will rather than to do what seems right at the moment. These three accounts are extreme examples that show it is much better when a person is acting within God's perfect will.

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Teacher's Guide

The Book of Ruth

SOURCE FOR QUESTIONS

Ruth 1:1 through 4:22

KEY VERSE FOR MEMORIZATION

"And Ruth said, Intreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee: for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge: thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God: Where thou diest, will I die, and there will I be buried: the LORD do so to me, and more also, if ought but death part thee and me." (Ruth 1:16-17)

BACKGROUND

Ruth is one of two women in the Old Testament to have an entire Book devoted to them. (Esther is the other.) The Book provides a wonderful historical metaphor of the plan of redemption. It bridges the historic time between the period of the judges and when God granted the Children of Israel their request for a king. It also establishes the ancestry of Israel's most famous king, David. This was a dark time in the history of Israel. We read, "In those days *there was* no king in Israel: every man did *that which was* right in his own eyes" (Judges 21:25).

The setting for the beginning of the Book of Ruth is the land of Moab, which was located east of the southern part of the Dead Sea. The Moabites were descendents of the incestuous relationship between Lot and his oldest daughter (Genesis 19:30-38). The Moabites refused to give Israel passage through their land to Canaan during the Exodus from Egypt. For this refusal, they and their descendents for ten generations were excluded from gathering with the congregational assembly of Israel (Deuteronomy 23:3-4).

The relationship between Boaz and Ruth is a developing theme in the narrative. The Hebrew word *ga'al* is translated as *kinsman* in most of the account. Implied in the translation is the responsibility of the kinsman, which was redemption. (See Leviticus 25:23-34 and Deuteronomy 25:5-10.) This act of redemption took on several forms: marrying a kinsman's widow, freeing family members from bondage, purchasing a mortgaged piece of family property, and avenging the loss of family. Some translators have used the phrase "kinsman-redeemer" to show the fullness of the Hebrew meaning. Others have simply used the word *redeemer* in places.

The story begins in sorrow with a family fleeing a famine, three funerals, and the grief of separation. As the process of redemption beautifully unfolds

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throughout the account, it ends with great joy, the provision of needs, an unexpected marriage, and the hope in a new baby's birth.

SUGGESTED RESPONSE TO QUESTIONS

1. Why did Elimelech and Naomi leave Bethlehem Ruth 1:1? Do you think this was a wise choice? Why or why not?

A famine had arisen in Israel. Since God had promised rain and provision as long as His people served Him (Deuteronomy 11:11-17), one possible reason is that Israel was not fulfilling their part of the covenant and the famine was part of God's judgment (Judges 21:25). The word Bethlehem *means "house of bread." They left the "house of bread" because there was no bread.*

The text does not indicate whether or not they were following God's instructions in leaving. We do know that God always provides for those who follow Him. In this case, moving out of the Promised Land was costly for this family. Besides the difficulty of the journey and separation from extended family, their sons married Moabite women and eventually all the men in the family died without leaving any heirs. Naomi's comments in Ruth 1:13 and 20 suggest that she felt her hardships were God's chastisement because they had left Israel.

Discuss how we should earnestly seek the Lord before making any life-altering decisions. The discussion could include:

- *Ways we can find the Lord's will and receive clear direction.*
- *Possible results of a wrong decision, and how God might discipline us.*
- *Personal examples from the class of how they found God's will and the results of following it.*

2. After the death of her husband and sons, Naomi determined to return to Israel. Why do you think she discouraged her two daughters-in-law, Orpah and Ruth, from accompanying her?

Students' thoughts might include several of the following ideas: In her grief, perhaps Naomi thought they would be better off staying in Moab with their parents. While acknowledging their kindness to her family, perhaps the younger women were painful reminders of the difficulty and loss that followed the choice to come to Moab. Maybe Naomi felt it was unfair to thrust the economic difficulties, which were sure to face her as a widow, upon her also widowed daughters-in-law. These difficulties would only be multiplied by going to Israel where Moabites were not accepted. Naomi even mentioned the futility of waiting for future sons for the daughters-in-law to marry.

Verse 1:13 seems to give insight into Naomi's state of mind at the time. She was grieving and felt as

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if God was judging her. Certainly this hampered her ability to offer a sustained invitation. Ask your class how grief, loss, or the discipline of God could limit our attempts at spreading the Gospel. Discussion could bring out that grief and loss can make us emotionally numb, cause our focus to be inward rather than outward, and absorb all of our emotional energy. If we feel we are being disciplined by God, we may feel inadequate or unworthy to reach out to others.

3. Ruth was not deterred by Naomi's comments. Which of Ruth's actions showed a spirit of willingness?

Ruth's confession of faith, in Ruth 1:16-17, is classic in all of Scripture. On a board, make two columns listing "Ruth" above one and the word "Us" above the other. Have the class list areas in which Ruth was willing. Her willingness to leave extended family, country, and Moabite religious teachings, and to embrace Naomi, Israel, and the God of Israel are wonderful indeed. She was willing to glean in the fields for their sustenance and to follow the instructions of Naomi concerning Boaz. Next have them list areas and ways in which we can show willingness. Specific answers will have more impact and lead to a more effective discussion.

4. Did Ruth just "happen" to glean in the fields of Boaz? Explain your answer. Ruth 2:3

Based on the phrase "and her hap was to light on a part of the field belonging unto Boaz," your students may initially respond that Ruth just happened to glean on the property belonging to Boaz. However, additional discussion should bring out that for the child of God, there are no "accidents." The divine providence of God led Ruth to the right fields even when she did not know it. Discussion should include the fact that God will always lead a hungry and honest heart toward Himself and to His will for that person's life.

5. One component of the Book of Ruth is the theme of redemption. Define the word *redeem* and explain how Boaz became a redeemer to Ruth.

The definition of redeem *is, "to buy back; to free from what distresses or harms: as to free from captivity by payment of ransom, to release from blame or debt, or to free from the consequences of sin."*

Redemption requires a value or price paid to purchase something back that was sold, mortgaged, lost, etc. Redemption also implies that the one paying the price has a "right" to redeem what needs to be bought back. That right is usually original, inherited, or transferred ownership. Boaz fulfilled the role of kinsman-redeemer by purchasing land and marrying Ruth.

6. The Book of Ruth can be used as a picture of how Jesus Christ came to redeem all of us from sin. What

similarities are there between Boaz in this account and Jesus Christ? In what ways are they dissimilar?

The class should develop a list in response to both questions. Results could include:

Similarities:

- *Both were kinsman (Jesus became part of the human family)*
- *Both provided redemption for their potential brides (Boaz for Ruth and Jesus for the Church)*
- *Both made their plans privately but paid the price publicly*
- *Both did what they did because of their love for their brides*

Differences:

- *Boaz redeemed out of his wealth but Jesus redeemed by giving His life on the Cross*
- *There was one with a higher claim to redeem Ruth than Boaz but there is no one with a higher claim to redeem us than Jesus*
- *Boaz redeemed that he might preserve and raise offspring in the name of one man (Mahlon, Ruth's deceased husband) but Jesus redeemed that He might raise many people as spiritual offspring who will glorify His own living Name*

7. During the time of Ruth, Israelite custom combined the laws of the kinsman-redeemer and the law for levirate marriage (marrying a deceased husband's brother). Why do you think Naomi started the kinsman process by sending Ruth at night to the threshing floor? Ruth 3:1-4

Naomi realized that Boaz was not only eligible as a potential husband for Ruth but also bore some obligation as a close male relative to purchase the mortgaged property and to marry Ruth to raise children to inherit the land in the stead of Mahlon, her deceased husband. Naomi instructed Ruth to perform actions that were a customary way of indicating to Boaz that he should act as the kinsman and bring her under his protection.

Because of Boaz's reputation and his actions toward Ruth when she gleaned, Naomi also realized that Boaz cared about Ruth and would honorably fulfill the customs in this area. Note in verse 4:6 that the relative who was closer than Boaz desired the land but not the responsibilities of another wife and children. Commentators point out that acceptance of this responsibility would have diminished his personal resources and thus that of his own heirs.

8. Following the instructions of Naomi, who was taking the initiative to arrange for a possible marriage, Ruth made great preparation before presenting herself at the feet of Boaz. What were those preparations (Ruth 3:3)? Compare them to preparations we must make to qualify as part of the Bride of Christ.

Ruth washed and anointed herself, changed her clothing, followed the instructions given to her, and then promised to continue her obedience. She asked for redemption according to the law.

We also need to be cleansed (made holy) and anointed (filled with the Holy Spirit). Our spiritual clothing should be that of righteousness. We need to follow the directions given to us in the Bible and also the leading of the Holy Spirit. While we cannot earn or deserve redemption, it is vital that we allow God to prepare our hearts so we are ready for Christ's return.

9. Redemption is the key theme of Ruth, specifically the fourth chapter. The words "redeem," "buy," and "purchase," are used at least fifteen times. What was the cost to redeem Ruth (Ruth 4:9-10)? Compare that to the price God paid to redeem humanity.

Boaz publicly announced his intention to remove any financial hindrances from the inheritance of Naomi and her offspring (Mahlon and Chilion) and to take Ruth as his own wife. He was obliged to raise children in the name of Ruth's deceased husband, his near relative. This assured that the lineage would be continued and the inheritance would not be lost.

While salvation is offered freely to humanity, it was very costly from God's perspective. Heaven's brightest Jewel willingly offered His own life to satisfy the requirements for the redemption of humanity. No greater price could be offered to secure our redemption.

CONCLUSION

Because of Ruth's choice to identify with Naomi's people and Naomi's God, she was rewarded not only with a godly husband and a son, but also with the privilege of being the great-grandmother of David, Israel's greatest king. Ultimately she was included in the lineage of the Savior of all humanity, Jesus Christ.

The story of Ruth provides a beautiful parallel to how we come to faith in God. We begin as aliens with no part in His Kingdom. Then, as we risk everything by putting our faith in Christ, God forgives us, saves us, rebuilds our lives, and gives us blessings that reach forward into eternity.

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DISCOVERY

Teacher's Guide

Samuel

SOURCE FOR QUESTIONS

1 Samuel 1:1 through 7:17

KEY VERSE FOR MEMORIZATION

"And the child Samuel grew on, and was in favour both with the LORD, and also with men." (1 Samuel 2:26)

BACKGROUND

In the history of Israel, the period of the Judges preceded the birth of Samuel. The Book of Judges tells of thirteen individuals who were appointed to rule and judge Israel. Some of these individuals were good, others were rebellious. This period lasted at least 300 years, and perhaps as long as 400, during which time Israel drifted far from the Lord.

Samuel was born, around 1100 B.C. of Levitical parents (1 Chronicles 6:33-38). Ramah, his birthplace, judicial residence, and place of burial, was about six miles north of Jerusalem (1 Samuel 1:19; 7:17; 25:1).

Hannah was the wife of Elkanah, and though he loved her, she was not able to bear children. This deprived her of more than the joy of being a mother. It also robbed her of her dignity and self-worth, for women were expected to bear children for their husbands. In Old Testament times, a married woman with no children was ashamed before her husband. She was thought to be under a curse from God. Peninnah, Elkanah's other wife who had children, further provoked Hannah. Although Elkanah loved Hannah, and had done all he could to comfort her, he could not seem to understand the depth of her anguish.

Considering the spiritual destitution of the priesthood, and the widespread disobedience of Israel at that time, it is remarkable that Hannah determined to take her burden to the Lord and had confidence that God would answer. It is also noteworthy that Samuel had such openness and sincerity towards God, considering the poor examples of priesthood he was subject to. Certainly Hannah's influence on him is evident, resulting in a man who was to become one of the purest characters in Israel's history.

While Samuel was a judge of Israel, he was more than that. He was also a prophet and a priest. He was the "connecting link" between the time of the judges, or tribal period, and the Kingdom, when kings ruled Israel. Samuel would later appoint Israel's first king, Saul.

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SUGGESTED RESPONSE TO QUESTIONS

1. Our lesson opens with Hannah in "bitterness of soul." What was the result of her "pouring out her soul before the LORD" (1 Samuel 1:15)? Why was she willing to make a vow to the Lord that meant giving up the child she longed to have? 1 Samuel 1:11

Hannah's agony was too great to be comforted by anyone but God. She took her burden to the Lord and wept before him. The Lord revealed His answer through Eli, the High Priest, saying that she would bear a son. Discuss the important fact that her countenance was "no more sad." We can see how real the comfort of the Lord is; even though the answer had not yet transpired, it was enough for Hannah that God had heard and would undertake.

In response to the second question, your students should conclude that her grief over her barrenness was so great that she was willing to give the child back to the Lord if He would grant her desire and, thereby, remove her remorse and feeling of inadequacy and apparent worthlessness. It might be good to remind your students that God does not require vows. If we vow, we must pay that we have vowed, as Hannah did.

2. Though it may have been difficult to give her child back to the Lord, Hannah paid her vow. Who benefited by her obedience in this matter?

Through Hannah's obedience, everyone gained, though all may not have known it. Certainly, Hannah could not have guessed how God would honor her obedience. It is not recorded in the first chapter of 1 Samuel that God would do more for Hannah than she originally asked. All she had asked for was a son, yet God honored her by giving her five more children (1 Samuel 2:21). Samuel benefited, through his anointing by God (while under Eli's care), to become His mouthpiece for the nation of Israel. The nation of Israel benefited by having godly leadership under Samuel, which they had not had under Eli.

Bring out how all of these circumstances would have been drastically different if Hannah had not followed through with her vow to God. Discuss with your class how different Hannah's life would have been if she had not done so. What about Samuel's? What about the future of Israel? How far-reaching, then, is our commitment and obedience to God. It will affect not only our own lives, but also our children, our church, and those around us.

3. According to 1 Samuel 2:12-17, 22, what were Eli's sons Hophni and Phinehas doing that displeased the Lord?

Eli's sons did as they pleased. They were "sons of Belial," a Hebrew term describing people of base character who openly practiced lawlessness. In the

New Testament, Belial is used as a synonym for Satan. The Law stated precisely what portion of the offerings belonged to the priests, but Eli's sons took what portion of meat they wanted, whenever they wanted, and by force if necessary. They also took the fat parts that belonged to the Lord (Leviticus 3:16), and they took raw meat so they could roast it and not have to eat boiled meat. They not only showed disrespect for the offerings made unto the Lord, but seduced the women that gathered at the door of the Tabernacle.

Eli knew all of this, but was unable and/or unwilling to control them. It is no wonder that God pronounced the judgment He did upon them. Note especially the contrast between the sons of Eli who "abhorred the offering of the LORD (1 Samuel 2:17) and Samuel who "ministered before the LORD" (1 Samuel 2:18).

4. What was young Samuel's response to God's call and what can we learn from his example?
1 Samuel 3:1-10

Samuel responded exactly as he had been instructed, by saying, "Speak; for thy servant heareth." Samuel was responding to God in a way that even his mentor, Eli, had not. How important it is to have a sensitive spirit to God's voice, and a heart to respond quickly without rebuttal. If we will listen, we will hear when God speaks to us.

Point out to your students Samuel's action the next morning (1 Samuel 3:15-18). He was not proud of his experience with God, but rather humbled by it. He was not desirous to rebuke his mentor, Eli, but held his peace and let God order the details. We can learn an important lesson of spiritual maturity here. We can also learn that God can use anyone, as long as his or her heart is open to His leading. Samuel, at this time, was probably no more than twelve years old.

5. In this portion of text, we find the nation of Israel attacked by a familiar enemy, the Philistines. According to 1 Samuel 4:1-11, what was wrong with Israel's approach? What can we learn from this?

Israel was not yet following God with a pure heart. The Philistines defeated them, and instead of searching their hearts before God to find out why, they resorted to human reasoning and superstition. They tried to imitate Moses and Joshua by carrying the Ark of the Covenant with them into battle, hoping that the presence of the Ark would mean God was with them and that victory would be theirs. The two wicked sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, were carrying the Ark. The people shouted when they saw the Ark come into the camp, however, God was not with them. They had not yet repented of their sin and disobedience before Him, so once again, the Philistines defeated them.

One lesson we could learn from this is that trying to recreate a situation that God has blessed in

someone else's life, or in another time and place is not what brings success. We cannot use people, places, or things as "good-luck charms" for God's blessing. Instead of trying to find the right combination of words or actions to bring God's blessing, we must seek God's face, and have our hearts clear. Victory does not come by making ourselves excited, or by creating the "perfect situation," as Israel tried to do. Victory comes when all is clear between our hearts and God, and we are willing and obedient.

6. Hannah, Samuel's mother, is a great example of God's blessing extending to others through one person's obedience. Conversely, what tragic events do we see in 1 Samuel 4, which were a result of the priests' sins and Israel's disobedience?

The tragic events included the following:

- *Israel was defeated twice before the Philistines.*
- *They lost the Ark of God to their enemies.*
- *The prophecy of judgment upon Eli's sons came to pass.*
- *Upon hearing of the tragedy of the stolen Ark, Eli fell and died.*
- *Phinehas' wife died in early childbirth.*
- *Before she passed away, she named her child "Ichabod," which means 'The glory of the Lord is departed from Israel."*

Although from man's perspective, all seemed lost for Israel, God would use these circumstances to teach both Israel and the Philistines a few lessons about His power and glory.

7. The Philistines took the Ark of God and tried to humiliate the God of Israel by placing the Ark, which represented God's presence, before their god Dagon. How did the Lord prove to the Philistines that He was the true God? 1 Samuel 5

The next morning, "Dagon" (who was the principal god of the Philistines), was lying before the Ark, as if a worshipper. They stood their "god" (an idol) upright, but the next morning the stump of Dagon was lying before the Ark, with his head and hands cut off and placed at the threshold of the temple. The Philistines were beginning to understand that these events had some power beyond them, a power that was sacred.

The Lord smote the Philistines with "emerods," which could have been bubonic plague, severe tumors, or hemorrhoids. The Philistines, anxious to be rid of the Ark, but unwilling to admit an embarrassing defeat, shipped the Ark from Ashdod to Gath and then to Ekron. However, all of these cities suffered the same plague. God is quite able to take care of Himself and make Himself known, even when people do not choose to serve Him.

8. When the Ark arrived in Beth-shemesh (1 Samuel 6:10-21), many people looked inside it and were slain by God. Why do you suppose the punishment was so severe?

Living in a Levitical city such as Beth-shemesh, these people knew better. When the Levites took the Ark down off the cart, they should have covered it, for it was not to be looked upon by anyone but the high priest (Numbers 4:5). The Ark of God was the Throne where the presence of God was to dwell for Israel! Some of the people got curious and looked into the Ark and were slain.

Class discussion could bring out that God is very serious about the respect, honor, and reverence that are due Him. In today's culture, we can get too casual and informal with God, and forget that He is "high and lifted up." Our prayers may go unanswered if we approach God with indifference or casual acknowledgment. He is God and created all things. We find God will bless those who respect Him and take His Word seriously.

9. We find a key to Israel's successful turn-around in 1 Samuel 7:3-6. What did they do, and what was the result?

It had been twenty years since the Ark had come back from the possession of the Philistines (1 Samuel 7:2), and the people had finally tired of being oppressed by these enemies. Samuel told them what was required in order to have God's hand of blessing upon them again. They were to put away the strange gods, admit their guilt, and repent. To all of this, they obeyed. How wonderful that Israel at last had a leader who would cry unto God for them, and God heard him! As Samuel prayed and offered a sacrifice, God sent ambushment against the Philistines, and Israel smote them. All the days of Samuel, the Lord's hand was against the Philistines (1 Samuel 7:13), and the Lord restored Israel's lost cities. Contrast this approach of prayer and humility before God to Israel's resort to carnal methods recorded in 1 Samuel 14. They were facing the same powerful enemy, but what a different result!

CONCLUSION

Israel learned what disaster apathy and carelessness can bring, as well as the blessing brought by obedience and reverence to God. We, too, can learn many valuable lessons through these chapters. Godly reverence, prayer, and obedience will make our spiritual lives shine.

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DISCOVERY

Teacher's Guide

Saul

SOURCE FOR QUESTIONS

1 Samuel 8:1 through 15:35

KEY VERSE FOR MEMORIZATION

"And when Samuel saw Saul, the LORD said unto him, Behold the man whom I spake to thee of! this same shall reign over my people." (1 Samuel 9:17)

BACKGROUND

This portion of Scripture marks another great turning point in the history of the Children of Israel. After they possessed the Promised Land by the power of God under the leadership of Joshua, they lived for approximately 400 years governed by judges. God was their King and Supreme Commander. However, growing apostasy and involvement with other nations caused them to forget God's covenant and desire an earthly king to "be like all the nations" and to fight their battles. The tribes of Israel had apparently forgotten that God called them to be a separate and unique people that would follow Him. In return, they would never be forsaken by the Lord.

Samuel explained to the people the negative consequences of having a king. However, they still cried out, "We will have a king over us." Samuel rehearsed these words to the Lord, who then authorized Samuel to anoint them a king. The Lord led Samuel to Saul, a Benjamite.

Saul was not crowned in a coronation that would be typical of a political act to establish him as a ruler. Samuel anointed him with oil, which was a religious act that made the king a representative of God to the people. The anointing oil was made specifically of myrrh, olive oil, and other costly spices.

The Philistines were Israel's chief enemy during Saul's reign. Israel's army was at a distinct disadvantage because they had no weapons and no ability to make any. The Philistines carefully guarded their technology in making iron and blacksmithing.

Even though Israel was not in a position to defeat anyone, through God's help, they were able to rout the Philistines and achieve a victory without swords.

This portion of text gives the account of the end of Samuel's ministry and the turbulent transition to a completely unfamiliar form of government for the tribes of Israel.

SUGGESTED RESPONSE TO QUESTIONS

1. What were the reasons given by the elders of Israel for wanting a king (1 Samuel 8:4-5)? Were these claims legitimate? Why or why not?

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They said that Samuel was old, that his sons were corrupt, and that they wanted to be like other nations. Bring out through discussion that none of these were legitimate reasons for abandoning the Lord's plan. Age did not stop God from using Abraham. God used Moses to "go against the flow" and to bring God's people out of Egypt to be a separate or unique nation. Discuss with your class that there are no legitimate reasons to go outside of God's plan.

2. What was God's reaction to the people's request? 1 Samuel 8:7-9

God granted their request, but He told Samuel to show them what having a king would mean. God gave them the desires of their heart, though that was not His will (1 Samuel 8:7). Discuss with your class the difference between God's permissive and perfect will.

3. Samuel expressed to Saul that "all the desire of Israel" was on him, speaking about his upcoming responsibility. What was Saul's response, and what does it show about his attitude? 1 Samuel 9:21

Saul responded that he was a Benjamite, of the smallest tribe, and of the least of all the families in the tribe. Compare this verse to 1 Samuel 9:1-2. The conclusion can be made that Saul's response was one of humility and grace. Judging by the response, it appeared that he would be a good king. Saul is also described as "a choice young man, and a goodly: and there was not among the children of Israel a goodlier person than he." The implication is that Saul was a promising choice from a human perspective.

4. What three prophesies did Samuel make regarding the signs that would happen on Saul's journey home (1 Samuel 10:2-6)? What can we learn from them for our lives today?

The first prophecy was that someone would tell Saul that his initial problem (the missing asses) had been solved. The second prophecy was that he would meet some men and they would give him bread, supplying his need for food. The third prophecy was that the Spirit of the Lord would come upon him, giving him power to deal with his new responsibilities.

There are several possible responses to the second question. One could be that just as God provided for Saul's material, physical, and spiritual needs, He will provide for us. Saul had nothing to worry about. God had proved that his problems would be solved, his needs would be provided for, and the necessary strength would be there when needed. Interestingly, the three prophecies dealt with his past, his present, and his future.

5. Saul was anointed king three times: privately by the prophet Samuel (1 Samuel 10:1), in public at Mizpeh (1 Samuel 10:17-24), and after his first victory as the leader of the tribes in battle against the Ammonites

(1 Samuel 11:15). At the second coronation, Saul "hid himself among the stuff" (1 Samuel 10:22). Was this an appropriate action? Why or why not?

It is easy to look at this and think that Saul was showing humility, however, discussion should focus on our need to answer God's call in spite of our own feelings of fear or lack of ability. Sometimes situations arise that could overwhelm us, but when we place our trust and faith in God, we realize that through His strength we can accomplish what He needs. The answer of whether or not it is right to hide from God's call is found in the motive of why we are hiding. If fear and insecurity are controlling our effectiveness for God, we need to determine to step out in faith and trust that God will be the strength we need.

6. In 1 Samuel 12:3-5, Samuel asked if there was anyone who was accusing him of any misdeeds. In his high offices as prophet and judge, he would have faced opportunities to become corrupt. What can we do to make sure that we are not corrupted by power at any level?

Allow your class to submit their suggestions for avoiding corruption. Some possible helps could include establishing checks and balances and making oneself accountable to another. Discuss possible pitfalls they may encounter in today's competitive market as they "climb the corporate ladder." Ultimately, our personal integrity will come down to maintaining a vibrant relationship with God which will result in the Holy Spirit directing and dictating our actions each day.

7. In 1 Samuel 10:8, Samuel tells Saul to wait in Gilgal seven days and Samuel would come and offer a sacrifice. After Saul disobeyed Samuel and offered the sacrifice himself (1 Samuel 13:8-12), who did Saul blame? How does this parallel some people's actions today?

This instruction was given at the same time as the prophecies that were fulfilled upon Saul's journey home in chapter 10. He should have trusted that if Samuel were accurate in the first three prophecies, he would not fail regarding the fourth. But Saul went ahead of God's will. Then he blamed his army and Samuel for his own foolish decision. Today, many people blame someone else for their own problems. You might wish to provide your class with some newspaper headlines that tie to the idea of blaming others for personal choices. Conclude this question by reinforcing that we always need to strive toward taking responsibility for our actions. Ultimately, we will stand before God as individuals, and take the punishment or reward for the choices we made in life.

8. Contrast the actions of Jonathan in 1 Samuel 14:6-15 with those of Saul in 1 Samuel 15:2-9. What was done right? What was done wrong?

It should be brought out that the faith of Jonathan and his armor bearer were the keys to the victory. Jonathan inquired of the Lord what to do and when he got the answer, he followed it wholly. Saul was given strict instruction, and although he showed good sense by letting the Kenites go, he failed miserably in following the Lord's commands and lost the kingdom because of his disobedience.

CONCLUSION

Saul got ahead of God several times by trying to do things in his own way instead of following God's commands. Let us pray that we have the patience to rely on God for every part of our lives, and let Him lead. His timing is always perfect!

DISCOVERY

Teacher's Guide

David

SOURCE FOR QUESTIONS

1 Samuel 16:1 through 31:13

KEY VERSE FOR MEMORIZATION

"And David behaved himself wisely in all his ways; and the LORD was with him." (1 Samuel 18:14)

BACKGROUND

Because of Saul's disobedience to God's clear commandments, and his subsequent lying about what he had done, God had rejected him from being king. Saul was still on the throne, but yet was unfit to lead the nation. For this reason, God instructed the prophet Samuel to anoint a new king in Saul's place.

Chapter 16 begins with Samuel anointing David to the throne. The narrative stresses that both Samuel and Jesse, David's father, assumed that one of David's older brothers would be chosen. However, the selection fell outside of human expectations. The Lord had chosen David in advance, and then confirmed His choice by sending His Spirit on David.

David's confidence in God is apparent in his contest with the Philistine giant, Goliath. Armies of that day commonly pitted their strongest warriors against each other in order to avoid the high cost of a full-scale battle. After a forty-day standoff, in which no Israelite soldier dared to confront the champion of the Philistines, the youthful shepherd volunteered to face Goliath in a battle to the death. Fully trusting in God for victory, he faced the giant and felled him with a single stone. Realizing that their hero was dead, the Philistine forces retreated, followed in close pursuit by the Israelites, and a great victory was won.

As David rose in popularity as a hero among the people, Saul's fits of insane jealousy produced a hatred for David that consumed him. Saul sought to put David deliberately in a position where he would be killed in battle, but those attempts failed. David ended up marrying the king's daughter, Michal, and developing a deep bond of friendship with Saul's son, Jonathan—in spite of the fact that Jonathan would have been the natural heir to the throne. Saul's initial assassination attempts having been thwarted, the erring king took more overt measures and attempted to use his slaves, his oldest son, his soldiers, and his own efforts to kill David. However, God repeatedly and miraculously intervened to protect His chosen leader.

Chapters 21 and 22 record the beginning of David's life as a fugitive. A group of Israelite men joined him, and God repeatedly helped David escape Saul's men. Twice, when opportunity arose for

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David to kill Saul, he refused to do so because Saul was God's anointed leader over Israel. At last, convinced that David had no intentions of killing him, King Saul acknowledged his own wrongdoing and ceased his attempts to kill David.

When the Philistine troops gathered to fight against Israel, Saul responded by leading his army toward the battle. However, he sought insight from a witch regarding the battle—a practice strictly forbidden in God's law. In the end, Saul's sin drove him to suicide, and his sons were killed in battle.

The events in this text block cover a period of at least ten years, for David was not quite old enough to go to war when he was anointed by Samuel, and he was thirty when he ascended the throne of Judah (see 2 Samuel 5:4).

SUGGESTED RESPONSE TO QUESTIONS

1. The Lord commanded Samuel to anoint one of Jesse's sons to be Israel's next king (1 Samuel 16). What characteristics did Samuel use to evaluate Jesse's sons? What did the Lord use?

Samuel was considering the outward appearance of Jesse's sons, wondering which one of these handsome, tall men the Lord would choose. In that culture, the eldest son was almost always given the position of leadership in the clan, and therefore, Samuel's eyes most naturally fell on Eliab. But the Lord let him know that He was looking for the inward character of the heart. Discuss with your class what we can learn from this about how we evaluate others. What are the dangers of judging by outward appearances?

2. What kind of a person was David? Look up the following Scriptures and write a brief review on the character of David.

Your students' review of these verses should bring out the following characteristics of David.

1 Samuel 16:18 – *Mighty, valiant, prudent, and possessed the Spirit of the Lord*

1 Samuel 17:20, 26, 32-37, 45-47– *Obedient, zealous for Israel, trusted God in frightening situations, brave*

1 Samuel 18:14, 22-23 – *Wise, humble*

1 Samuel 23:1-5 – *Prayed and obeyed*

1 Samuel 24:1-11; 26:6-12 – *Honored God's chosen leader*

1 Samuel 29:3 – *Faultless*

3. Using the Scriptures in the previous question, along with the description of Goliath in 1 Samuel 17:4-10,42-44, contrast David and Goliath.

Goliath had been trained in matters of war from his youth; David had no military training whatsoever. Goliath was outfitted with a coat of mail, bronze armor, and powerful weapons; David wore only his

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simple shepherd's garments and carried a sling. Goliath was proud and self-reliant, confident that he could not be defeated; David was humble and God-reliant, willing to face danger in order to defend the Name of God, which Goliath had blasphemed.

4. What was the secret of David's success in battle (1 Samuel 23:1-5)? How can we, as Christians, possess the same kind of confidence and courage?

The secret of David's success was his faith in God, brought about by continued contact through prayer and worship. David left nothing to chance. He consulted the Lord earnestly and often, always endeavoring to do the Lord's will and not what seemed right.

Your students' response to the second question should center on the fact that if we want to have confidence and courage like David had, we must commune with God as David did. There are no shortcuts to a close walk with God.

5. Jonathan, next in line for the throne of Israel, acknowledged David's divine appointment when he gave David his royal robes and weapons. What qualities stand out in Jonathan's character? 1 Samuel 19:2-7; 20:1-42

Class discussion should bring out that Jonathan was faithful and loyal; he stood by his best friend, David, and helped and comforted him despite opposition. He was amazingly selfless. He was obedient to God, trusting that the Lord knew what He was doing in taking the future kingship from him and giving it to David. Jonathan could have made a move to become the next king by killing his rival, but he did not do so because of his love for both God and David.

Using Jonathan's example, lead your group in a discussion of some things we can do to build new friendships or strengthen existing ones with other believers. Bring out that Jonathan's selflessness, his loyalty, and his commitment to his friend were qualities that built the strong and enduring bond between these two men.

6. Jonathan secretly communicated Saul's murderous designs to David, and as a result, he suffered the wrath of his insanely jealous father. What are some possible results when we take a stand for what is right?

Initially, your class discussion will likely bring out that taking a stand for the right could result in the loss of a friendship, ridicule, or harassment. In some parts of the world, such a stand may even result in loss of employment, persecution, or even physical harm and death. Once these possibilities are explored, bring out that good can also result from taking a stand for the right. Others may be impacted by our courage. In Jonathan's case, his stand for right preserved the life of God's anointed King.

7. David had several opportunities to take matters into his own hands (chapters 24-26). How did David "behave himself wisely?"

Although King Saul was disobedient and unfit to rule, and David had been anointed king by Samuel, David trusted the Lord, waited on Him, and did what was right. Focus on the great respect David had for Saul's position as the Lord's anointed, indicated by the fact that he refused to yield to the temptation to kill Saul. Ask your class: When the enemy places a tempting situation before you, how should you respond?

8. How did David demonstrate his faith and trust in God? 1 Samuel 22:5; 23:2

David demonstrated his trust and reliance upon God by asking advice from the prophet Gad and following that advice, and by praying earnestly and often. He would not proceed with battle plans until he had received permission from the Lord. Ask your class: In what ways are ongoing prayer and submission to the Lord's will the marks of a true Christian?

9. What was David's attitude when Abigail confronted him and prevented him from acting rashly and unwisely (1 Samuel 25)? Name three things we can learn from his response.

David listened to what Abigail said and quickly acknowledged his error. As your students offer their list of things we can learn, the following points could be covered: It is very important that we acknowledge any error and accept correction. We should always think before we react. We should not attempt to take vengeance into our own hands. We should accept rebuke with a humble spirit.

Because of his humility, David appreciated Abigail's rebuke and was thankful that she had interceded to prevent him from doing something wrong. Likewise, if we cultivate a spirit of humility, we will be able to accept correction and advice from others, which is intended to help and guide us.

CONCLUSION

Despite the trials and difficulties brought on by Saul's persecution, David behaved himself wisely and trusted the Lord. Let us follow his example and trust the Lord in every circumstance, seek His guidance, and behave ourselves wisely in this present, evil world.

DISCOVERY

Teacher's Guide

David's Successes

SOURCE FOR QUESTIONS

2 Samuel 1:1 through 9:13

KEY VERSE FOR MEMORIZATION

"Wherefore thou art great, O Lord God: for there is none like thee, neither is there any God beside thee, according to all that we have heard with our ears." (2 Samuel 7:22)

BACKGROUND

The Book of 2 Samuel is really a continuation of the Book of 1 Samuel. Originally, the two were written together as a history for the people of Israel and Judah. Together, the two books chronicle the transition in Israel from the time of the judges to the rule of the kings. They specifically tell the accounts of Samuel, Israel's last ruling judge; Saul, Israel's first king; and David, Israel's second and greatest king.

The Book of 1 Samuel is concerned mostly with the reign of Saul, his downfall, God's appointment of David to become the next king, and how God put the shepherd boy David into a position to become king.

The Book of 2 Samuel records the culmination of God's plans for David. Finally, after David had spent many years running and hiding from Saul and his armies, the deaths of Saul and Jonathan had opened the throne to David. After asking God what he should do, he moved to Hebron and became king of Judah, but it was not until seven and a half years later (2 Samuel 5:5), that he finally was able to govern the unified kingdom of Israel. His reign lasted a total of forty years and six months.

Of note in this account is David's attitude. No matter what happened, he was determined to honor God, and to honor Saul as God's anointed king before him. This attitude is evident in the first chapter, when David learned of the deaths of Saul and Jonathan. David tore his clothing as a sign of mourning, and wept and fasted to show his grief. In chapter 1, verses 19-27, the author included David's beautiful expression of honor and lament for the two men.

Although David had known for years that he would be Israel's next king, his patient attitude regarding his actual appointment was exemplary. During the years of civil war between Judah (who had installed him as their king) and Israel (who were following Saul's son Ish-bosheth and his advisors), David was willing to leave the matter with God. His attitude showed that he knew God would work it all out in His own time.

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In chapters 6 and 7, the author tells how David brought the Ark of the Covenant back to Jerusalem, and of David's desire to build a permanent house of God to replace the Tabernacle. God honored David's desire to please him by promising him that his throne would be established forever (2 Samuel 7:16).

Chapter 8 tells of David's military victories, and chapter 9 tells the story of how David honored the descendents of Saul and Jonathan through Jonathan's son, Mephibosheth.

SUGGESTED RESPONSE TO QUESTIONS

1. What was David's immediate reaction when he learned of Saul's death? What does this reveal about David's character? 2 Samuel 1:11-12

Instead of rejoicing that his enemy was dead, David mourned the death of God's anointed. He remembered Saul and honored him. This shows David as a man of integrity and honor. Ask your class what the natural reaction of a person would be in David's position. Discuss what our attitudes and feelings should be when someone who opposes us fails. A hypothetical situation could be that a coworker who persecutes a Christian is demoted or fired from a job.

2. In 2 Samuel 1:17-27, the author included David's lament for Saul and Jonathan. Why do you suppose he did this?

This was the author's way of establishing that David did not arrange for the deaths of Saul and Jonathan. His lament showed David's honor of them in spite of the circumstances. This would have been an important aspect of establishing David as a person who was worthy to be Israel's king. The people of Israel and Judah were observing David's reaction. Bring out that those around us are also observing our reactions. If we honor God even in difficult times and we do not have a vengeful spirit, others will notice, and our credibility and witness will be increased.

3. In 2 Samuel 2:18-28 and 3:17-39, the author tells about the civil war between Israel and Judah, including the report of the deaths of Asahel and Abner. Asahel was fighting for David (Judah), and Abner was on the side of Saul's family (Israel). What is the end result of conflicts between individuals, families, and organizations?

The end result may be bitterness, pain, division, etc. In this case, the people from both sides knew each other. It is obvious from Abner's response to Asahel that he did not want to kill him because he respected Asahel's brother, Joab. Saul's disobedience to God had far-reaching consequences even after his death, and one of these consequences was a bloody civil war that put brothers, friends, neighbors, and loved ones against each other in battle.

It is important to obey God and live as peaceably as we can with those around us. However, some

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conflict is inevitable within the human family. When we face conflict, we need to be sure our attitudes are right toward God and those around us, and do our best to resolve the issues with humility and soft words.

4. The two traitors who killed Ishbosheth in chapter 4 expected to be rewarded by David for eliminating his rival. What was David's reaction when they brought him Ishbosheth's head?

Instead of rewarding them as they expected, he had them executed for their cold-blooded killing of a righteous man. David trusted in God; he knew that God had promised him the throne of Israel, so he did not need traitors to go and kill the king in order to get it. He knew that God would fulfill His promises. Lead your students into a discussion regarding how God will bring His will to pass without our intervention or the intervention of others.

5. In 2 Samuel 6:1-11, what was David's mistake in moving the Ark as he did? (See Exodus 25:10-22) In light of Exodus 25:22, why was it important for the Ark to be moved to Jerusalem?

The Ark was designed by God to be moved using staves that were passed through rings attached to the corners of the Ark. It was to be moved by the sons of Levi whose duty was to care for the Ark. Instead, David decided to transport the Ark in an ox-cart. When the cart became unstable, Uzzah, who was not a Levite and had not been cleansed, reached out to steady it. This was a grave offence, as we can read in Numbers 4:15. The Ark was a holy thing, and if it was touched by anyone other than the chosen priests, that person would die. God did not want the holiness of the Ark to be breached, so he killed Uzzah instantly when he touched the Ark.

The Ark was important because it signified God's presence in Israel. In Exodus 25:22, God promised that His Spirit would dwell between the cherubims on the Mercy Seat of the Ark. This was a visual demonstration of God's presence. Also, the Ark contained artifacts to remind the people of special times when God had protected and cared for them. Both for spiritual and morale reasons, it was important for the Ark to be in the capital city of David's kingdom.

6. In chapter 7, David expressed his desire to God to build a permanent dwelling for Him. What was God's response to David's desire?

Although it was not God's plan for David to build His house, He was pleased with David's desire to honor Him, and He gave David a number of promises. In verse 16, we read where God told David, " . . . thine house and thy kingdom shall be established for ever before thee: thy throne shall be established for ever." David trusted God to fulfill that promise. Jesus, a descendent of David, sits on the throne in Heaven forever fulfilling this promise that God made to David.

7. In chapter 9, David sought out Saul's descendent, Mephibosheth. What was his purpose in this, and how might this meeting have been different than what Mephibosheth expected it to be?

David wanted to honor Jonathan. He did this by restoring Saul's land to Mephibosheth, giving him servants to work the land, and creating a permanent place for him at the king's table. Mephibosheth might have expected that David would want to kill him since he was Saul's last remaining heir and could have possibly made a claim to the throne. Instead, David gave him an honored place in the kingdom. Discuss why it is important to do right even though it might appear to be personally damaging.

8. Throughout the text of this lesson, there are many incidents that show the quality of David's character. What kind of person was David, and how did he please God?

David was a godly man who tried to walk before God with integrity and faithfulness. He continually showed respect for those who could have been his enemies, and he honored the places of authority that God allowed them to have.

In addition to this, David trusted God to bring about His plan for him. On several occasions people tried to help the plan along by killing David's rivals, and they were met, each time, with punishment and dishonor rather than being rewarded for eliminating an enemy.

9. In examining your own life, what are some elements of David's character that you could cultivate in your own spiritual walk?

Use the students' responses to develop a list of David's admirable qualities. Discuss how we can nurture these qualities in our own lives. David honored God in his treatment of others, and he trusted God to work out His plan in David's own life.

CONCLUSION

Just as he did for David, God has a plan for each of us. Sometimes it takes a while for God's plan to come to completion. We can chafe at having to wait on God, or we can follow David's example and use our waiting time to carefully develop godly character in our lives.

DISCOVERY

Teacher's Guide

David's Sin

SOURCE FOR QUESTIONS

2 Samuel 10:1 through 12:31

KEY VERSE FOR MEMORIZATION

"And David said unto Nathan, I have sinned against the LORD. And Nathan said unto David, The LORD also hath put away thy sin; thou shalt not die." (2 Samuel 12:13)

BACKGROUND

The text for today's lesson finds David involved in yet another battle. Unlike many others, this one was not initiated by David, but was in response to the indignities his servants suffered at the hands of Hanun, the new king of Ammon. Mistaking David's offer of condolences for the recent loss of their king as nothing more than a ploy to spy out their city, the Ammonites proceeded to send David a message by mistreating his servants.

Inexperienced and vulnerable, Hanun hired mercenaries from the area north of Israel to fight for him. Their strategy was to hit Israel's army from the rear while Israel was engaged in battle with the soldiers of Rabbath-Ammon — modern day Amman, Jordan. Joab, David's trusted captain of the guard quickly realized what was happening and split their much smaller army with his brother, Abishai. While Joab and "all the choice men of Israel" fought the mercenaries, Abishai led the rest of the army in their attack against the Ammonite city. Joab and Abishai agreed that if either of them saw the other in need during the battle, they would join forces.

The phrase in the first verse of chapter 11, "at the time when kings go forth to battle," refers to the specific time of year when armies went to war. In Biblical times, the large armies, often numbering in the hundreds of thousands, needed large quantities of food and water to simply sustain the soldiers. It was impractical or even impossible for armies to bring along enough to feed everyone. Instead of trying to bring provisions from the homeland, armies would wait until crops were ready to harvest in the territory where the conflict would be. In the ancient Near East, barley, the grain that ripened first, was ready for harvest in the spring. Spring also meant the end of the rainy season, thus making travel by foot much easier and faster.

Unlike current day battles, these men fought hand-to-hand. They typically fought during the day, and the battle lines moved depending on which side prevailed. On this occasion, the battle occurred outside the city walls of Rabbath-Ammon. Following their initial

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defeat by Joab, the mercenaries regrouped and met David's forces in a place called Helam. This area was located several miles northeast of Jerusalem, a few miles east of the Sea of Galilee.

Chapter 12 records the prophet Nathan's confrontation of David. Despite David's steps at covering up his sin with Bathsheba, Nathan had a message from God to deliver to him. Nathan devised an allegory to show the king the error of his ways, and David passed judgment without realizing he was condemning himself. Nathan saw that the king, although angry, was also vulnerable at this point. With one direct statement, "You are the man!" David's heart was pierced with the words of the Lord. David knew that he was guilty, so without argument, he acknowledged his sin and repented sincerely.

The consequences of sin often have their fulfillment after an individual is reconciled to God, as was the case with David. The pronouncement found in chapter 12 verse 10, "Now therefore the sword shall never depart from thine house; because thou hast despised me," followed David for the rest of his life.

Chapter 12 concludes with David going out to battle with his men. Joab had besieged the Ammonite city Rabbah, where Uriah had been slain, but sent word to the king requesting him to be there when they took the city so the credit would go to David and not to Joab. David went to Rabbah and led his men in the final attack that brought the city to its knees.

SUGGESTED RESPONSE TO QUESTIONS

1. Why did David desire to show kindness to Hanun, the new king of the Ammonites? 2 Samuel 10:2

Hanun's father, Nahash, had shown kindness to David; we are not told when, but possibly while King Saul threatened his life. The Ammonites were enemies of Israel, and during David's flight from King Saul, it is likely that the Ammonite king saw advantage in forming an alliance with David. It is possible that a bond was formed due to their mutual enemy — King Saul.

2. What happened as a result of Hanun, the new king of Ammon, listening to the poor advice of his counselors? 2 Samuel 10:3-7

The Ammonites humiliated David's servants by shaving off half of each of their beards, and by cutting off the lower half of their robes so that they were exposed. Israelite men wore full beards as a sign of maturity and respect. To shave half of it off was a highly offensive act. Cutting the men's clothes and forcing them to leave the city half naked was a serious affront. David was indignant and immediately launched his forces into battle with the Ammonites.

3. At times, other people may misinterpret our actions. How should we respond?

Thoughts presented by your class may include: pray for the person; clarify the misunderstanding, if

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that is possible; show kindness to the other person; forgive; refuse to be bitter or gossip about the matter.

4. In the episode with Bathsheba in 2 Samuel 11:1-5, what are three observations we can make about King David's behavior?

David's behavior led him further and further into sin. Class discussion may bring out thoughts such as:

- *As king, he should have been with his army, instead of tarrying in Jerusalem (verse 1).*
- *He failed to turn away from temptation (verse 4).*
- *He attempted to "cover up" his sin (verses 6-15).*

5. How might we learn from David's poor choices when it comes to temptation?

On a board, record your students' responses to combating temptation. Their thoughts might include: immediately call on God to give strength to resist, be prayed up, look ahead to avoid situations that might be tempting, read the Bible every day, etc. Discuss some or all of these suggestions and possibly allow volunteers to share how they overcame a specific temptation.

6. David took a number of decisive steps when he heard the news that Bathsheba was pregnant (2 Samuel 11:6-27). How did his first sin lead to the next sin and the next? What can we learn from this sequence that we can apply to our lives today?

David sent for Bathsheba's husband, Uriah, to come spend some time at home. David hoped that while on furlough, Uriah would sleep with his wife so no question of the child's paternity would arise. When these attempts failed, David sent a note back to the front lines to Joab detailing how he was to put Uriah in harm's way, with the express purpose that Uriah would be killed. Following Uriah's death, David quickly married Bathsheba in another effort to conceal his original sin. Lessons we can learn involve how often people commit additional sins in an effort to cover up another sin. Unconfessed sin will always bring trouble. It is always best to admit the deed, seek forgiveness, and ask God for strength to never repeat it.

7. The name Nathan means "God has given," and indeed God gave Nathan to David to be his prophet, counselor, and friend. Nathan was courageous and told David the truth, even when he did not know what the outcome would be. What creative means did God help Nathan utilize to make his point? 2 Samuel 12:1-4

Nathan used an allegory to make his point. In his story, the "poor man" was Uriah, the "little lamb" was Bathsheba, the "traveler" was David's lust, and the "rich man" was David himself. Once David pronounced judgment against the offending "king," Nathan pointedly informed the King that David was the guilty man. Lead your class into discussing possible situations when it would be more prudent to be tactful

versus blunt and to the point. Some examples could include: witnessing to the unsaved, dealing with unsaved teenage children, and correcting a peer in the Gospel. Comment on how necessary it is to have the guidance of the Spirit of God in difficult situations such as these.

8. Sin has consequences, and Nathan listed several for David (2 Samuel 12:10-12). What did God determine would happen to David and Bathsheba's child, and what was David's reaction to God's judgment?
2 Samuel 12:14-23

God determined that the child that had been conceived as a result of their sin would die. David reacted by fasting and praying to God to spare the child's life. After David agonized bitterly before God for seven days, the child died.

9. David repented once Nathan pointed out the error of his ways. As a result of his repentance, God spared David's life, but He did not mitigate all the judgment on David. What parallels can we draw for our own lives based on this account?

When people repent, God forgives. However, all the consequences of the sin may not disappear. An object lesson would be to take a board such as a 2x4 and pound a nail into it. Compare this to committing sin. When a sinner repents and God forgives, it is like taking the nail out. However, the hole in the board will remain (show the hole). In the same way, although God forgives us, some of the consequences and the scars may remain.

Consider posing a hypothetical situation and allowing your students to detail some possible good and bad results from a choice. For example, a high-school student who has been a Christian all through school attends an end-of-the-year party, and his fellow students begin drinking alcohol. What are some possible results if he stays at the party and is hung over the next morning? What if he repents? How would the results be different if he chooses to leave the party early rather than face the temptation to drink?

Challenge your students to daily follow God in every area of their lives.

CONCLUSION

Living a godly life involves more than living clean while in public. God sees us wherever we are, and we place our integrity on the line when we choose to do in secret what we would not do in public. If at any point we realize we have made such an error, we can do as David did and sincerely repent. God will never turn any honest seeker away.

DISCOVERY

Teacher's Guide

David's Struggles

SOURCE FOR QUESTIONS

2 Samuel 13:1 through 24:25

KEY VERSE FOR MEMORIZATION

"It is God that avengeth me, and that bringeth down the people under me, and that bringeth me forth from mine enemies: thou also hast lifted me up on high above them that rose up against me: thou hast delivered me from the violent man. Therefore I will give thanks unto thee, O LORD, among the heathen, and I will sing praises unto thy name." (2 Samuel 22:48-50)

BACKGROUND

David was a man of devotion to God, and had been anointed by God to be the leader over His chosen people. Although David was the most just of all Israel's kings, he was not perfect. After restoring the nation of Israel to peace and great military power, his personal life became entangled in sin. He committed adultery with Bathsheba and then ordered the murder of her husband in an attempt to cover up his deeds. Through the prophet Nathan, God rebuked David and pronounced severe judgment upon his household. In chapters 13 through 24 of 2 Samuel, God's judgment against David's household was fulfilled. Amnon, David's son, molested his half sister, Tamar. Absalom publicly humiliated David's concubines. Both David's sons — Amnon and Absalom — were killed.

David had to face the consequences of his sins, even though he repented and his connection to God was restored. A string of tragic events befell David's family; the record of lust, murder, rebellion, and exile, added up to a price David probably never dreamed he would have to pay when he first fell into sin. He also experienced trouble and distress on a national level, having to flee for his own life when his kingship was challenged through the treachery of Absalom.

David lived with ongoing reminders of his sinful deeds for the rest of his life. This account of the final years of his life serves as a warning to us of the terrible consequences of sin, but also of the great mercy of God when one turns from sin in repentance.

The final four chapters of 2 Samuel give an "addendum" to David's life story, and are not necessarily in chronological order. His final psalm is given, and his best warriors are listed. The sad story is given of how David numbered Israel and the resulting judgment. But then the writer recounts David's beautiful declaration that he would only offer to God that which cost him something. David's life serves as an object lesson to us yet today.

OPENER

SUGGESTED RESPONSE TO QUESTIONS

1. In 2 Samuel 13:31, King David responds with deep grief over events that had occurred in his family. In two or three sentences, summarize the cause of his grief.

Your students' answers should provide a summary of the events of chapter 13. David's son Amnon had yielded to his lust for his half-sister Tamar and had raped her, and in revenge for this despicable act, Absalom had murdered Amnon. This caused fear in the hearts of David's other sons, and they all fled. Initially, word came to David that all of his sons had been slain. Though this drastic report proved to be false, David was deeply grieved because of the untimely death of Amnon, his first-born son.

Bring out to your class that God had said that David's family would suffer as a result of his adultery with Bathsheba and his subsequent murder of Uriah (2 Samuel 12:9-10). The events of this chapter recount the beginning of that promised judgment.

2. In our day of moral relativism, many people believe that their own behavior is a matter of personal choice. How do the consequences of sin, disobedience, and rebellion affect the lives of others? Cite specific examples to support your answer.

Sin, disobedience, and rebellion bring pain, damage, and grief into the lives of others, not only to the victims but also to those who follow the example of the perpetrator. Allow time for your students to cite specific examples. You could come prepared with some examples drawn from your local newspapers; they should not be hard to find.

You may wish to bring out that the closer the connection, the greater the impact of the sinful behavior: for example, the lifestyle chosen by parents often has a tremendous impact on their children. Relate the discussion to today's lesson, pointing out that in Absalom, David saw the results of his own past sins.

3. Following his murder of Amnon, Absalom was forced to flee from Jerusalem. In an attempt to have him restored to royal favor, Joab hired a "wise woman" of Tekoa to approach David with a contrived story paralleling David's own experience with Absalom. How did David respond? 2 Samuel 14:11-21

David quickly reacted with a merciful judgment in the matter, and promised forgiveness and protection to this widow's son based on the fact that two wrongs do not make a right. It would not do to kill the heir of the departed Israelite and thus cut off his inheritance among God's people. Then the true purpose of the woman's account was revealed. David saw in the story a rebuke of his own treatment of Absalom, and gave permission to Absalom to return to Jerusalem, although he was ordered to remain in his own house and was not allowed to see his father.

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4. When confronted with his sin concerning Bathsheba and Uriah, David acknowledged it and wholeheartedly repented. God forgave him, opening the way for him to begin life anew. Using 2 Samuel 13:28 and 15:2-4, 10,14, contrast Absalom's behavior with that of his father.

Absalom sinned and kept on sinning. As a proud, independent, and scheming young man, he followed his sin of murder with conniving against his father, an unlawful assumption of the throne, and the attempted murder of his father. Absalom not only rejected his father's love, but he also rejected God's love.

Bring out to your students that God offers forgiveness, but we will not experience that forgiveness until we confess our sins and completely and wholeheartedly repent of them. God knows the heart, and he will never turn aside one who comes to Him with "a broken heart; and . . . a contrite spirit"(Psalm 34:18).

5. In chapter 16, we read of Shimei's verbal tirade against David. How did David respond to the insults and curses heaped upon him? What lesson can we learn from his attitude? 2 Samuel 16:5-14

Shimei's verbal abuse was unjustified because David had not had any part in Saul's death. David quietly tolerated the abuse, because He knew that his deliverance would come from God (2 Samuel 16:12).

Discussion of the second question should bring out that maintaining our composure in the face of unjust criticism or verbal assault can be a difficult experience. However, God knows what we are enduring and He will help us to respond in a Christ-like manner if we will look to Him. Notice that David's trust was in the fact that the Lord controlled the circumstances that came his way. What assurance this brings when we are assailed by the fiery darts of the enemy! Encourage your students to share examples from their own experience or knowledge of times when the Lord helped one to respond quietly to an unjustified attack. What might be the results in the lives of the one attacked, the assailant, and/or the onlookers when a godly response is given?

6. In 2 Samuel 18:6-18, we read Absalom's death; verse 33 records David's great anguish. Why do you think David was so upset over the death of his rebellious son?

David truly loved his son, even though Absalom's actions certainly made him undeserving of that love. David also may have recognized that his actions, at least in part, contributed to Absalom's death. Perhaps some of his grief revolved around the ignominious nature of Absalom's death, and the fact that he had been killed in direct violation of David's command that no one should harm him.

7. David's grief for Absalom was so intense that it appeared he did not appreciate the military victory that

had been won. Joab pointed out that there would be terrible consequences if David did not commend the troops for their achievement. For the sake of political strategy, he urged David to go and "speak comfortably unto thy servants." What was the result? 2 Samuel 19:8

David followed Joab's advice, and went forth and sat in the gate. The people came before the king and were shortly convinced that the king should be brought back to the royal city.

Here is an opportunity to discuss with your class the fact that, at times, God may place us in a position where we must offer advice to a fellow brother or sister. What attitude of heart should we have in such cases? How might our manner of delivery impact the acceptance or rejection of the message?

8. In Chapter 24, David commanded that a census be taken, which brought the anger of the Lord against Israel and a pestilence resulting in 70,000 deaths throughout the land. When David pled with God for "these sheep," God commanded him to make an offering in the threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite. Araunah offered to give David the property and the necessities for the offering. What was David's response, and what can we learn from it? 2 Samuel 24:24

David would not accept the generosity of Araunah, for he felt that if he did so, the offering would not have been his *offering. David purchased Araunah's threshing floor, oxen, and wooden plows for full price — the latter two purchases being used as sacrificial animals and fuel for the altar fire.*

Ask your class what Biblical principle is illustrated here. Conclude together that God puts a high value on sacrificial offerings. The only meaningful sacrifice is one that costs us something, and paying the full price is what makes it meaningful. Our giving must be from our hearts. When God requires a consecration from us, what is the motive of our hearts when we yield to Him? Are we just giving to "get" a blessing? Or are we giving because we want to please God with every part of our being?

9. Chapter 22 is filled with significant insights into God and what it means to have Him as our God. What major themes are developed in David's song as recorded in this chapter?

Class responses will likely bring out that themes include "praise," "deliverance," and "salvation." Use these words as column headings, and note under each one the verses that pertain to these thoughts.

Discuss with your class how praise, deliverance, and salvation were a major part of David's life, noting specific examples of each. Among godly role models in the Bible, probably no one stands out more than David in relation to these three words. Thoughts along these lines could be a method of summarizing David's entire life as a conclusion to our study of 1 and 2 Samuel.

CONCLUSION

Through the help of God, David had accomplished what no other leader before him had accomplished — Israel was finally at peace after more than 400 years of political upheaval. Throughout his reign, the basis of David's administration was dedication to God and the well-being of the people. Though he failed God, he admitted his guilt and repented. His devotion toward God ultimately earned him the honor of being called "a man after God's own heart" (Acts 13:22).

DISCOVERY

Teacher's Guide

Solomon's Reign

SOURCE FOR QUESTIONS

1 Kings 1:1 through 11:43

KEY VERSE FOR MEMORIZATION

"Of the nations concerning which the LORD said unto the children of Israel, Ye shall not go in to them, neither shall they come in unto you: for surely they will turn away your heart after their gods: Solomon clave unto these in love." (1 Kings 11:2)

BACKGROUND

The first two chapters of 1 Kings give an account of the closing years of David's reign, concluding the account recorded in 2 Samuel. They cover the transition from his reign to the reign of his son, Solomon. The main events of this Book are the death of David, Solomon's reign and death, the division of the kingdom, and Elijah's ministry.

As David was on his deathbed, his fourth son Adonijah (the logical choice to succeed him as the first three sons, Amnon, Daniel, and Absalom, were dead by this time) attempted to seize the throne without David's knowledge and proclaimed himself king. When the news reached David, he declared that his son Solomon, born to him by Bathsheba, was to be the next ruler. He gave the order for Solomon's anointing, thus quickly instituting temporary co-regency. Immediately following the anointing, the trumpet was blown to alert the people that the king's choice had been anointed.

A mule was a prized animal, to be ridden by the wealthy and powerful. A strong message was sent when Solomon was given King David's mule to ride. (Only the king rode the king's mule.) Sacrifices were offered when a new king was anointed, demonstrating the nation's joy over a new king. These were called peace offerings, and were offered by the priest. Although Adonijah declared himself as king, he did not have the religious ceremony following, while Solomon did.

Solomon began his reign in the steps of his father David, acting in obedience to the Lord. Though he was given wisdom from God, he began making choices that would eventually lead to his downfall.

Chapters 3 and 4 relate the granting of wisdom to Solomon and the grandeur of his kingdom. Chapters 5 through 9 describe Solomon's building projects and the dedication of the Temple. Chapters 9 through 11 record his greatness, his ultimate downfall, and his death.

OPENER

SUGGESTED RESPONSE TO QUESTIONS

1. What was David's parting advice to Solomon? 1 Kings 2:2-4

David told Solomon how important it was to keep God as the center of his kingdom. God would keep His promise to preserve the kingdom if Solomon did his part. In verses 5 through 9, David gave Solomon advice about relations with others—those who had cursed David and those who were allies.

2. Why was Solomon so swift to remove his adversaries at the beginning of his reign, and how did it benefit him? 1 Kings 2:13-46

Because Solomon was swift in his judgments against those who tried to take control, he established his authority early on and sent a clear message that he was now king. Direct the class into a discussion of what steps we may need to take as new Christians in regard to our connections with the ungodly.

3. What did Solomon request from God? Why was God pleased with Solomon's request? 1 Kings 3:5-14

Solomon's request was for an understanding heart. He asked for wisdom that he might "discern between good and bad; for who is able to judge this thy so great a people?" His attitude pleased God because he did not seek personal gain or acclaim. Though Solomon did not ask for wealth, God gave him riches and long life as well.

Class discussion could include the thought that setting our sights on riches will only leave us dissatisfied. Putting God and His work first will satisfy our deepest needs, bringing more benefits than we ever could imagine, though they may not be material in nature.

4. What was Solomon's first demonstration of great wisdom? 1 Kings 3:16-28

Solomon's first demonstration of great wisdom occurred when two harlots brought one baby to him, both claiming to be the mother of the child. One of the women had smothered her child during the night. When Solomon suggested the child be divided between the two women by cutting it in two, the real mother quickly said to give it to the other, thus preserving the life of the child. Solomon returned the child to its real mother.

5. According to 1 Kings 5:13-14, Solomon employed three times as many workers as were needed for the Temple project, and then rotated their schedules so they did not have to be away from their homes and families for long periods of time. Why do you think this was a wise move?

No doubt Solomon's prudent arrangement alleviated widespread discontent among the workers. It

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showed his concern for the welfare of his workers and the importance he placed on family life. The strength of a nation is closely correlated with the strength of its families. Solomon seemingly recognized that one's family should always be a high priority. Discuss with your students the importance of arranging our own work schedules to minimize any negative impact on our families.

6. What was the intent of the Queen of Sheba when she came to visit Solomon? (1 Kings 10:1) What was her reaction after she had spent time with him?

The Queen of Sheba, traveling to Solomon's court from modern-day Yemen, came with "hard questions" originally planned to test Solomon's wisdom that had been proclaimed throughout her part of the world. Riddles and proverbs were often used to test wisdom and she probably brought along quite a few, but when she arrived and was witness to Solomon's wisdom, the Bible says, "there was no more spirit in her." She accepted that what she had heard about Solomon was true.

7. How did Solomon's acceptance of wives from foreign religions affect the course of his life? Does compromise affect Christianity today? Explain.

By marrying women from idolatrous nations, Solomon opened the door to sin. God had given him specific instructions not to do this, but he disregarded God's command. In the end, Solomon allowed idolatry to take over and, although he may have still believed in his heart that the God of Israel was the one true God, he caved in to the pressures from his wives to worship their gods.

Compromise certainly can affect Christianity today. We must be careful not to allow ungodly influences to impact our spiritual lives. Outline several areas where the secular perspectives have infiltrated the church in our day: an acceptance of second marriages, homosexuality, immorality, abortion, etc. A lack of resistance to these philosophies may seem like a small thing to start with, but eventually, it will separate us from God.

8. How would you sum up the reign of Solomon? What were his strengths? What eventually led to his downfall?

Solomon reigned over Israel for forty years. The majority of those years were spent honoring God and are sometimes referred to by historians as Israel's Golden Age. His strengths included being the wisest man who ever lived, and building God's Temple in Jerusalem. His weaknesses included his lust for women, marrying women from heathen nations, and excessively taxing his people to support his wives and concubines.

9. What principles or precepts did you learn from the study of Solomon that you can apply to your own life?

Your students' answers to this question should provide a good way of summarizing the key points of this lesson.

CONCLUSION

While our start in the Christian life is vital, how we finish is of even greater importance!

DISCOVERY

Teacher's Guide

Divided Kingdom

SOURCE FOR QUESTIONS

1 Kings 12:1 through 16:34

KEY VERSE FOR MEMORIZATION

"And it came to pass, when all Israel heard that Jeroboam was come again, that they sent and called him unto the congregation, and made him king over all Israel: there was none that followed the house of David, but the tribe of Judah only." (1 Kings 12:20)

BACKGROUND

Chapters 12 through 16 of 1 Kings record the division of Israel into the separate nations of Judah and Israel, and their respective histories up to the time of Elijah. God allowed this division to occur because of Solomon's disobedience and idolatry. In 1 Kings 11:9-13, the stage is set for the events that followed.

Solomon's son, Rehoboam, was heir to the throne of the united Israel. However, due to God's judgment against Solomon's idolatry, Rehoboam became king only of Judah, which included the absorbed tribe of Benjamin. Solomon's servant, Jeroboam, became king of the ten northern tribes known as Israel. The two kingdoms were at war throughout the next 260 years.

For approximately three years, Rehoboam seemingly followed in the way of the Lord (2 Chronicles 11:13-17). Yet as soon as he became king, Rehoboam turned from God, and led Judah into deeper sin. Similarly, Abijam (Abijah), Rehobam's son and successor, initially seemed to have respect for God (he brought freewill offerings to the house of the Lord and, according to 2 Chronicles 13:4-18, called on God to provide victory in battle), but was not a godly man. His true heart was revealed by his continued worship of false gods. Religious apostasy deepened under his rule.

Following Abijam's short reign of three years, Judah enjoyed many years under the righteous reigns of King Asa and his son, Jehoshaphat (1 Kings 15:24). Asa's steps to turn Judah back to the worship of God included driving out the male cult prostitutes brought in by his father and removing all the idols his father had made. He displaced Maachah as queen mother, thus removing her influence toward idolatry. He also began to replenish the treasury of the Lord's house.

During this same time frame, Israel endured a series of kings whose hearts were far from God. Unlike Judah, who had some kings who were devoted to God, Israel never had a king that did right in the sight of God. This apostasy started with Jeroboam's introduction of a substitute religion and calf worship.

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God pronounced judgment against Jeroboam because he led the people into sin, and debauchery was widespread among the next kings in Israel. Each successor went to bloody extremes to rid himself of potential threat from any relative of the previous king. Following Jeroboam's death, Nadab assumed the throne, but in fulfillment of God's prophecy concerning the destruction of the house of Jeroboam, Baasha assassinated Nadab and went on to kill all the males of the house of Jeroboam.

Baasha reigned for twenty-four years and was succeeded by his son, Elah, who reigned only two years before Zimri, one of his military commanders, assassinated him. Zimri destroyed the house of Baasha, but only lasted seven days as king because the people proclaimed Omri, commander of the army, as king.

Following four years of struggle, Omri established himself as king over Israel. The rule of his house lasted for forty-eight years through his reign and the reigns of Ahab, Ahaziah, and Jehoram. These kings all followed after the evil practices of calf worship, which ultimately brought their destruction.

SUGGESTED RESPONSE TO QUESTIONS

1. The nations of Israel and Judah were divided, partly because Rehoboam listened to the advice of the young men and gave a rough reply when the people asked him to lighten their yoke (1 Kings 12:1-16). Compare the advice of the old men in 1 Kings 12:7 to the advice of the young men in 1 Kings 12:10-11, and explain why the advice of the old men was superior.

The young men wanted Rehoboam to show his power by using threats and rough words, whereas the old men advised Rehoboam to have the heart of a servant and use good words with the people. Effective leadership cannot be based upon threats. The older, wiser counselors knew that effective leaders lead by example: if you want people to serve you, then be a servant to them. Ask your class if there have been times when they listened to wise counsel. What were some of the results?

2. Through Ahijah the prophet, God told Jeroboam that he would establish his house if Jeroboam would be obedient and keep God's commandments (1 Kings 11:38). Read 1 Kings 12:26-33 to see Jeroboam's response. Why did Jeroboam forsake God and set up golden calf idols in the towns of Bethel and Dan?

Jeroboam was afraid that if the people went to Jerusalem to offer sacrifices to God in the Temple, they would turn their hearts back to king Rehoboam of Judah. To protect his political power, Jeroboam lead the people into gross idolatry. You could develop a discussion around the advantages of obeying God even when it may mean losing personal position.

3. Three miracles were performed by the prophet of Judah (1 Kings 13:1-6), yet Jeroboam did not turn

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from his idolatry (1 Kings 13:33,34). Why do you think Jeroboam persisted in his disobedience even after seeing the miracles? Compare this to the reaction of unbelievers today when they observe God at work.

In 1 Kings 14:9, God says that Jeroboam cast God behind his back. Jeroboam was so intent on having his own way that he hardened his heart and turned his back on God. As your students make a comparison to the reaction of unbelievers today, the thought should be brought out that once people have determined to disobey God, they may be so blinded by self-will that even miracles or signs from Heaven will not bring them to their senses.

4. The prophet of Judah knew how important it was to obey God's instructions (1 Kings 13:7-10), and yet he was persuaded to disobey by the old prophet of Bethel. What arguments did the old prophet use to foster disobedience in the prophet of Judah? (See 1 Kings 13:15-19.) How might similar arguments be presented to tempt us to disobey God's commands today?

The old prophet had two main arguments: "I am a prophet, just like you," and "An angel spoke the word of the Lord to me." Similarly, people today may claim to be Christians, or they may claim that God has spoken to them directly. However, if their words contradict the plain teaching of Scripture, we should take the words of Paul the Apostle to heart: "But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed" (Galatians 1:8).

5. Why do you think the lion killed the prophet of Judah? (See 1 Kings 13:20-32.) What can we learn from this account?

He was killed because of his disobedience to God. Some may feel that the prophet of Judah did not deserve his punishment, since he was deceived by the old prophet of Bethel. Others may point out that the prophet of Judah could have avoided his fate if he had not tarried in Israel (1 Kings 13:14). In any case, since the lion attack was prophesied, and since the lion miraculously did not eat either the prophet or the ass, the death of the prophet seems to have been ordained of God.

In response to the second question, we can learn that it pays to ensure that what we hear lines up with God's Word. Anything we learn that is contradicted by God's Word should be cast away—even if spoken by seemingly godly people.

6. Is the prophet of Judah's disobedience any more or less excusable than the disobedience of King Jeroboam? Explain your answer.

King Jeroboam's disobedience seemed to be more flagrant than that of the prophet. However, the point should be made that all disobedience in inexcusable. Use this question to reinforce the importance of

carefully following the commands of God. Consequences are not always limited to the one who disobeyed.

7. Under the reign of King Rehoboam, the nation of Judah also turned to idolatry (1 Kings 14:21-24). Of the ten kings mentioned in today's text, only two of the kings—Asa of Judah and his son Jehoshaphat—did "that which was right in the eyes of the LORD" (1 Kings 15:11). After reading 1 Kings 15:9-15, note the difficulties that Asa must have faced in trying to do right. How might we face similar difficulties?

Asa had to reverse the policies of his wicked father and even had to remove his grandmother as queen because of her idolatry. He had to implement policies that were, no doubt, unpopular with the people. When we determine to do what is right, we may have to reverse the course our families are taking, and we may have to make decisions that will make us unpopular.

8. There was no king in Israel who would stand up and stop the idol worship the country had fallen into; as a result, wickedness increased and Israel degenerated into gross sin (see 1 Kings 16:25-33). Wicked King Ahab "did more to provoke the LORD God of Israel to anger than all the kings of Israel that were before him" (1 Kings 16:33). Give three examples of times when you have seen the effects of unrestrained disobedience and sin sustained and magnified in a life, a family, or a nation.

Students may share how an individual life was destroyed by bad decisions, or how generations of a family have suffered as sinful patterns were repeated, or they may point out how our own nation is suffering the consequences of lifestyle changes begun in the 1960s and 1970s.

CONCLUSION

The Book of 1 Kings weaves together an account of the moral choices made by individuals, prophecies which predict the consequences of these choices, and the actual political outcomes of these choices in Israel and Judah. The Bible clearly reveals that our response to God's commands affects our families, our nation, and ourselves.

DISCOVERY

Teacher's Guide

Elijah

SOURCE FOR QUESTIONS

1 Kings 17:1 through 22:53

KEY VERSE FOR MEMORIZATION

"And it came to pass at the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice, that Elijah the prophet came near, and said, LORD God of Abraham, Isaac, and of Israel, let it be known this day that thou art God in Israel, and that I am thy servant, and that I have done all these things at thy word." (1 Kings 18:36)

BACKGROUND

Nothing is recorded about Elijah before he suddenly appeared before King Ahab, as recorded in 1 Kings 17:1. As one of the first in a long line of important prophets God sent to Israel and Judah, Elijah was a Tishbite of the land of Gilead, a mountainous area located on the eastern side of the Jordan River.

King Ahab was Israel's seventh king, reigning from 919 B.C. to 897 B.C. He was influenced by his wife, Jezebel, daughter of Ethbaal, king of Zidon, and introduced Baal worship to Israel (1 Kings 16:31-32).

Baal was worshiped for two reasons: generosity and anger. In generosity he supposedly gave light, warmth, and rain, but his anger was manifested in the fierce summer heat that destroyed the vegetation he had brought. Human victims, usually the firstborn of the sacrificer, were burnt alive to appease his anger in time of plague or other troubles. Such sacrifice is figuratively termed "passing" the victim "through the fire" (Deuteronomy 18:10; 2 Kings 16:3). Ordinary offerings to Baal consisted of incense and burnt sacrifices.

God directly confronted Ahab's false religion with the appearance and message of Elijah. Since the name *Elijah* means, "Jehovah is my God," the prophet's very name pointed to the true and only God. Elijah announced, "As the LORD God of Israel liveth . . . ," drawing attention to the ever-present, all-knowing, and all-powerful God. He then exposed Baal as a lifeless and powerless idol by declaring there would be no "dew nor rain these years, but according to my word."

During the three-and-a-half year drought, God sustained Elijah. Provisions were first supplied at the brook Cherith, a torrent-bed or wady, possibly located on the east side of the Jordan River. Elijah was then sent to a widow woman in Zarephath, the same area that Jezebel came from. During this time there was severe famine in Samaria where King Ahab dwelt.

Before Elijah prayed to end the drought, he called on the people to choose between God and Baal. Ahab

OPENER

gathered the Children of Israel, 450 prophets of Baal, and 400 prophets of the groves. The Hebrew translation for *groves* is *asherah* (or Astarte), which was a Phoenician goddess (see "Pagan Gods" supplement). It was this idolatrous crowd that Elijah challenged to see whether Baal or God would consume a sacrifice using fire not created by man.

Following Elijah's tremendous victory and the execution of the prophets of Baal, Elijah fled for his life from Jezebel's wrath. He traveled over 300 miles in 40 days to Mount Horeb (Mount Sinai), where the Lord instructed him to anoint Hazael to be the King of Syria, Jehu to be the King of Israel, and Elisha to be his successor—instructions which Elijah followed. God later used these two kings to execute judgment on Ahab's family and the idolatrous people of Israel.

The prophet Elijah confronted Ahab one last time to pronounce final judgment against him after the death of Naboth. Naboth the Jezreelite had refused to sell his property to Ahab because it had belonged to his family for some time. Therefore, Jezebel found two men ("sons of Belial" meaning evil, lawless, and wicked men) to falsely accuse him of blasphemy and he was stoned to death. Elijah told Ahab that, "In the place where dogs licked the blood of Naboth shall dogs lick thy blood." Ahab was later killed in a battle, and as they washed his chariot in the pool of Samaria the dogs licked his blood, fulfilling Elijah's prophecy.

SUGGESTED RESPONSE TO QUESTIONS

1. Referring back to 1 Kings 16:33, why do you think God sent Elijah to King Ahab?

Ahab had done more to provoke God's anger than all the previous kings of Israel. God, in His faithfulness to Israel, sent Elijah the prophet to confront this wicked king and to turn the hearts of His people back to Him. Ask your class to list ways that God calls sinners today. Some suggested responses might be: conviction of Holy Spirit, personal testimonies, traumatic events, church services, and Gospel music. Possibly allow time for the students to share personal examples.

2. How did Elijah respond to God's instructions? (1 Kings 17:1-5, 8-10; 18:1-2) What can we learn from this example?

Elijah was obedient to perform the instruction of God when it came to him. Most of the commands from God to Elijah placed him in extremely difficult and potentially life-threatening situations. You may want to follow up the responses to this question by asking, "How did Elijah have courage to confront these wicked people and deliver messages that were offensive to them?" Guide the class to realize that Elijah, no doubt, had cultivated a relationship with the Lord over a long period of time. These big "faith tests" were preceded by many smaller ones. We, too, must first be faithful in the little things before God can entrust us to handle greater challenges.

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3. What was God's plan in caring for Elijah during the drought? (1 Kings 17:2-16) How should this example encourage us today?

While Samaria suffered from severe famine, God fed Elijah at the brook Cherith and then at the widow of Zarephath's house. God will take care of us and sustain us even in the most difficult of times. Ask the class for examples or personal testimonies of how God sustained them in difficult circumstances.

4. How many prophets did Obadiah hide? (1 Kings 18:3-4) Why?

Obadiah, the governor of Ahab's household, hid 100 prophets because Jezebel had "cut off" the prophets of the Lord. Bring out that the parenthetical note in verse 3 describes the character of Obadiah. He feared and honored God so much that he had risked his own life to protect the men of God from the evil devices of Jezebel.

5. How did the people respond at Mount Carmel when asked which God they would serve (1 Kings 18:21)? Why would they have responded in this manner?

They responded by silence: we read, "the people answered him not a word." They probably responded this way because of peer pressure. There were 450 prophets of Baal and 400 prophets of the groves, but only one prophet of the Lord. It is very likely that few in the crowd of people openly served God for fear of Jezebel who had "cut off the prophets of the LORD*." Discuss what types of peer pressure we face today and ask for ways that we can avoid compromising. Thoughts might include avoiding situations and people who would potentially ask you to violate what you know to be right.*

6. Why did Elijah have water poured over the sacrifice? 1 Kings 18:33-35

He may have poured water on the sacrifice to prevent the suspicion of fire under the altar. If there had been any fire present, this would have put it out. Also, it may have been to make the expected miracle more notable, in order to open the eyes of the people to the true God. Elijah took great care to make the victory untainted and certain. The point should be made that we, too, want to conduct ourselves in a manner that is above reproach and brings glory to God. It could also be brought out that sacrifices to God must cost something. After more than three years of drought, water was very precious.

7. After praying a short and simple prayer that caused fire to come down from Heaven and consume the sacrifice, why did Elijah need to pray seven times to cause the rain to come? 1 Kings 18:42-45

While we do not know the exact answer, we do know that Elijah did not give up after the first prayer was unanswered. In the presence of the people, God

chose to answer Elijah's prayer quickly and in a manner that caused the people to acknowledge His divine authority. With the people gone, and only his servant present, Elijah sought the Lord in a different manner. The posture of falling on the ground and placing his head between his knees showed his humility, reverence, importunity, and earnest desire to have God answer his prayer. Like Jacob, who wrestled with the angel and did not give up until he received the blessing, Elijah continued in prayer. James 5:16 states, "The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much." Elijah prayed until he received the answer.

Explain to your class the difference in praying about something versus praying through the matter. You may also bring out that Elijah did not predetermine how God would answer his prayer. After seeing the fire fall from Heaven and consume the sacrifice, he did not look for a supernatural answer for rain. He took the "cloud the size of a man's hand" as sufficient evidence that God had heard his prayer.

8. When Elijah fled to Mount Horeb, in what manner did the Lord speak to him? (1 Kings 19:12) How does God speak to us today?

God did not speak to Elijah through the strong wind, the earthquake, or the fire. He spoke to Elijah through a "still small voice." In the midst of these great earthly manifestations, Elijah instantly recognized the calm, gentle, and peaceful voice of God. Elijah's personal relationship with God helped him discern His voice as God spoke to him.

In response to the second question, your students should conclude that God may speak to us in a number of ways. He can speak in an inaudible, yet unmistakable, way to our hearts, impressing us regarding His will. God can speak to us through His Holy Word, the Bible. Or, He may speak to us through the words of a minister, a song, a testimony, encouragement of a friend, in prayer, or in any manner He chooses.

Class discussion should bring out that to hear God's voice we must have a personal relationship with Him. How well we hear is dependent on how close we stay. A fun class exercise would be to have a student go to the most distant point in your class, have another student stand about half way, and finally one student stand right next to you. In a quiet, gentle voice quote or paraphrase John 10:4 then ask the most distant student what was said, then the person that is half way, and finally next to you. The point is that the closer we are to God, the better we can hear Him.

9. Elijah cast his mantle onto Elisha signifying God's call on his life to be a prophet. List five areas in which God calls people to service, and indicate how He makes this known.

There are many areas of service in the work of the Lord. Altar workers, clerical staff, van drivers, choir

and orchestra members, cleaning crew, landscaping, maintenance, ministerial, nursery, Sunday school teachers, ushers, and many others.

Our first qualification is to be saved. As we faithfully serve the Lord, He calls us to serve in various needs within the church by placing our name on the hearts of those that are already serving and bringing needs to our attention as we endeavor to perform His Will. You can illustrate this by asking students in your class how they came to serve in different capacities in the church. Share your experience of how you were asked to be a Sunday school teacher.

CONCLUSION

Elijah's example of faithfulness and obedience to God in difficult and wicked times should encourage all Christians to cultivate and maintain a close and personal relationship with the Lord.

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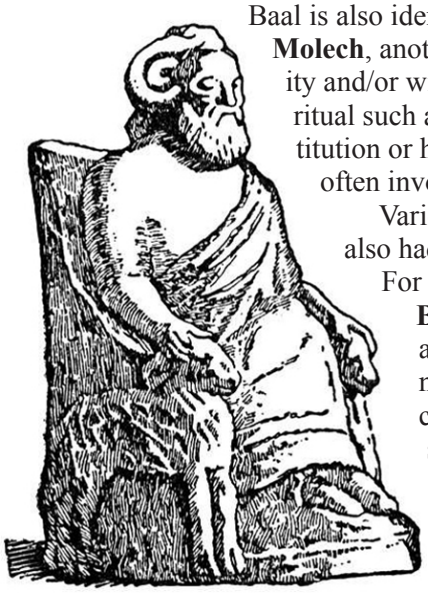
Pagan Gods

BAAL

Baal (Baalim in the plural) was a widely-worshiped pagan god of fertility. He was the principal male god of the Phoenicians and Canaanites. The wicked King Ahab and his wife Jezebel promoted Baal worship in Israel. The Book of Hosea describes the conflict between worship of the true God and this false god.

Baal worshipers believed he had power over wind, rain, and clouds. When crops were abundant, they worshiped him as the sun-god to give thanks. In times of drought, storms, or other crop devastation, they worshiped him as the storm-god to appease his wrath. The fact that his prophets could not end the three-year drought Elijah had proclaimed proved his lack of power, and the supremacy of the God of Israel.

Baal worship involved extremely immoral practices including illicit sex and human sacrifice, usually by burning a worshiper's firstborn alive.



Baal is also identified with **Molech**, another pagan deity and/or wicked sacrifice ritual such as temple prostitution or human sacrifice, often involving children. Various locations also had local Baalim. For example, **Baal-peor** was a Moabite god, named so because his obscene rites were performed at Mount Peor. Sometimes compound forms of the word were used to name locations where he was worshiped, such as **Baal-gad** and **Baal-hermon**.

ASHTORETH

Elijah requested that 400 "prophets of the groves" attend the showdown recorded in 1 Kings chapter 18. These individuals led the Israelites' worship of the pagan goddess **Ashtoreth** (Ashtaroth or Astaroth in the plural). The Greek form of her name is **Astarte**. The Hebrew name, **Asherah** (Asherim in the plural), referenced both the deity and the idols used in her worship. The King James Version of the Bible translated this simply "groves."

Ashtoreth was widely considered a goddess of love (fertility) and war, and also identified by some worshipers as a "moon goddess," the "goddess of the morning and evening star," or the "goddess of the sea." Her common names included, "Queen of Heaven," "Mistress of Heaven," "Lady of Heaven," and "Lady Asherah of the Sea."

Ashtoreth was often connected closely to Baal; many myths said she was his wife or mistress. Another tradition called her "the mother goddess," saying that she had 70 children and that Baal was one of them. The Mesopotamian version of this goddess was called **Ishtar** (or Ashtar) and they said Tammuz, god of vegetation, was her husband (Ezekiel 8:14). The Moabites called her the spouse of Chemosh, their national god. Later, Ashtoreth was identified with the Greek goddess **Aphrodite** and the Roman **Venus**.

An idol of Ashtoreth was possibly the stem of a tree without branches shaped into an image and planted in the ground (Deuteronomy 16:21) or a similar looking object carved out of wood, silver, or stone. Ashtoreth worship glorified sex and war and included temple prostitution.

DELIBERATE MISSPELLINGS

Scholars suggest that some of the variety in translation and resulting ambiguity in the names of these pagan gods comes from deliberate mispronunciations and misspellings. Biblical writers expressed contempt for pagan gods in this way. For example, the word *Molech* is a combination of the Hebrew words for "ruler" and "shame." Despite various titles, it is clear that all of these terms (Baal, Molech, Ashtoreth, Astarte, Ishtar, etc.) are used to reference the pagan worship detested by the God of Israel.