



**THE GOD OF  
DELIVERANCE**

Moses and the  
Journey to Canaan

**JESUS IS LORD**

The Ministry of Jesus

**CHOOSING WISDOM**

What Exactly is Wisdom?

**GOD'S  
WORD**  
FOR LIFE

# GOD'S WORD

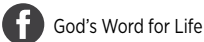


FOR LIFE

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\*AN indicates All Nations Sunday.

## DAILY DEVOTIONAL GUIDE

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## GETTING STARTED

The first page of each week's material will help you to become familiar with the Truth about God, Truth for My Life, Focus Verse, and Lesson Text to be used in your Sunday school class or small group setting.

SEPTEMBER 4, 2022

SERIES 1: THE GOD OF DELIVERANCE

# 1.1

**SLAVES CAN BE DELIVERED**

**TRUTH ABOUT GOD**  
God circumvents efforts that seek to keep us enslaved.

**TRUTH FOR MY LIFE**  
I will act on God's provision of deliverance.



**FOCUS VERSE: Hebrews 3:14**  
For we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end.

**LESSON TEXT: Exodus 2:1-10; Hebrews 3:1-19**

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**SG**  
**TEACHING OUTLINE**

LESSON **1.1**

**Lesson Title:** Slaves Can Be Delivered

**Icebreaker:** Have you ever repeated a story you just knew was true only to discover it was not? Describe what happened.

**Lesson Connection:** Share the Lesson Connection.

I. THE HEBREWS WERE SLAVES IN EGYPT

- » What are the "spiritual thermometers" in your life that help indicate the spiritual atmosphere you are in?
- A. Governments May Forget Their History
  - » What indicators signal that the past has been forgotten? These might be changes in someone's personal life or in the world in general.
- B. Pharaoh's Daughter Rescued Moses from Death
- C. Discovering God's Unstoppable Plan for My Deliverance
  - » What are some testimonies of God's deliverance in your life and others' lives?

II. ANOTHER DELIVERER LIKE MOSES

- A. Moses Was a Type of the Messiah, Jesus Christ
- B. I Will Choose Grace and Truth
  - » How would you tell a friend or coworker about God's grace and truth?

III. OLD COVENANT VERSUS NEW COVENANT

- A. The New Covenant Accomplished What the Old Covenant Only Symbolized
  - » What did you see and understand better after you received the Holy Spirit that you could not understand before?
- B. I Will Believe in Jesus and Experience Deliverance from Sin

**Internalizing the Message**

**Prayer Focus**  
Lead the group in prayer and consider the following topics of focus:

- Pray for God to help you to know what spiritual atmosphere you are in and if He wants you to continue therein.
- Ask God to help you be and do what He wants you to as you grow stronger in your faith.

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## SMALL GROUP TEACHING OUTLINE

The second page provides a Small Group (SG) Teaching Outlines so you can follow along with the main points of the lesson if you choose to bring your Daily Devotional Guide to church. The outline also includes the lesson's discussion questions so you can be prepared for discussion if you meet in small groups.

## BIBLICAL OVERVIEW

Lesson Text: Exodus 2:1-10; Hebrews 3:1-19

It is said that some people are born for greatness. In the ancient world, the events of early life often showed a child's promise before the child took a single step or uttered the first word. The story of Moses mirrors several other narratives from multiple cultures. In fear, Moses' mother put him in a basket, and Pharaoh's daughter found him and adopted him before Moses grew up to deliver the Israelites. In a similar story, a drifter of water rescued Sargon of Akkad from a basket in the water, and the helpless baby grew up to become a mighty king. In the epic known as the Mahabharata, something similar happened to Karna. But his humble origins did not prevent Karna's gifts as a warrior and a speaker from shining.

However, Moses achieved far more than these other legendary figures by leading the Israelites out of Egyptian bondage and by receiving the Torah directly from God. Through the one whose name means "drawn out of the water," the Lord turned the waters of the Nile to blood, parted the waters of the Red Sea, and brought forth water from a rock.

Although Moses was an instrument of the miraculous, he also faced many troubled waters while dealing with the rebellious nature of the children of Israel. The Book of Hebrews remembers the anger Moses experienced on a regular basis due to the Israelites' disobedience. The generation who experienced the miracle at the Red Sea also tested the Lord's and Moses' patience at Massah and quarreled at the waters of Meribah. Massah means "test" and Meribah means "strife or contention." The Israelites left their praise at the Red Sea and chose to complain rather than worship. They ultimately failed to find rest in the Promised Land.

God had delivered Israel from Egyptian slavery, but they remained bound in their minds. Their shackles held them mentally and spiritually. We must receive salvation and avoid returning to a sinful mindset. We can act on God's provision of deliverance by embracing Jesus—the greatest liberator with the humblest origins.

MOSES ACHIEVED FAR MORE THAN OTHER LEGENDARY FIGURES BY LEADING THE ISRAELITES OUT OF EGYPTIAN BONDAGE AND BY RECEIVING THE TORAH DIRECTLY FROM GOD.

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## BIBLICAL OVERVIEW

The third page of each lesson will give you a “high level” Biblical Overview of the Lesson Text. The content will explore the text, its background, and any other pertinent information to help you better understand the setting, purpose, and message of the text.

## DAILY DEVOTION

The remaining pages will guide you through your week of personal devotion and study. You are encouraged to complete the Bible Reading plan for each day and explore a portion of the text with the help of a section of Biblical Insight on that part of the text. Next is a Daily Devotion to read and a prompt to reflect and pray about the principles presented.

## DAY 1

Exodus 2:1-4

<sup>1</sup>And there went a man of the house of Levi, and took to wife a daughter of Levi.  
<sup>2</sup>And the woman conceived, and bare a son: and when she saw him that he was a goodly child, she hid him three months.  
<sup>3</sup>And when she could no longer hide him, she took for him an ark of bulrushes, and daubed it with slime and with pitch, and put the child therein; and she laid it in the flags by the river's brink.  
<sup>4</sup>And his sister stood afar off, to wit what would be done to him.

## Biblical Insight

Biblical scholars often look for information outside of the Bible to provide key facts about Scripture. Often these extrabiblical items can help us more fully understand the history of the Bible. Trouble for the Israelites started in Exodus when a king arose who did not know Joseph. There may be a lot more to this situation than meets the eye. Some scholars believe Joseph rose to power because a group of Semites known as the Hyksos controlled Egypt at that time. The Hyksos introduced horses and chariots into Egypt, preparing the stage for future events at the Red Sea. While the Israelites lived in Goshen, the native Egyptians returned to power and cast out the Hyksos. This led to a crisis for the children of Israel. Since the Egyptians had just removed the Hyksos, they likely had grave concerns about the Israelites dwelling in their land.

## Daily Devotion

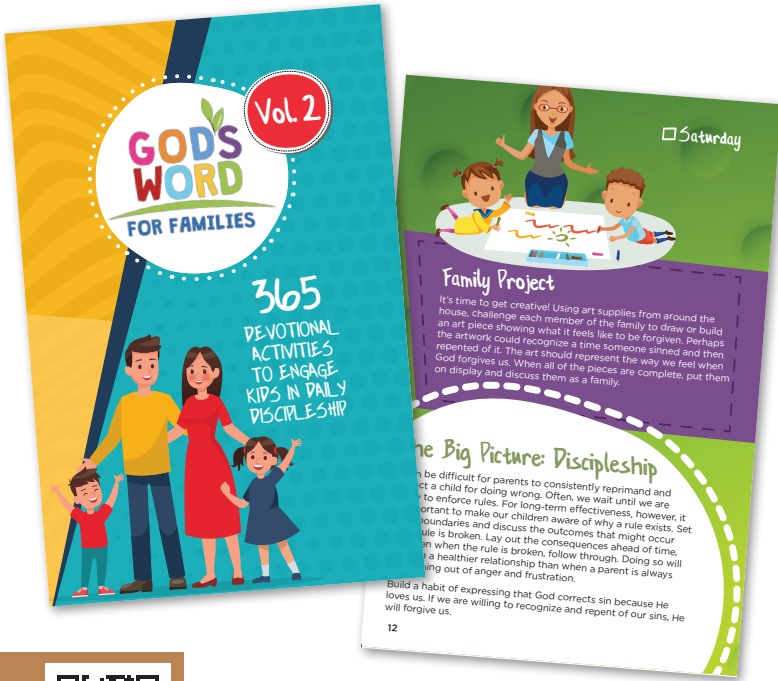
A quick scroll through our news feed will reveal many leaders who neither know nor follow the Lord. Many of them reject His ways and at times promote and push beliefs that are against God. This affects us because our world is still greatly tainted by sin and evil.

Although this may trouble our souls for a moment, Daniel wrote of our God that “he changeth the times and the seasons; he removeth kings, and setteth up kings” (Daniel 2:21). It is difficult for us to grasp why God would allow leaders in our world who do not follow His Word. Nevertheless, we must always trust that God is still in control and all power belongs to Him, even when we feel powerless. Don't be discouraged if the world around you feels dark with sin. God will always triumph over evil, no matter how dark and long the night may seem. There is no darkness that His glorious light cannot overcome.

## Reflection and Prayer

» What can you do to apply this principle to your life today?

## GOD'S WORD FOR FAMILIES



SCAN TO  
PURCHASE



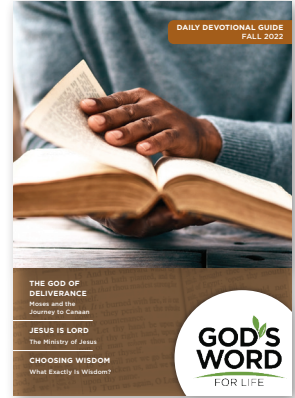
*God's Word for Families* is a wholly Apostolic discipleship tool designed to help your entire family grow in relationship to God and each other. By exploring a biblical passage from Sunday to Saturday, daily ten-minute activities use a variety of learning styles to engage family members to hear God's voice. Tap in to God's plan for your family by committing to daily discipleship with *God's Word for Families*.

### Weekly Overview:

- Sunday — Introduction to the Bible Passage
- Monday — "Why?"
- Tuesday — Analytic Learning
- Wednesday — Worship
- Thursday — Real-life Application
- Friday — Discussion
- Saturday — Family Project

# YOUTH DAILY DEVOTIONAL

God's Word for Life equips every age level of the church to study Scripture daily. This resource for youth (ages 12-18) provides a daily Bible passage connected to the week's lesson and a corresponding devotion. Each day ends with a final challenge to apply the message of God's Word with both junior high and senior high options.

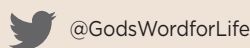


# PODCAST



The God's Word for Life Podcast presents portions of Scripture with fresh insight and urges adults to think deeply about how the Bible impacts their lives. Each week episodes will encourage listeners to engage with God's Word through reflection and prayer, further develop their personal relationship with Jesus Christ, and live out God's Word in their lives.

## CONNECT ON SOCIAL MEDIA



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## SERIES 1: THE GOD OF DELIVERANCE

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This series, “The God of Deliverance,” will follow the Israelites on their journey out of slavery in Egypt to the building of the Tabernacle in the wilderness. We will watch as Moses grows up in the palace of Pharaoh and have a closeup view of the plagues that ultimately led to the Israelites’ freedom. We will follow them through the Red Sea to the mountain where they received the commandments, and we will end up watching the glory of the Lord fill the Tabernacle. This series will show us a God who delivers and allow each of us to experience that deliverance in our own lives.



## SERIES 2: JESUS IS LORD

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This series, “Jesus Is Lord,” will look closely at the claim that Jesus is the one true God. After hearing His teachings and seeing the miracles He performed, many in Scripture came to express faith in Jesus Christ as the Son of God. They watched Him cast out devils. The disciples were there when He calmed the storm. He delivered the demoniac in Gadara and set a woman free from a twelve-year-long disease. This series will not only remind us of the power of God that was at work in Jesus’ day, but it will challenge us to have faith that His power is still available to us today. Truly, Jesus is Lord of all.



## SERIES 3: CHOOSING WISDOM

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This series, “Choosing Wisdom,” will lead us on a trip through highlighted portions of Proverbs and Ecclesiastes. We will look at wisdom’s worth, wisdom’s works, the truth that wisdom waits, and then hear wisdom’s warning. The Scripture passages we will study will help us to better understand the importance of choosing wisdom. Wisdom is not elusive or impossible to attain. If we will seek wisdom by seeking the God who gives wisdom, we will gain what we need to please the Lord and walk in His commandments.



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# 11

## SLAVES CAN BE DELIVERED

### TRUTH ABOUT GOD

God circumvents efforts that seek to keep us enslaved.

### TRUTH FOR MY LIFE

I will act on God's provision of deliverance.



**FOCUS VERSE:** Hebrews 3:14

For we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence stedfast unto the end.

**LESSON TEXT:** Exodus 2:1-10; Hebrews 3:1-19



**Lesson Title:** Slaves Can Be Delivered

**Icebreaker:** Have you ever repeated a story you just knew was true only to discover it was not? Describe what happened.

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  - A. Governments May Forget Their History
    - » *What indicators signal that the past has been forgotten? These might be changes in someone’s personal life or in the world in general.*
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  - B. I Will Believe in Jesus and Experience Deliverance from Sin

**Prayer Focus**

- Pray for God to help you to know what spiritual atmosphere you are in and if He wants you to continue therein.
- Ask God to help you be and do what He wants you to as you grow stronger in your faith.

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# DAY 1

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## Exodus 2:1-4

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<sup>3</sup> And when she could not longer hide him, she took for him an ark of bulrushes, and daubed it with slime and with pitch, and put the child therein; and she laid it in the flags by the river's brink.

<sup>4</sup> And his sister stood afar off, to wit what would be done to him.

## Biblical Insight

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## Daily Devotion

A quick scroll through our news feed will reveal many leaders who neither know nor follow the Lord. Many of them reject His ways and at times promote and push beliefs that are against God. This affects us because our world is still greatly tainted by sin and evil.

Although this may trouble our souls for a moment, Daniel wrote of our God that “he changeth the times and the seasons: he removeth kings, and setteth up kings” (Daniel 2:21). It is difficult for us to grasp why God would allow leaders in our world who do not follow His Word. Nevertheless, we must always trust that God is still in control and all power belongs to Him, even when we feel powerless. Don't be discouraged if the world around you feels dark with sin. God will always triumph over evil, no matter how dark and long the night may seem. There is no darkness that His glorious light cannot overcome.

## Reflection and Prayer

» *What can you do to apply this principle to your life today?*

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## DAY 2

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### Exodus 2:6

And when she had opened it, she saw the child: and, behold, the babe wept. And she had compassion on him, and said, This is one of the Hebrews' children.

### Biblical Insight

When we read the story of the Exodus, we often think of Pharaoh's wickedness. He enslaved the Hebrews and refused to let them go. But God used the compassion of Pharaoh's daughter to save Moses. Although the Bible tells us God hardened Pharaoh's heart, we never read that the Lord softened the heart of Pharaoh's daughter. Perhaps she acted out of her own concern for a helpless infant.

### Daily Devotion

As Pharaoh raised his family to worship countless gods, his daughter did not grow up to worship the Hebrews' God alone. However, she still expressed some commendable characteristics. If Pharaoh's daughter—who was merely part of an earthly kingdom—was willing to take in someone who was not like her, who could offer her little, and to whom she had no obligation, how much more should we—who are of a heavenly kingdom—act in the same way?

Jesus surrounded Himself with people who could do nothing for Him. He loved the poor, healed the sick, ministered to the brokenhearted, and accepted people society had written off. As Christians, we aim to follow our heavenly Father's example. Today let us remember that we are part of the greatest Kingdom, which always seeks to shelter and bring in those in need.

### Reflection and Prayer

» *What can you do to apply this principle to your life today?*

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## DAY 3

### Hebrews 3:1-5

<sup>1</sup>Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus;

<sup>2</sup>Who was faithful to him that appointed him, as also Moses was faithful in all his house.

<sup>3</sup>For this man was counted worthy of more glory than Moses, inasmuch as he who hath builded the house hath more honour than the house.

<sup>4</sup>For every house is builded by some man; but he that built all things is God.

<sup>5</sup>And Moses verily was faithful in all his house, as a servant, for a testimony of those things which were to be spoken after.

### Biblical Insight

The Book of Hebrews compares the faithfulness of Jesus to Moses. Interestingly, these verses speak of Jesus following in the footsteps of Moses and Moses following in the footsteps of Jesus. Moses was a faithful servant over the house of God; so was Christ. Yet Christ is greater because He built the house. Jesus was also a prophet like Moses. Hebrews shows the Alpha and Omega nature of Jesus as the beginning and the end.

### Daily Devotion

Faithfulness—this word isn't much of an eye catcher in today's society. Being faithful isn't flashy or loud; it is simply consistent and always dependable. But we find faithfulness is foundational for those who want to be used by God and be pleasing to Him. People crave to be seen and praised by those around them, all the while cutting corners to try to make it to the top. It can be incredibly easy for us to despise the little things we are faithful over because they seem to be insignificant.

Before David ever killed Goliath, he faithfully took care of his father's sheep. His brothers even mocked him for what they saw as a small and meaningless task. But through David's faithfulness with the sheep, he learned to fight battles that later brought him into victory against the Philistines. Don't despise being faithful over the small things; it is the foundation for your victory over large things.

### Reflection and Prayer

» *What can you do to apply this principle to your life today?*

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# DAY 4

## Hebrews 3:7-11

<sup>7</sup> Wherefore (as the Holy Ghost saith, To day if ye will hear his voice,

<sup>8</sup> Harden not your hearts, as in the provocation, in the day of temptation in the wilderness:

<sup>9</sup> When your fathers tempted me, proved me, and saw my works forty years.

<sup>10</sup> Wherefore I was grieved with that generation, and said, They do alway err in their heart; and they have not known my ways.

<sup>11</sup> So I sware in my wrath, They shall not enter into my rest.)

## Biblical Insight

The Israelites spent so much of their time in the wilderness wanderings murmuring and complaining that we might refer to those years as the wilderness whinings. God presented them a wonderful opportunity to seize Canaan. They angered the Lord because of their unbelief, and He refused to allow them to enter into their rest in the Promised Land. As New Testament believers, we might think we are immune to such things, but we must be careful not to frustrate the grace of God. (See Galatians 2:21.)

## Daily Devotion

We have been delivered from being bound by the sin of this world. Nevertheless, at times we may still be caught off guard when we find ourselves in a difficult season. Perhaps this was one reason the children of Israel struggled with unbelief as they walked through the wilderness to their Promised Land. Is it possible they falsely believed there would be no more struggle since they had been delivered from Egypt?

We can be delivered from the bondage of the world but never receive the promises God has for us because we become too focused on our current struggles. We may become so consumed in our own “wilderness” that we are unable to see the miraculous hand of God in the middle of it all. Let’s hold to this: the Lord knows exactly how long we will be in each season of life. If we trust His voice and stand on His Word, we will find ourselves living in the promises He has given us.

## Reflection and Prayer

» *What can you do to apply this principle to your life today?*

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## DAY 5

### Hebrews 3:12-19

<sup>12</sup> Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God.

<sup>13</sup> But exhort one another daily, while it is called To day; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.

<sup>14</sup> For we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end;

<sup>15</sup> While it is said, To day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts, as in the provocation.

<sup>16</sup> For some, when they had heard, did provoke: howbeit not all that came out of Egypt by Moses.

<sup>17</sup> But with whom was he grieved forty years? was it not with them that had sinned, whose carcasses fell in the wilderness?

<sup>18</sup> And to whom sware he that they should not enter into his rest, but to them that believed not?

<sup>19</sup> So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief.

### Biblical Insight

The story of the Exodus features the Lord sending plagues on Pharaoh and hardening his heart. Because of Pharaoh's hardened heart, Egypt lost crops, cattle, and their precious firstborn. This story should have served as a warning to the Israelites, but the Hebrews hardened their hearts in the wilderness and refused to listen to the Lord. Note that God did not cause their hearts to be hardened; they did it themselves. As a result, God did not allow them to enter into His rest. We must guard against hardened hearts.

### Daily Devotion

The heart rarely turns to stone overnight. This sad process often happens little by little. Since we live in a society with constant access to media, news, and information, our hearts can harden rather easily. Sometimes we cannot process the evil in our world. Let's be careful not to allow these situations that surround us to prevent us from absorbing what our God is speaking. We must protect our hearts from becoming calloused to the things of God because of the harshness of our world. God instead calls for "a heart of flesh" (Ezekiel 36:26). If your heart has begun to slowly grow cold, turn to God today and ask Him to give you a soft heart again.

### Reflection and Prayer

» *What can you do to apply this principle to your life today?*

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# 1.2

## LEAVING SLAVERY

### TRUTH ABOUT GOD

The Lord is more powerful than things holding us in bondage.

### TRUTH FOR MY LIFE

I will celebrate my deliverance from being a slave to sin.



### FOCUS VERSES: Exodus 15:1-2

<sup>1</sup>Then sang Moses and the children of Israel this song unto the LORD, and spake, saying, I will sing unto the LORD, for he hath triumphed gloriously: the horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea.

<sup>2</sup>The LORD is my strength and song, and he is become my salvation: he is my God, and I will prepare him an habitation; my father's God, and I will exalt him.

**LESSON TEXT: Exodus 7:1-7; 12:11-17, 50-51; 14:26-31; 15:1-2**



**Lesson Title:** Leaving Slavery

**Icebreaker:** Have you ever had to make a difficult move (e.g., a new home, a new job)? Explain what made it difficult.

- I. THE PLAGUES EXPOSED EGYPT'S FALSE GODS
  - » *What are some of the false gods this world serves today?*
  - A. The Plagues Made the Lord Known to Egypt
  - B. I Will Fear and Believe the Lord
    - » *What does the fear of God look like in your life?*
- II. THE LORD MADE A DISTINCTION BETWEEN ISRAEL AND EGYPT
  - » *What are some of the major distinctions between the people of God and the world?*
  - A. Effects of the Plagues
  - B. The Blood of the Lamb Protected Those Who Applied It
  - C. I Will Apply the Blood of the Lamb to My Life
    - » *What do you think about when you think of the blood of Christ?*
- III. THE PASSOVER COMMEMORATED ISRAEL'S DELIVERANCE
  - A. The Lord Spoiled the Egyptians and Destroyed Their Army
  - B. I Will Celebrate My Deliverance from Sin
    - » *What testimonies of God's deliverance in your life do you share the most?*

**Prayer Focus**

- Praise God for the testimonies in your life and others.
- Ask God to continue to work miracles to give more people testimonies of His goodness and greatness.

# BIBLICAL OVERVIEW

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**Lesson Text:** Exodus 7:1-7; 12:11-17, 50-51; 14:26-31; 15:1-2

The descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob appear by many names in the Old Testament. They are known as Hebrews, Israelites, and by various tribal affiliations, especially Judah for the southern kingdom. The children of the matriarchs Sarah, Rebekah, Rachel, and Leah have several fitting descriptions. Unfortunately, the Israelites were known as slaves in Egypt before the Lord mightily delivered them from Egyptian bondage.

One of the meanings of the name of Israel is “one who wrestles with God.” This meaning refers to Jacob’s battle with the Angel of the Lord and Israel’s continual struggles as a people. God’s people certainly needed to focus more on praising the Lord than complaining. We could even combine Israel and Judah into a name meaning “those who praise and wrestle with God.”

However, another name may prove equally appropriate and perhaps even more specific to the setting in ancient Egypt: Hebrew. The word *Hebrew* comes from a root meaning “to pass over” or “to cross over.” The Hebrews experienced the miraculous during the Passover meal as they ate the lamb and applied the blood to their doorposts so the Lord’s judgment would pass over them.

Even after Pharaoh let the Israelites leave Egypt, they still needed to live up to the name *Hebrew* at the Red Sea. When God directed Moses to stretch forth his rod, the Red Sea parted and the Hebrews crossed over on dry land. The Lord demonstrated the power to save the Hebrews from everyone and everything keeping them captive. After the Hebrews crossed over, they celebrated their deliverance from slavery. In the future, their descendants would also live up to the name *Hebrew* by passing over the Jordan River and claiming the blessings of the Promised Land.

THE DESCENDANTS OF ABRAHAM, ISAAC,  
AND JACOB ARE KNOWN AS HEBREWS,  
ISRAELITES, AND BY VARIOUS TRIBAL  
AFFILIATIONS

# DAY 1

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## Exodus 7:1

And the LORD said unto Moses, See, I have made thee a god to Pharaoh: and Aaron thy brother shall be thy prophet.

### Biblical Insight

Exodus 7:1 contains some odd words the Lord spoke to Moses. God declared He made Moses like a god to Pharaoh, all the while Aaron was serving as Moses' prophet. The Lord's declaration seems rather strange given the strict monotheism expressed in the books of Moses. However, we must look to the polytheistic Egyptian context to better understand the events playing out in the Book of Exodus. Since Pharaoh viewed himself as divine, or at least having the support of the Egyptian deities, the Lord needed to put Moses on equal footing with the monarch so Moses could speak to Pharaoh and bring the plagues on the land of Egypt. When we encounter difficult passages in Scripture, context can aid our interpretations.

### Daily Devotion

With each passing day, we draw closer to the coming of the Lord. It is evident that our time is short. Often in news, culture, politics, and media we only hear part of what is happening. The whole story told in context matters. We may even align ourselves with one group or culture and believe we are speaking the complete truth, but we must guard against this type of thinking so we hear the whole matter before coming to a conclusion. Let us first compare everything to the Word of God and allow this to be the foundation of what we believe.

Just as Moses was a shining light in Israel's dark slavery, we are to be a shining light in our dark world. But those around us will only follow that light if we are consistent and true in what we say and believe. Let's allow God to work through us and speak through us to make a difference in the lives of the people around us.

### Reflection and Prayer

» *What can you do to apply this principle to your life today?*

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# DAY 2

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## Exodus 12:11

And thus shall ye eat it; with your loins girded, your shoes on your feet, and your staff in your hand; and ye shall eat it in haste: it is the LORD'S passover.

## Biblical Insight

The Lord told the Israelites to eat the Passover in haste so they would be prepared to leave quickly once Pharaoh relented and let them go. Ironically, a Passover *Seder* commemorating this event usually takes hours. People can grow weary during the meal. Perhaps they should think about the Israelites in the first Passover and how they could live out the experience for themselves. Sometimes we are not living our best lives for Jesus because we are only reading about events in the Word of God instead of actively participating in them.

## Daily Devotion

Perhaps the only thing more frustrating than not knowing the will of God is knowing His will and choosing not to follow it. From the beginning, the Lord gave His creation instructions on what He intended them to do. Even in the Garden of Eden, Adam and Eve were instructed to be fruitful and replenish the earth. Although this command referred to them having children, we find a spiritual principle here as well.

It is always the will of God for us to be fruitful in our walk with Him and to add to His church with the natural giftings He has given each of us. We are not just on earth to simply occupy it but to fulfill God's divine will for our lives. In order to be fruitful and flourish in His will, we must be doers of the Word, not hearers only (James 1:22). The Word is to saturate us and launch us forward to do and become all God has called us to.

## Reflection and Prayer

» *What can you do to apply this principle to your life today?*

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## DAY 3

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### Exodus 12:17

And ye shall observe the feast of unleavened bread; for in this selfsame day have I brought your armies out of the land of Egypt: therefore shall ye observe this day in your generations by an ordinance for ever.

### Biblical Insight

Exodus 12:17 gives the command for the Hebrews to continue celebrating the Passover to commemorate God's great victory at the Red Sea. Generations of Jews have participated in Passover *Seders* because this meal is an essential part of Jewish identity. They think about the tears shed and the bricks the Hebrews created as slaves. Christians, however, do not need to celebrate the Passover because we partake in the suffering of Jesus at the cross during communion. Jesus is our Passover Lamb.

### Daily Devotion

Maybe one Christmas someone bought you a car. Or perhaps your spouse gave you tickets to a cruise on your anniversary. Those are great gifts, but the greatest gift we will ever receive is salvation. No matter how long we have walked with the Lord or how mature we have grown in Him, we should never lose our thankfulness for the price He paid for us at Calvary. Brand new believers are often in awe that a loving God chose to give His own life to save us. But over time, we can grow numb to this good news if we are not careful.

Without the Cross, we would have no hope of salvation, grace, or mercy. May we ever continue to grow in our knowledge and relationship with our heavenly Father and cling to our remembrance of what He did at Calvary. When we keep the Cross as the center of our focus, the small and petty situations we face as Christians begin to fade away as our hearts once again fill with thanksgiving.

### Reflection and Prayer

» *What can you do to apply this principle to your life today?*

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## DAY 4

### Exodus 14:26–28

<sup>26</sup> And the LORD said unto Moses, Stretch out thine hand over the sea, that the waters may come again upon the Egyptians, upon their chariots, and upon their horsemen.

<sup>27</sup> And Moses stretched forth his hand over the sea, and the sea returned to his strength when the morning appeared; and the Egyptians fled against it; and the LORD overthrew the Egyptians in the midst of the sea.

<sup>28</sup> And the waters returned, and covered the chariots, and the horsemen, and all the host of Pharaoh that came into the sea after them; there remained not so much as one of them.

### Biblical Insight

We often lift our hands to Heaven in praise or prayer without thinking about the power we possess. When God told Moses to stretch his hand over the sea to bring the waters down onto the Egyptian chariots and horseman, Moses was not making an empty gesture or simply waving like a magician. Stretching forth the hand signified power. We see many events that confirm the importance of this action. Jacob blessed Joseph's children by stretching forth his hands. Although we may sometimes feel powerless, God has put great power in our hands for healing and deliverance.

### Daily Devotion

Matthew's Gospel tells of a man whose hand was withered. Jesus did not command the man to complete a ten-step process to be made whole; Jesus simply instructed him to stretch forth his hand, and immediately he was healed.

What might have happened if the man who needed the miracle had been too discouraged to act in faith? Would he have been healed? When the Lord commanded him to stretch forth his hand, perhaps Jesus wanted to see if the man believed Him for the impossible.

Sometimes we lift our hands in complete confidence that we will see the supernatural. At other times our faith is weak, and we are filled with fear. Just because we don't feel faith in the moment does not mean we should not respond in faith. Don't fold your arms and refuse to reach out to your heavenly Father. If your situation seems impossible today, stretch your hands toward Heaven and see what the Lord will do.

### Reflection and Prayer

» *What can you do to apply this principle to your life today?*

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## DAY 5

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### Exodus 15:1-2

<sup>1</sup> Then sang Moses and the children of Israel this song unto the LORD, and spake, saying, I will sing unto the LORD, for he hath triumphed gloriously: the horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea.

<sup>2</sup> The LORD is my strength and song, and he is become my salvation: he is my God, and I will prepare him an habitation; my father's God, and I will exalt him.

### Biblical Insight

In Exodus 15 we read the Song of the Sea. The Israelites praised the Lord for the great victory He fought for them. The underdog slaves triumphed over impossible odds and a formidable army because of the Almighty. The Song of the Sea serves as one account of the story. A prose narrative also explains the events. God uses both poetry and prose to speak to His people. Preachers often relay important narratives through prose in their messages, and the praise team uses the poetry of song to tell the story a different way. Both forms are needed to help us fully understand the message.

### Daily Devotion

We look forward to gathering with others of the same faith in a conference or special service. We may even develop a list of some of our favorite preachers, and we come with great expectation when we know they will be nearby. Is it possible God feels this way every time the church house doors are open and His church gathers together? Does He excitedly wait for the first song to begin to hear the sounds of His creation praising Him?

Psalm 22:3 reads, "But thou art holy, O thou that inhabitest the praises of Israel." The Lord sits—or dwells—in the midst of our praises. Our thanksgiving and adoration instantly draw God near to us. Worship with instruments and singing is more than just a cultural introduction to a church service; it is when the Lord comes and dwells among His people and allows us to feel His presence.

### Reflection and Prayer

» *What can you do to apply this principle to your life today?*

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# 1.3

## THE TEN COMMANDMENTS

### TRUTH ABOUT GOD

God loves us enough to create safeguards for our good.

### TRUTH FOR MY LIFE

I will follow the commands of Scripture and experience the spiritual protection they provide.



### FOCUS VERSE: Romans 16:26

But now is made manifest, and by the scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, made known to all nations for the obedience of faith.

**LESSON TEXT: Exodus 20:1-17; Matthew 22:37-40; Romans 16:25-27**



**Lesson Title:** The Ten Commandments

**Icebreaker:** Do you find you are naturally a rule follower, or do you tend to march to the beat of your own drum?

**I. TWO VERSIONS OF THE TEN COMMANDMENTS**

» *Think back to when you first learned about the Ten Commandments. Which one stood out to you most? Which is hardest for you to follow?*

- A. The Most Significant Difference
- B. The Ten Commandments and the First and Second Commandments
- C. The Relationship between Faith and the Ten Commandments
  - » *When you think of faith versus Law, what do you think of? How can we walk by faith on a daily basis instead of living legalistically?*
- D. Believing in Jesus and Obeying the Gospel

**II. LOVE GOD**

» *Think about these four aspects of completely loving God: heart, soul, mind, and strength. What are some examples of loving God in each of those aspects of your life? For you, which aspect is easiest? Which is the hardest?*

- A. The First Four Commandments
- B. Loving God and Finding Spiritual Protection

**III. LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR**

» *How do you respond in love to people who are not kind to you in return?*

- A. The Last Six Commandments
- B. Loving My Neighbor and Finding Spiritual Protection
  - » *Think about examples of evangelizing, performing acts of service, speaking uplifting words, and being a peacemaker. How are these ways in which we love our neighbors?*

**Prayer Focus**

- Thank God for His Word that shows us how to live pleasing to Him.
- Ask God for help in following His commands to love Him and love others.

# BIBLICAL OVERVIEW

**Lesson Text:** Exodus 20:1-17; Matthew 22:37-40; Romans 16:25-27

When Christians think about the commandments God gave Moses, they often refer to them collectively as the Law. While the word *Torah* could be translated “law,” the term also means “teaching or instruction.” The Torah represents more than just a law to obey; the Torah represents a way of life that brings prosperity to the individual, the family, the community, and the nation adhering to it.

Nevertheless, many people see control or conformity when thinking about the Word of God. Some view the Ten Commandments and other principles negatively, feeling they engender bondage. Ironically, God gave the Ten Commandments and other instructions in Scripture because He had delivered the people from Egyptian slavery. The Ten Commandments represent safeguards to keep us from returning to our sinful, enslaved past. We have the freedom to follow the commandments rather than being bound by arbitrary rules from a slave master like Pharaoh.

Some people think Christians must show unquestioning loyalty to Jesus. While Jesus asks us for our love and devotion, He does not reject us when we have questions. Jesus is a loving Savior, not an unfeeling taskmaster. He welcomes our questions.

A lawyer tested Jesus in Matthew 22 by asking about the greatest commandment in the Law. Jesus gracefully said to love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, and mind. Jesus further added that we should love our neighbors as ourselves.

Laws in the Old Testament differed greatly from laws of other ancient cultures. For example, the ancient Babylonians believed that the deities they worshiped gave Hammurabi the right to rule. As king, Hammurabi established laws. In the Hebrew Scriptures, God gave the Torah. He did not depend on a fallible human being to establish a legal system. In fact, the laws of the Bible feature more than just legal statutes. The commandment to love our neighbor as ourselves reveals a focus on morality and ethics lacking in other law codes. God’s love for the Israelites and His willingness to deliver them from slavery led the Almighty to provide safeguards for His people. Therefore, the Torah originated from a place of love and mercy, not judgment.

WHEN CHRISTIANS THINK ABOUT THE  
COMMANDMENTS GOD GAVE MOSES, THEY  
OFTEN REFER TO THEM COLLECTIVELY AS  
THE LAW.

# DAY 1

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## Exodus 20:8-11

<sup>8</sup>Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy.

<sup>9</sup>Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work:

<sup>10</sup>But the seventh day is the sabbath of the LORD thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates:

<sup>11</sup>For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the LORD blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it.

## Biblical Insight

The Bible contains two versions of the Ten Commandments. The first appears in Exodus 20 and the second in Deuteronomy 5. Since the name *Deuteronomy* means “second law,” we see Moses gave the commandments to the Israelites once more. Although both accounts are very similar, one of the major differences between the two concerns keeping the Sabbath Day. The Exodus account focuses on God resting from Creation. In contrast, Deuteronomy speaks of letting servants and animals rest so the people remember being slaves in Egypt.

## Daily Devotion

We find in Genesis that over a period of six days, the Lord created everything we see and enjoy. The mountains, the oceans, the stars, and the trees are all the craftsmanship of our Lord. Yet on the seventh day of Creation, He rested. Often we feel that if we take a break or rest for a season, we will lose our creativity or motivation to complete what we have started. However, from a biblical perspective, rest was actually part of the Creation process.

Since we are made in the image of God, our characteristic is to be creative, as He was, but it was also His characteristic to rest. We cannot have creativity without also having rest. Eventually the creative ability will burn out because it is not met with time to recuperate. Day seven of Creation was just as important as days one through six. Don't be afraid to rest; it was God-designed to help us become all He has called us to be.

## Reflection and Prayer

» *What can you do to apply this principle to your life today?*

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## DAY 2

### Exodus 20:3–4, 12

<sup>3</sup> Thou shalt have no other gods before me.

<sup>4</sup> Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth:

<sup>12</sup> Honour thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee.

### Biblical Insight

Many people want to boil down basic instructions to a key word or phrase. While we do not want to reduce the Word of God, we cannot deny the power of the word *honor* as a key aspect of all Ten Commandments. Most obviously, we honor parents since the word appears in that commandment. We also honor God by not having other gods. We honor His holy day, the Sabbath. We honor our neighbors by not stealing from them. We honor life by avoiding murder. We honor our spouses by avoiding adultery. We honor the values of God by avoiding coveting. If we want to obey all the commandments, we must live a life of honor.

### Daily Devotion

Jesus was asked which commandment He considered to be the greatest. He responded with an answer to this question, but then He went a little further and stated what was considered the second greatest commandment: to love your neighbor as yourself.

In order to live a life of honor, we must seek to lift up and encourage those around us. Our thought process should not be whether what we do will bring us honor; rather, we should consider if we are honoring our brothers and sisters in the Lord. To live a life of honor is to live a life of servitude. An individual cannot have true honor without also having a heart to serve.

We see this principle played out in the life of Jesus while He walked the earth. He was always looking for an opportunity to serve those society would have considered beneath Him. Before we seek honor, we should first seek to serve, for this is the path to a life worth remembering. “Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another” (Romans 12:10).

### Reflection and Prayer

» *What can you do to apply this principle to your life today?*

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## DAY 3

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### Exodus 20:17

Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife, nor his manservant, nor his maidservant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor any thing that is thy neighbour's.

### Biblical Insight

We may hear the news that someone has broken one of the Ten Commandments. Even if we do not know the culprit, we can observe that property was stolen or a murder occurred. We can even see when people do right by honoring their parents and the Sabbath. However, we cannot see if someone is coveting something. While there is nothing wrong with desiring nice things, we must not allow ourselves to become jealous of our neighbors. While coveting is often a hidden sin, it is also a gateway sin to breaking other commandments.

### Daily Devotion

Carbon monoxide poisoning is incredibly dangerous and at times fatal due to the fact that without the right equipment, it is completely undetectable. There is no evidence of smell, taste, or feel that lets its victim know it is near. When a carbon monoxide alarm is set in one's house, if the poison begins to settle in, it is quickly detected and the family can escape with no lasting effects.

At times, if we are not careful, we can allow bitterness, offense, jealousy, and other sins to form in our hearts and spirits without even realizing they are present. It is easy to see sins that are done outwardly, but sins hidden deep in our human nature are much more difficult to discover. In order to protect ourselves from allowing secret sins to form in our hearts, we must consistently allow the Word of God to work in our lives. God's Word shines light into all areas and allows us to recognize what should not be there before it takes root and causes spiritual decay in us (Hebrews 4:12).

### Reflection and Prayer

» *What can you do to apply this principle to your life today?*

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# DAY 4

## Matthew 22:37-40

<sup>37</sup> Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.

<sup>38</sup> This is the first and great commandment.

<sup>39</sup> And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.

<sup>40</sup> On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.

### Biblical Insight

Sometimes people try to complicate the Word of God when they interpret it, or they say Scripture is just too difficult to understand. Jesus made things simple for us. The first two commandments simply consist of loving God and loving our neighbors. While it is true we must love the Lord with all our heart, soul, and mind, the admonition is not hard to comprehend. Sometimes we just need to get back to the basics. If we love the Lord, we will develop a greater understanding of His Word.

### Daily Devotion

We live in a day and age when people are obsessed with finding love. We hear phrases such as “love me as I am,” but rarely do they stop seeking love long enough to examine whether they are also giving love. People are infatuated with self-love, but from a biblical perspective, Scripture does not command us to offer up this type of love. We do find, however, the commandment to love God and people over and over again.

Sometimes we can become so focused on the feeling of love that we forget to examine the actions that love produces. Love is a verb, and it forces us to act. We cannot love if we are not also living out love. Jesus told Peter that if he truly loved Jesus, he should feed His sheep. The Lord was trying to express the principle that if we love Him, we will disciple, instruct, care for, and nourish those around us. Love requires involvement. If we are to love, we must also have our hands invested in the harvest. Love is more than just an emotion; it is a lifestyle of giving.

### Reflection and Prayer

» *What can you do to apply this principle to your life today?*

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## DAY 5

### Romans 16:25-27

<sup>25</sup> Now to him that is of power to stablish you according to my gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began,

<sup>26</sup> But now is made manifest, and by the scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, made known to all nations for the obedience of faith:

<sup>27</sup> To God only wise, be glory through Jesus Christ for ever. Amen.

### Biblical Insight

The Bible teaches us the importance of obeying the Law, and we often focus on ensuring we adhere to God's commandments. The Israelites not only broke the commandments in the Torah, but they also failed to listen to the words of the prophets. Gentile believers learned about the command of the eternal God through the writings of the prophets. Whereas the Israelites failed in this area, Gentiles have the grand opportunity to receive salvation. But we must avoid the trap of disobedience and deaf ears.

### Daily Devotion

Paul's closing to his letter to the Romans echoes his opening of the epistle. It is a doxology, or a formal declaration of praise to God. In the context of worship, Paul explains that the revelation (mystery now made known) of the gospel is for obedience to faith. As we obey the gospel, we put our faith in action.

It's a joyous thing to follow the commands of Scripture and activate our faith. The disciple who deeply loves God and His Word obeys not out of grit and willpower as if paying our taxes. No, we follow the commands of Scripture because we trust the loving God who shared His message to us for the purpose of establishing a covenant relationship. John reminded us that God's commandments are not grievous but a result of our mutual love (1 John 5:3). God loves us enough to give us His message, which is for our good and brings blessings when followed. As we love Him and follow His Word, our love and relationship with Him is strengthened.

Today consider how you're doing in following the Word of God. Are there areas you struggle to understand and follow? What could you do this week to better understand God's message to you and how to apply His Word for the ultimate blessing it brings: deeper communion with God?

### Reflection and Prayer

» *What can you do to apply this principle to your life today?*

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# 1.4

## FILLED WITH GOD'S GLORY

### TRUTH ABOUT GOD

The Holy Spirit dwells in believers who are the Temple of God.

### TRUTH FOR MY LIFE

I will let the glory of the Lord fill my life.



### FOCUS VERSES: Exodus 40:34-35

<sup>13</sup> Then a cloud covered the tent of the congregation, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle.

<sup>35</sup> And Moses was not able to enter into the tent of the congregation, because the cloud abode thereon, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle.

**LESSON TEXT: Exodus 35:30-36:7; 40:33-38; Hebrews 9:6-14, 23-28**



**Lesson Title:** Filled with God's Glory

**Icebreaker:** If you could add anything to our existing church building, what would it be?

- I. THE TABERNACLE WAS BUILT BY SPIRITUALLY GIFTED MEN
  - A. Bezaleel, Aholiab, and Other Artisans
  - B. I Will Do What God Enables Me to Do
    - » *In what areas has God gifted you that you will use for His glory? In what other areas would you like to grow and learn?*
- II. THE TABERNACLE WAS SYMBOLIC
  - A. Pointing to Covenant
    - » *What things are easier under the New Covenant? What things might be harder?*
  - B. I Will Embrace the New Covenant
    - » *How can we perform each of the three above elements every day? Give practical examples of each.*
- III. THE TABERNACLE WAS FINISHED
  - A. The Glory of the Lord
    - » *Maybe you don't see a physical glory cloud, but what signs do you look for from day to day to remind yourself that God's presence dwells within you?*
  - B. I Will Let the Glory of the Lord Fill My Life
    - » *What daily choices can we make to ensure we actively dwell in Christ and allow Him to dwell in us every day?*

**Prayer Focus**

- Thank God for the gifts He has given you and the church family.
- Pray for God to use you for His glory.
- Ask God to show all of us what gifts we are able to use for Him.

## BIBLICAL OVERVIEW

**Lesson Text:** Exodus 35:30–36:7; 40:33–38; Hebrews 9:6–14, 23–28

When we think about being filled with the Spirit, we often focus on spiritual matters rather than practical skills, like sewing garments or working as artisans, designers, and weavers. Our minds race to prophesying, tongues and interpretation, and praying for healing. While the gifts of the Spirit should be active in our lives, we must not forget that God anoints members of the body of Christ with diverse abilities to help His church.

We read in Exodus that God filled people with the Spirit to accomplish what might seem like ordinary tasks. Nevertheless, these jobs served a major purpose. Exodus 28:3 speaks of God endowing individuals with wisdom to “make Aaron’s garments to consecrate him.” We often think the ministry consecrates the saints, but here the saints consecrated the ministry.

In Exodus 35:30–31, God referred to Bezaleel as “filled . . . with the spirit of God, in wisdom, in understanding, and in knowledge, and in all manner of workmanship.” The Lord inspired Bezaleel to teach others so they could make the curtains and tent for the Tabernacle. Bezaleel and his fellow laborers needed design skills and workmanship to make the Tabernacle portable and pleasing to God.

Despite their abilities, the Lord had a higher purpose in mind. The tent they created was only a copy of the heavenly place where God dwells. The Lord wanted to fill people with His Spirit so they could have the gifts necessary to create a Tabernacle, and He wanted to dwell in His people.

The idea of dwelling takes us back to the Hebrew word for tabernacle. It does not simply mean “tent or tabernacle”; it means a place to dwell. The translators of the Septuagint missed the complete meaning of the word and rendered it as tent. They even used a Semitic word that meant tent rather than a word that meant dwelling. Certainly Bezaleel and his cohorts created a tent, but spiritually it was so much more. God was looking for so much more. Beyond all the grandeur of the Tabernacle, God desired a place to dwell with His people. He still desires to dwell near us today. Since our bodies are the Temple of God (1 Corinthians 6:19), we should invite God to dwell in our hearts and be filled with His glory.

WHILE THE GIFTS OF THE SPIRIT SHOULD BE ACTIVE IN OUR LIVES, WE MUST NOT FORGET THAT GOD ANOINTS MEMBERS OF THE BODY OF CHRIST WITH DIVERSE ABILITIES TO HELP HIS CHURCH.

# DAY 1

## Exodus 36:1-4

<sup>1</sup>Then wrought Bezaleel and Aholiab, and every wise hearted man, in whom the LORD put wisdom and understanding to know how to work all manner of work for the service of the sanctuary, according to all that the LORD had commanded.

<sup>2</sup>And Moses called Bezaleel and Aholiab, and every wise hearted man, in whose heart the LORD had put wisdom, even every one whose heart stirred him up to come unto the work to do it:

<sup>3</sup>And they received of Moses all the offering, which the children of Israel had brought for the work of the service of the sanctuary, to make it withal. And they brought yet unto him free offerings every morning.

<sup>4</sup>And all the wise men, that wrought all the work of the sanctuary, came every man from his work which they made;

## Biblical Insight

Second Chronicles 2 tells of another skilled craftsman like Bezaleel. Just as Bezaleel helped to build the Tabernacle, Hiram was essential to building the Temple. Hiram was the king of Tyre, and he congratulated Solomon on succeeding his father. Hiram prepared himself to help young King Solomon by supplying the cedar to build the Temple for the Lord. King Hiram sent several craftsmen, including his best craftsman who was also named Hiram. The craftsman Hiram was half-Israelite because his mother was from the Hebrew tribe of Dan and his father was Phoenician. He had the ability to work in gold, silver, bronze, iron, stone, wood, and various colors of yarn. This jack-of-all-trades was even a skilled engraver. He proved to be a great blessing in building the Temple.

## Daily Devotion

It is difficult enough to build a house, but could you imagine building the house in which God would dwell? Building the Tabernacle and the Temple were both huge projects. They were not simply thrown together using the lumber on sale from the big box stores. Rather, every detail was carefully crafted and examined. In both instances God had given specific gifts and talents to individuals to fulfill His plan to have a place to dwell among His people.

We need to find and develop our spiritual giftings, but it is also important that we use the practical, physical talents the Lord has entrusted to us for His glory. There would have been no physical place for the presence of God to dwell if Bezaleel and Hiram had not used their natural skills to design and build the house of God. Value is not just found in singing, preaching, and teaching, but also in those who have the ability to create, envision, and work to help grow God's church. Our heavenly Father has gifted each of us a set of practical gifts, so let us use and develop them as we also develop our spiritual gifts.

## Reflection and Prayer

» *What can you do to apply this principle to your life today?*

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## DAY 2

### Exodus 40:33–38

<sup>33</sup> And he reared up the court round about the tabernacle and the altar, and set up the hanging of the court gate. So Moses finished the work.

<sup>34</sup> Then a cloud covered the tent of the congregation, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle.

<sup>35</sup> And Moses was not able to enter into the tent of the congregation, because the cloud abode thereon, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle.

<sup>36</sup> And when the cloud was taken up from over the tabernacle, the children of Israel went onward in all their journeys:

<sup>37</sup> But if the cloud were not taken up, then they journeyed not till the day that it was taken up.

<sup>38</sup> For the cloud of the LORD was upon the tabernacle by day, and fire was on it by night, in the sight of all the house of Israel, throughout all their journeys.

### Biblical Insight

We often think of Moses being blessed to commune with God on the mountain and receive the Ten Commandments. When the other Israelites feared to come near the Almighty, Moses pressed into great encounters with the Lord. He even saw as much of God as a human could possibly see. However, not even Moses could enter the Tent of Meeting at the end of the Book of Exodus. God filled the Tabernacle so full of His glory that everyone, including Moses, had to stay away.

### Daily Devotion

Think of the most powerful service you have been in. When we are baptized in the saving name of Jesus and filled with His Spirit, we are blessed to have great encounters with God where we feel His presence so strong in our lives. Sometimes we fall to our knees as we are surrounded by His overwhelming glory. These moments are precious and remind us how close Jesus truly is to us.

But we have not even scratched the surface of how wonderful and glorious He is. Moses could only see a portion of God because no person can see the fullness of God's glory and live to tell about it. We must never grow used to His presence and think we have experienced all there is to experience of Him. Oh no, God is far more holy, powerful, and glorious than we will ever comprehend.

### Reflection and Prayer

» *What can you do to apply this principle to your life today?*

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## DAY 3

### Hebrews 9:6-10

<sup>6</sup> Now when these things were thus ordained, the priests went always into the first tabernacle, accomplishing the service of God.

<sup>7</sup> But into the second went the high priest alone once every year, not without blood, which he offered for himself, and for the errors of the people:

<sup>8</sup> The Holy Ghost this signifying, that the way into the holiest of all was not yet made manifest, while as the first tabernacle was yet standing:

<sup>9</sup> Which was a figure for the time then present, in which were offered both gifts and sacrifices, that could not make him that did the service perfect, as pertaining to the conscience;

<sup>10</sup> Which stood only in meats and drinks, and divers washings, and carnal ordinances, imposed on them until the time of reformation.

### Biblical Insight

The Book of Hebrews teaches about shadows of things to come. While these shadows were important in their day, they only pointed to what was coming. The high priest was permitted to enter the Holy of Holies once a year to atone for the sins of the people, but the people's conscience was not truly cleansed. This ceremony was vital for their spiritual growth, but its real significance was in the foreshadowing. This ceremony and others like it pointed to Jesus as our great High Priest who would sacrifice His own blood for us and finally and truly cleanse us from our sins.

### Daily Devotion

Everyone loves a paycheck at the end of the week. Maybe you just enjoy your work, but the paycheck makes the work sweeter. How would you feel if the boss set your car on fire on payday? Why would anyone work for a boss like that? Yet people work for worse wages every day: Paul wrote, "For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Romans 6:23).

Our heavenly Father paid the debt we owed because of our sin. We deserved to die, but Jesus died in our place. He paid what we could not repay and gives us what we do not deserve. That is amazing grace. The Cross made a way for all of us to experience God's presence daily and to receive a taste of what is to come after this life. The joy we feel here cannot be compared to what we will experience when we are finally and fully with Him in Glory.

### Reflection and Prayer

» *What can you do to apply this principle to your life today?*

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# DAY 4

## Hebrews 9:11-14

<sup>11</sup> But Christ being come an high priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building;

<sup>12</sup> Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us.

<sup>13</sup> For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh:

<sup>14</sup> How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?

## Biblical Insight

The Torah had strict instructions for making atonement for the people. Hebrews 9 speaks of the blood of bulls and goats and the ashes of a heifer. The Israelites went to great lengths to procure the right red heifer. The heifer could not have one spot or blemish, neither could it have been under a yoke (Numbers 19:2). In contrast, Jesus took the yoke of sin that was upon us and broke it. He replaced our yoke with His, telling us, "My yoke is easy, and my burden is light" (Matthew 11:30).

## Daily Devotion

Take a look outside the window. There is no pickup truck and trailer hauling an animal ready to be sacrificed for your sins. When Jesus gave His own life on the cross, the Old Testament practice of animal sacrifices for sin was fulfilled by the blood of Jesus that washes away our sins. No longer do we go through the grueling process of finding a perfect animal for sacrifice because Jesus became that sacrifice.

Let's daily examine our own lives to see if spots or blemishes of sin have formed. The children of Israel did not casually look over each animal. They inspected every inch for defects that would disqualify it from being acceptable. Ephesians 5:27 speaks of God's church without blemish and without spot. Jesus' selfless gift on Calvary did not only set us free from sin, but it also gave us the grace to live above the power of sin.

## Reflection and Prayer

» *What can you do to apply this principle to your life today?*

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## DAY 5

### Hebrews 9:23-28

<sup>23</sup> It was therefore necessary that the patterns of things in the heavens should be purified with these; but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these.

<sup>24</sup> For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us:

<sup>25</sup> Nor yet that he should offer himself often, as the high priest entereth into the holy place every year with blood of others;

<sup>26</sup> For then must he often have suffered since the foundation of the world: but now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.

<sup>27</sup> And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment:

<sup>28</sup> So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation.

### Biblical Insight

The Book of Acts records Jesus' ascension to Heaven in the presence of His disciples. Our Lord and Savior promised to return the same way He left. As we look for His return, we must realize Jesus is not coming back to roll forward our sins. Unlike the yearly sacrifice offered to cleanse the sins of the people, Jesus only had to offer Himself once. His blood is powerful enough to save all generations from all their sins. When Jesus returns, He will bring salvation to those waiting for Him—to those cleansed by His precious blood.

### Daily Devotion

Jesus is coming! Jesus is coming! We have heard this message heralded for years. Generations before ours eagerly looked toward Heaven, wondering when Jesus would come back. Jesus promised He was going to prepare a place for us; then He would come back for us so that where He is, there we may be also (John 14:2-3).

Perhaps it feels like the waiting will never end, but it will. We must continue to believe what Jesus promised two thousand years ago and not grow weary in waiting. Jesus told of ten bridesmaids who all fell asleep while they waited for the bridegroom. Even in their exhaustion, five of them had prepared for the long wait and brought extra oil for their lamps.

As the world grows darker with each passing day, let's lift our heads, cling to our faith, and keep looking toward the sky. As sure as Jesus came the first time, He is coming back. What a day that will be.

### Reflection and Prayer

» *What can you do to apply this principle to your life today?*

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# 2.1

## A HOUSE DIVIDED

### TRUTH ABOUT GOD

Jesus recast what  
“family” looks like.

### TRUTH FOR MY LIFE

I will be born again  
and faithfully live for  
Jesus.



### FOCUS VERSE: Mark 3:35

For whosoever shall do the will of God, the same is my brother, and my sister, and mother.

### LESSON TEXT: Mark 3:20–35



**Lesson Title:** A House Divided

**Icebreaker:** What one trait describes your family the best?

- I. THE FOUNDATION OF GOD'S FAMILY
  - A. God's Family Members Share His Traits
  - B. I Want to Be a Member of God's Family
    - » *In addition to obedience, what are other traits we see in the family of God?*
  
- II. JESUS' FAMILY AND FRIENDS CRITICIZED HIM
  - A. Jesus' Response to His Critics
    - » *Why do you suppose the scribes and others hated Jesus so much?*
  - B. Jesus' Previous Encounter with the Strong Man
  - C. I Will Follow Jesus Alone Because He Bound the Strong Man
    - » *How does Jesus' victory over temptation give you power over temptation?*
  
- III. THE FOUNDATION OF JESUS' FAMILY
  - A. Being in Jesus' Family Is Not Always Popular
    - » *Recount a time when following Jesus caused you to be "outside."*
  - B. Jesus' Family Members Share His Traits
    - » *Which of Jesus' family traits do you wish you had more of in your life?*
  - C. I Will Be Born Again and Faithfully Live for Jesus

**Prayer Focus**

- For us to be bold and unashamed to live for Jesus
- To help others be born again into God's family

## BIBLICAL OVERVIEW

**Lesson Text:** Mark 3:20–35

In Mark 3:20–35, Jesus returned home to a most unwelcome homecoming. People started talking about Jesus being out of His mind, so His family attempted to restrain Him. This indictment of the people—“He has lost His senses”—comes from a Greek word that often appears in English as the word *ecstasy* or *ecstatic*.

Contemporary English often uses these words to describe extreme happiness, being delirious with joy, or having a rapturous feeling. Other connotations of being crazy or mad in the sense of being insane exist; however, these may have become more metaphorical over time as the meaning of the word has changed. The delirium we feel when we describe ourselves as ecstatic probably means we are overjoyed. Rather than having abandoned good sense and gone out of our minds, we are describing a state beyond our normal senses that lifts us to a euphoric high.

The *Septuagint* often described this phrase as someone fearing or trembling. In Jesus’ day, it could refer to needing a reality check, a straitjacket, or a good therapist. The scribes who came down from Jerusalem ratcheted the word even further and accused Jesus of being demon possessed. For someone thought to be deranged, Jesus certainly gave rational answers to their questions by speaking to them in parables. However, the next chapter of Mark reveals that Jesus’ disciples failed to understand a parable. Even Jesus’ parables might have made Him sound like He was “off His rocker.”

Jesus’ family stood outside, wanting to detain Him, but they could not due to the crowd. Neither He nor they were ecstatic (overjoyed) to see one another. Therefore, Jesus redefined family as whoever does the will of God. His family did not feel euphoric when they heard His proclamation, but others likely did. If so, they may have also been called crazy.

Today’s Christians who have received the Spirit may understand both meanings of ecstatic. We feel joy unspeakable, while family and friends may describe us as crazy. If so, we are in good company in the spiritual family of Jesus.

THE DELIRIUM WE FEEL WHEN WE DESCRIBE OURSELVES AS ECSTATIC PROBABLY MEANS WE ARE OVERJOYED.

# DAY 1

## Mark 3:20–25

<sup>20</sup> And the multitude cometh together again, so that they could not so much as eat bread.

<sup>21</sup> And when his friends heard of it, they went out to lay hold on him: for they said, He is beside himself.

<sup>22</sup> And the scribes which came down from Jerusalem said, He hath Beelzebub, and by the prince of the devils casteth he out devils.

<sup>23</sup> And he called them unto him, and said unto them in parables, How can Satan cast out Satan?

<sup>24</sup> And if a kingdom be divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand.

<sup>25</sup> And if a house be divided against itself, that house cannot stand.

## Biblical Insight

The people of Nazareth spread rumors about Jesus and misinterpreted His actions. The scribes from Jerusalem took these accusations even further. Jesus could not find honor in His own hometown, not even from His own family. After Jesus left Nazareth, He later returned (Mark 6) only to receive a similar homecoming. The people were offended because they could not believe a man from their town could have such wisdom and power. Jesus declared that prophets often deal with dishonor in their own towns. Jesus only cured a few sick people in Nazareth because of the people's unbelief.

## Daily Devotion

The citizens of Nazareth sat still in the synagogue as Jesus taught. “Isn’t he cute? Little Jesus is all grown up. He made my dining room table, you know.” They were closest to Jesus, but they did not believe in God’s call on His life. It can be discouraging when those closest to us do not believe in our call or ministry. If you find yourself facing what Jesus felt, take heart because Jesus did too.

God also called Joseph in Genesis to save his nation, and Joseph shared that call with his family. His family scolded him for even sharing his dreams with them. Thankfully, Joseph never completely gave into bitterness at his family for their unbelief. When the day dawned that they needed what Joseph had to offer from his God-ordained ministry, he was there for them.

Don’t allow others’ unbelief—even from those closest to you—to cause bitter roots to spring up in your spirit. Jesus can use even their unbelief to shape you into a closer image of Him.

## Reflection and Prayer

» *What can you do to apply this to your life today?*

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## DAY 2

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### Mark 3:22

And the scribes which came down from Jerusalem said, He hath Beelzebub, and by the prince of the devils casteth he out devils.

### Biblical Insight

The teachers of the Law came down from Jerusalem to see Jesus according to Mark 3. Despite their years of training and knowledge of God's Word, they mistook the Prince of Peace for the prince of demons. They called him *Beelzebub*, the "Lord of the Flies." Beelzebub is associated with the flies that accompany death, disease, and decay. These teachers of the Law had no idea that the Prince of Peace had come with healing in His wings. (See Malachi 4:2.)

### Daily Devotion

Expectations are quite tricky. We expect certain things from our family, our friends, our boss, and even our God. No matter how much we know the Bible, we must remember that the Lord will do things or allow certain things to happen that do not meet our expectations. Our response in these times greatly matters. Is it possible these teachers could not see what Jesus was doing because they were disappointed in who they thought He was? Had he seemed more religious or majestic, might they have accepted Him?

Moments will come in our walk with God when He simply does not live up to our expectations. In these moments we must decide if we will accept His ways and will or if we will refuse to allow Him to be Lord over us because life looks different than we thought it should. Let's guard our hearts against offense toward our Father, knowing and trusting that His ways are much higher than our ways.

### Reflection and Prayer

» *What can you do to apply this to your life today?*

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## DAY 3

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### Mark 3:24

And if a kingdom be divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand.

### Biblical Insight

When the teachers of the Law accused Jesus of casting out devils by the power of the devil, Jesus leaned on logic and questioned how He could be part of the kingdom of the evil one and oppose the evil one. When Jesus told them that a kingdom divided against itself cannot stand, perhaps He was reminding them of the divided kingdoms of Israel and Judah. The twelve tribes did not stay together. Ten tribes were lost when the Assyrians deported people from the northern kingdom of Israel. To answer their accusations, Jesus had history and logic on His side.

### Daily Devotion

We learn in elementary school that division makes everything smaller. Scripture teaches the same lesson. On the Day of Pentecost the “disciples” were in “one place and one accord” (Acts 2:1) Certainly those 120 people had different personalities and experiences with God, but their reason for gathering was the same—they were waiting for the promise of the Father.

We believers have great power and strength when we are unified with each other. Although our methods and opinions may vary, our purpose in discipling the people around us is the same. As we work together in the kingdom of God, let’s focus on what brings us together rather than what tears us apart. We need each other to fulfill God’s Great Commission.

### Reflection and Prayer

» *What can you do to apply this to your life today?*

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# DAY 4

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## Mark 3:27

No man can enter into a strong man's house, and spoil his goods, except he will first bind the strong man; and then he will spoil his house.

## Biblical Insight

Jesus taught the teachers of the Law that the only way to steal from the strong man's house was to first bind the strong man. Jesus proved His ability to bind Satan by casting his demonic forces out of people. Jesus had bound the strong man, and Satan could do nothing about it. While the exorcisms of Jesus proved impressive, they foreshadowed His binding Satan and stealing the keys of death, Hell, and the grave.

## Daily Devotion

Satan is relentless and ruthless. He is keenly aware that he has no power over Spirit-filled believers, but this does not stop him from trying to destroy us. First Peter 5 and John 10 paint a grisly picture of the devil. He constantly roams all over the world trying to find someone to kill, steal from, and devour. Although he may not physically enter our homes and bind us, he intends to bind us in our minds.

Our minds are constantly battling thoughts of evil and defeat. This seems to be the quickest way to weaken even the strongest Christian. If Satan can wear down our minds, he can fill us with constant worry and fear. Perhaps this is why Paul wrote in II Corinthians 10:5 that we must cast down imaginations. Even though Paul suffered great trials and tribulations, he was still strong in his faith because he had learned the value of protecting his mind.

## Reflection and Prayer

» *What can you do to apply this to your life today?*

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## DAY 5

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### Mark 3:28–29

<sup>28</sup> Verily I say unto you, All sins shall be forgiven unto the sons of men, and blasphemies wherewith soever they shall blaspheme:

<sup>29</sup> But he that shall blaspheme against the Holy Ghost hath never forgiveness, but is in danger of eternal damnation.

### Biblical Insight

We have all sinned, yet we can all rely on Jesus to forgive us and cleanse us by His blood. Jesus even said we can be forgiven for the slanderous words we speak. However, the one sin that cannot be forgiven is blasphemy against the Holy Spirit. Based on the context of this stern warning, blasphemy against the Spirit appears to be attributing to Satan what truly belongs to God. Such an individual would likely be far removed from right relationship with God. Let us reverence the Lord and be on guard, but not be fearful.

### Daily Devotion

“Is this a Heaven or Hell issue?” We have heard that question. When we first came to Jesus, we may have even asked that question ourselves. We want to make sure we make it to Heaven, so we see each action as right or wrong. Although this is foundational in our walk with God, just labeling actions in life as right or wrong should not be our goal.

As we mature spiritually, we should change the question we ask and begin asking, “Is this pleasing to God?” It was never God’s intent for us just to try to avoid Hell; God wants us to desperately want to know Him and have an intimate relationship with Him. Our goal should be to walk so closely with Him that we seek His approval in every area of life. May we fill all our days, including this day, with actions and attitudes that draw us closer to Jesus.

### Reflection and Prayer

» *What can you do to apply this principle to your life today?*

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# 2.2

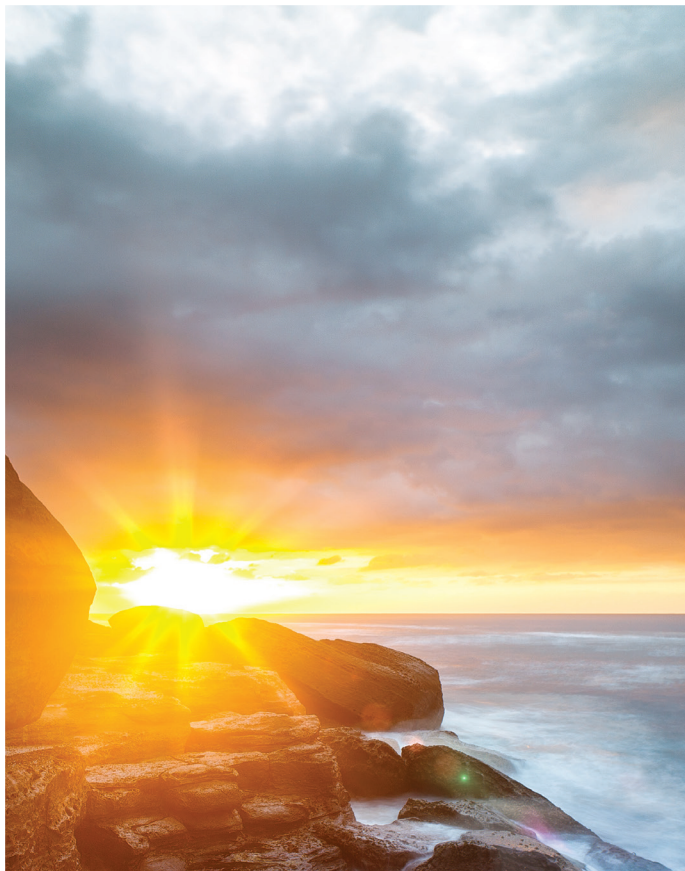
## CALMING THE STORM

### TRUTH ABOUT GOD

Jesus is God  
manifest in the flesh.

### TRUTH FOR MY LIFE

I will put my faith  
exclusively in Jesus.



### FOCUS VERSE: I Timothy 3:16

And without controversy great is the mystery of  
godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in  
the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles,  
believed on in the world, received up into glory.

**LESSON TEXT: Psalm 65:5-7; 89:8-9; Mark 4:35-41;  
I Timothy 3:16**



**Lesson Title:** Calming the Storm

**Icebreaker:** What is the most frightening storm you have ever lived through?

I. THE DAY JESUS PROVED HIS DEITY

» *Do you ever have moments of confusion where it's difficult to understand what God is doing? What do you do in those times?*

A. Even the Wind and Sea Obey Him

» *What would you have done if you were one of the disciples?*

B. Who Is This Jesus?

» *Can you describe a prayer God answered that caused you to be in awe of His power?*

C. I Believe Jesus Is Who He Said He Is

II. JESUS' TRUE IDENTITY

» *In one sentence, describe the Incarnation to someone who has never heard of it.*

A. Jesus Is God in Flesh

B. I Will Trust Jesus to Calm My Storms

**Internalizing the Message**

» *Are there any God-sized storms in your life that only God can calm? If so, let us ask Him to calm those storms as He calmed the storm upon the sea and the storm within the soul.*

**Prayer Focus**

- For us to believe Jesus is who He says He is
- For Jesus to calm our storms and calm our fears

# BIBLICAL OVERVIEW

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**Lesson Text:** Psalm 65:5-7; 89:8-9; Mark 4:35-41; I Timothy 3:16

Words change over time, and people tend to use them euphemistically to avoid being too harsh. We say a dog was “put down” instead of euthanized. Rather than saying someone died, we gently and respectfully refer to a person’s passing. During the funeral, someone gives a eulogy, which—like euphemism—is a word that also contains the *eu* from Greek, meaning “well or good.” Euphemisms make words more palatable.

Sometimes we need to be more direct. Preachers often say they do not want to sugarcoat their words. Yet we all find ourselves looking for ways to state something more empathetically to lessen the harsh impact for others.

Euphemisms have their place, but they can often inhibit the full meaning of a word or expression; sometimes they can even reverse it. No songwriter or singer would conceivably earn a number one hit on the Christian charts with the lyrics: “Our God is a terrible God. He reigns from Heaven above with wisdom, power, and love. Our God is a terrible God.” Those lyrics sound, well—terrible. Yet Psalm 65:5 speaks of the terrible or terrifying works of God that inspire fear rather than inspire amazement.

We prefer to sing about our awesome God, but the word *awe* does not simply connote something wondrous; awe is also associated with fear. If we still have some confusion about God being terrible and awesome, we should think about the word *awful* meaning “full of awe,” as in a terrifying thing that causes fear and dread. We should have a healthy fear of the Lord because He controls the wind and the waves. In fact, if we choose to completely toss out euphemisms, we could say that Jesus told the storm to shut up. Certainly, “Peace, be still” sounds much better, but it may not fully capture the awesome terror of that holy moment.

WORDS CHANGE OVER TIME, AND PEOPLE  
TEND TO USE THEM EUPHEMISTICALLY TO  
AVOID BEING TOO HARSH.

# DAY 1

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## Psalm 65:5

By terrible things in righteousness wilt thou answer us, O God of our salvation; who art the confidence of all the ends of the earth, and of them that are afar off upon the sea.

## Biblical Insight

Psalm 65:5 addresses the Lord as “O God of our salvation.” The name Jesus (*Yeshua*) comes from the Hebrew word for salvation, connecting *Yeshua* with *Elohim*. Some might choose to dismiss this connection, but Psalm 65:7 speaks of the God of our salvation silencing the waves, a miracle Jesus performed in Mark 4 to show that He was the Messiah. Psalm 79:9 contains the same address and begs the Lord to deliver us and forgive our sins—acts Jesus accomplished by dying on the cross. Jesus is truly the God of our salvation.

## Daily Devotion

When we call on Jesus, we are calling on the Lord of the universe, who holds all power in His hands. When we call on God, Jesus answers because He was God in flesh. As we think about salvation, we often think only of salvation for our souls. Hallelujah, we’re heading to Heaven! But let’s remember God is also our Savior from depression, anxiety, pain, loss, grief, and many other difficult seasons we experience in our walk through life.

The greatest salvation was for our souls, but Jesus didn’t stop there. He bore stripes on His back to save us from disease and sickness. He even carried our griefs and sorrows to save us from depression and anxiety. We first call on Him to save us from our sins, but let us continue to call on Him to save us in all life’s circumstances.

## Reflection and Prayer

» *What can you do to apply this principle to your life today?*

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## DAY 2

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### Psalm 65:6

Which by his strength setteth fast the mountains; being girded with power.

### Biblical Insight

Jesus taught about having faith to move mountains, but moving a mountain seems an impossible task to our human mind. Yet we serve the very one who formed the mountains by His power. Sometimes we are guilty of focusing on the wrong question. We may incorrectly ask, “How could this mountain possibly be removed?” We should be asking, “If the one who had the power to make this mountain has given me power through His Spirit, why couldn’t this mountain be removed?”

### Daily Devotion

A molehill is small; a mountain is large. No wonder we are not supposed to make mountains out of molehills. God designed each of us to be able to tell the difference between small and large. Because of this God-given ability, we may be tempted to see our problems and categorize them into different sizes. Our heavenly Father does not label our situations the same as we do.

Sure, we should express to God our concerns and fears about our current problems, but no matter how big or small they may seem to us, He simply sees His ability and power to do the miraculous. Whether you face a molehill or a mountain, run to God and ask Him to do the impossible. He specializes in making the impossible possible.

### Reflection and Prayer

» *What can you do to apply this principle to your life today?*

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## DAY 3

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### Psalm 89:8-9

<sup>8</sup> O LORD God of hosts, who is a strong LORD like unto thee? or to thy faithfulness round about thee?

<sup>9</sup> Thou rulest the raging of the sea: when the waves thereof arise, thou stillest them.

### Biblical Insight

During the Intertestamental Period, a group rose against a Greek tyrant who was claiming to be a god. The Maccabees opposed Antiochus IV and eventually defeated him. Many think the name Maccabees is an acronym for: “Who is like you among the heavenly powers, Lord?” The Maccabees recognized a pretender in their midst and defeated him. Sadly, the nation they saved was not able to recognize Jesus. Thankfully, the disciples came to know Jesus as the one true God because He rules over the waves and the sea.

### Daily Devotion

All through the Bible we meet kings who thought they were somebody, but through a demonstration of the power of God, they proclaimed that Jehovah alone was the one true God. Sadly, many of these kings went right back to serving their false gods and worshiping their man-made idols. For a moment they recognized God as Lord over all, but they refused to live in submission to Him.

As Christians, we must be careful that we don't proclaim with our mouths that Jesus is Lord, when all the while we worship idols. We may not have carved idols in our homes, but we can turn fear, worry, entertainment, power, money, and politics into the center of our focus and thoughts. Let us guard our hearts from being filled with anything that causes us to dethrone the one true God from His rightful place as Lord over our lives.

### Reflection and Prayer

» *What can you do to apply this principle to your life today?*

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# DAY 4

## Mark 4:35–41

<sup>35</sup> And the same day, when the even was come, he saith unto them, Let us pass over unto the other side.

<sup>36</sup> And when they had sent away the multitude, they took him even as he was in the ship. And there were also with him other little ships.

<sup>37</sup> And there arose a great storm of wind, and the waves beat into the ship, so that it was now full.

<sup>38</sup> And he was in the hinder part of the ship, asleep on a pillow: and they awake him, and say unto him, Master, carest thou not that we perish?

<sup>39</sup> And he arose, and rebuked the wind, and said unto the sea, Peace, be still. And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm.

<sup>40</sup> And he said unto them, Why are ye so fearful? how is it that ye have no faith?

<sup>41</sup> And they feared exceedingly, and said one to another, What manner of man is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?

## Biblical Insight

The disciples saw with their own eyes as Jesus woke up on the ship and rebuked the wind and the sea. We hear them asking, “Who is this?” While this question could seem like they were doubting, perhaps a question mark is not sufficient enough punctuation to explain their situation. They needed an exclamation point to go with it: “Who is this?!” Even as they questioned, the realization was dawning on them that the one with them—the one who controlled the wind and the waves—was the Almighty.

## Daily Devotion

The disciples had walked with Jesus for a while. They probably knew His favorite meal. They had grown close to Him, but they didn’t really realize who He was. However, when they were in the throes of a storm on the water, the revelation that Jesus was the Almighty became clear to them.

We know from Scripture about the attributes and nature of God. But do we truly know Him? Many times we only really know Him when we sail through our own storms. We know that Jesus is our healer and our provider, but only when we need Him to heal and provide do we truly understand that He is both the healer and the provider. Everyone wants a miracle, but few of us want to need that same miracle. If you find yourself in a stormy season, don’t just focus on your problem. Ask the Lord to reveal to you who He is.

## Reflection and Prayer

» *What can you do to apply this principle to your life today?*

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## DAY 5

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### I Timothy 3:16

And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory.

### Biblical Insight

First Timothy 3:16 unveils a powerful understanding that deserves the same reverence as the *Shema* in Deuteronomy 6:4. Paul specifically stated, “God was manifest in the flesh.” God came in the flesh as Jesus Christ. God was “justified in the Spirit” and “seen of angels.” Jesus matches that description. God was “preached unto the Gentiles” and “believed on in the world.” The disciples preached Jesus, and many believed on Jesus. Finally, God was “received up into glory.” Jesus returned to Heaven according to Acts 1. The only way we can effectively interpret I Timothy 3:16 is to understand Jesus as God in flesh.

### Daily Devotion

As born-again believers grasp the Oneness of God, we begin to see all of Scripture through this glorious lens. This should create in us a deeper love for the Cross and the price Jesus paid for us at Calvary. God Himself came in flesh and became the perfect sacrifice for our sins.

With this revelation comes a warning. We must make sure we don’t become arrogant in our approach to others who do not see Jesus in the same divine light. In Acts we meet a man named Cornelius who did not have the fullness of truth, but he was a devout God fearer who loved the Lord with all his heart. If Peter had discounted Cornelius’s relationship with God because he had not yet been baptized, Cornelius may have never received the gospel. We must hold fast to our doctrine but never in a prideful way. None of us would have received the gospel if someone had not loved us enough to preach to us while we were yet sinners.

### Reflection and Prayer

» *What can you do to apply this principle to your life today?*

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# 2.3

## GO HOME TO YOUR FRIENDS

### TRUTH ABOUT GOD

Jesus is compassionate.

### TRUTH FOR MY LIFE

I will tell my friends about Jesus.



### FOCUS VERSES: Mark 5:19-20

<sup>19</sup> Howbeit Jesus suffered him not, but saith unto him, Go home to thy friends, and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee, and hath had compassion on thee.

<sup>20</sup> And he departed, and began to publish in Decapolis how great things Jesus had done for him: and all men did marvel.

### LESSON TEXT: Mark 5:1-20



**Lesson Title:** Go Home to Your Friends

**Icebreaker:** What was your favorite bedtime story or nursery rhyme as a child?

- I. EVIL SPIRITS KNOW WHO JESUS IS
  - A. Jesus Is the Son of the Most High God
    - » *How do you think the disciples reacted when they heard Jesus was going into Gentile territory?*
  - B. All Creation Will Confess That Jesus Christ Is Lord
- II. JESUS HAD COMPASSION FOR GENTILES
  - A. The Plight of the Demoniac
  - B. I Will Have Compassion for the Rejected
    - » *Can you think of anyone who may feel rejected to whom you can show the compassion of Jesus Christ?*
- III. GO HOME TO YOUR FRIENDS
  - A. Jesus Had Compassion on the Demoniac and Delivered Him
    - » *What about God's call on your life makes you unique and uniquely valuable?*
  - B. I Will Tell Others My Story of the Lord's Compassion
    - » *Who needs to hear your testimony? How can you share it with them this week?*

**Internalizing the Message**

- » *What role do you play in the story of God's redemption in your world?*

**Prayer Focus**

- For us to have confidence in God's power over evil
- For Jesus to give us compassion for the rejected

# BIBLICAL OVERVIEW

**Lesson Text:** Mark 5:1-20

We often hear pastors, teachers, student ministers, and elders telling us to fulfill the Great Commission by spreading the gospel of Jesus Christ. We must go into the highways, hedges, and byways sharing the Word of God in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and the uttermost part of the earth (Acts 1:8). This focus on canvassing the entire world with the message of salvation leads to outreach efforts, such as door knocking and missionary trips. Since we are called to spread the good news of Jesus, it is surprising to read what we read early in the Gospel of Mark.

Biblical scholars see Jesus trying to keep His identity as the Messiah a secret in the Gospel of Mark. In chapter 1, Jesus confronted a demon-possessed man who referred to Him as the “Holy One of God” (Mark 1:24). Jesus commanded the man with the unclean spirit to be silent because Christ did not want to reveal Himself to the people.

In the same chapter, Jesus told a leper He cleansed not to share his testimony with anyone (Mark 1:43-45). Jesus even taught in parables to obscure His divine identity. Jesus not only banned demons and people He healed from revealing who He was, but He also told His disciples not to inform others (Mark 8:29-30).

However, something different occurred when Jesus crossed the sea into the country of the Gadarenes. He encountered a demon-possessed man who ran up to Him, worshiped Him, and called Him the “Son of the most high God” (Mark 5:7). After casting out all the man’s devils, Jesus told him, “Go home to thy friends, and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee, and hath had compassion on thee” (Mark 5:19). The formerly possessed man went into an area of the Gentile world known as Decapolis because it consisted of ten cities. Everyone who heard his testimony was amazed.

When people question this outlier to the Messianic Secret in the Gospel of Mark, scholars suggest that Jesus wanted to keep His identity hidden from the Jews. However, they argue He wanted the Gentiles to hear the good news. Although the Bible speaks of Paul as the apostle to the Gentiles, one of the first people to proclaim the power of Jesus to Gentiles happened to be a formerly demon-possessed man who knew someone so wonderful and powerful that he could not keep Him a secret.

WE MUST GO INTO THE HIGHWAYS,  
HEDGES, AND BYWAYS SHARING THE  
WORD OF GOD IN JERUSALEM, JUDEA,  
SAMARIA, AND THE UTTERMOST PART  
OF THE EARTH (ACTS 1:8).

# DAY 1

## Mark 5:1

And they came over unto the other side of the sea, into the country of the Gadarenes.

### Biblical Insight

Different sources identify Gergasa or Gadara as the place Jesus met the demon-possessed man in Mark 5. Both places have the potential to be correct. Gergasa was one of the cities of the larger region known as Decapolis, the area the formerly possessed man evangelized. Gadara may refer to a more local area. The name Gadara is associated with the tribe of Gad, who chose to live on the eastern side of the Jordan River along with Reuben and the half-tribe of Manasseh away from the other tribes of Israel. Since Gad was one of the ten lost tribes, we can view the events in Mark 5 as a way for the Messiah to fulfill His call to the house of Israel while also ministering to the Gentiles.

### Daily Devotion

A story is told of a Christmas morning in 1985. A little girl was given a brown leather Bible with her name engraved on the front.

Now the leather is worn and some of the pages are tattered. However, it is more important today than it was over thirty-five years ago. It has been with its recipient through tests God turned into testimonies.

When she opens her Bible, she thanks God for those who invested in her life. Their willingness to give of themselves helped sow a passion for God's Word. Now she has the ability to invest in others.

What about your life? What can God do with your willingness to be used? Think back to where you've come from. How has God blessed you and brought you to where you are? What can you do to bless others?

### Reflection and Prayer

» *What can you do to apply this principle to your life today?*

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## DAY 2

### Mark 5:1-5

<sup>1</sup> And they came over unto the other side of the sea, into the country of the Gadarenes.

<sup>2</sup> And when he was come out of the ship, immediately there met him out of the tombs a man with an unclean spirit,

<sup>3</sup> Who had his dwelling among the tombs; and no man could bind him, no, not with chains:

<sup>4</sup> Because that he had been often bound with fetters and chains, and the chains had been plucked asunder by him, and the fetters broken in pieces: neither could any man tame him.

<sup>5</sup> And always, night and day, he was in the mountains, and in the tombs, crying, and cutting himself with stones.

### Biblical Insight

In Scripture the enemy of our soul often mimicked divine power. Pharaoh's magicians duplicated the first few miracles of Moses and Aaron, but they were unable to continue after the fourth plague. In Mark 5, we meet a demon-possessed man who possessed supernatural strength similar to Samson's strength. No one could bind him; no one could stop him. The townspeople tried to bind him with chains, but he broke the chains in pieces. While Samson received his power from the Holy Spirit, this man received his power from evil spirits. Only God manifest in the flesh could set this reverse-Samson free.

### Daily Devotion

A few years ago, Amy purchased an adorable purse online. She quickly opened the package and was surprised the purse came with a fancy dust cover bag. Feeling somewhat pampered, Amy opened the cover bag to inspect it. It was classy with gold lettering across the front in an elegant font. Just then, Amy's daughter walked in, grabbed the new purse from the table, and excitedly asked, "You bought a Kate Spade purse? Wow, those are expensive!"

However, an odd, misspelled sentence was written on it that read, "She tucked her corallipstick away and floated back to the porty." Somehow, Amy had inadvertently bought a fake name-brand purse. Everything looked legitimate; it even had the label that mimicked a serial number. However, something was wrong in the translation that revealed its inauthenticity. When the trials of this life come against us, we want to rest assured that we have an authentic relationship with Christ, not a cheap substitute. Only the real mark of our Maker will matter.

### Reflection and Prayer

» *What can you do to apply this principle to your life today?*

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## DAY 3

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### Mark 5:7

And cried with a loud voice, and said, What have I to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of the most high God? I adjure thee by God, that thou torment me not.

### Biblical Insight

James commended his readers for believing in one God. However, he noted that the devils also believe in one God, and they tremble (James 2:19). In Mark 5, the demon-possessed man believed in one God because he called Jesus “the most high God” when Jesus cast out his demons. Similarly in Mark 1:24, the demon-possessed man identified Jesus as the “Holy One of God.” We see strong monotheistic messages here. Both stories present a powerful Oneness message from most unlikely sources.

### Daily Devotion

Have you ever met someone who had never had freedom of religion? One pastor’s wife relates meeting an immigrant named Nargis from an area of the world where Christians are persecuted. When the Christian asked Nargis if she had ever been to church, her face turned pale. She quickly hushed the Christian as if she were trying to save her life. In fact, that’s exactly what Nargis thought she was doing. She was amazed that the Christian freely spoke of Jesus. She had never heard of this God who is so powerful. In her nation the mention of any god but Allah was strictly forbidden and punishable by death.

Nargis agreed to visit the Pentecostal church even though she was still frightened. Her desperation was tangible as she walked into the sanctuary. That night she freely lifted her hands to worship the one true God for the first time in her life. She trembled, not out of fear, but in innocent response to the presence of God. Her previous government tried to suppress the knowledge of Jesus Christ, but she still found Him. Are you taking advantage of the privilege you have to freely worship Jesus?

### Reflection and Prayer

» *What can you do to apply this principle to your life today?*

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# DAY 4

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## Mark 5:9

And he asked him, What is thy name? And he answered, saying, My name is Legion: for we are many.

## Biblical Insight

The demon-possessed man of Gadara clearly knew who Jesus was when he encountered Him. And Jesus knew exactly who was controlling the man from Gadara. Jesus demonstrated power over him and the devil by asking his name. The man identified himself as Legion, explaining the moniker by stating, “For we are many.” Ancient sources disagree on the number of soldiers that comprised a legion. The most accurate estimate seems to be around 5,000–6,000 soldiers to qualify as a legion. The battle was one against about 5,500, but that didn’t matter because Jesus was not just one; Jesus was the One.

## Daily Devotion

“I’m terrible when I don’t get my medicine,” one little boy exclaimed. He was clear and possibly even correct, but his declaration was heartbreaking. Other people had told him numerous times that his behavior was unacceptable or even obnoxious when he did not take his medicine to help him focus. But his statement revealed more than just how he behaved; it revealed the identity he believed because of how people had labeled him.

We often identify ourselves by our mistakes, our issues, or the labels others have given us. However, once we have been baptized in the name of Jesus, those labels are irrelevant because Jesus has the authority to name us. Even though others may have called us worthless, we are now His; we are bought with the highest price: the precious blood of Jesus. (See 1 Peter 1:19.) What label can you leave behind so you can share your testimony with your world?

## Reflection and Prayer

» *What can you do to apply this principle to your life today?*

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## DAY 5

### Mark 5:11-16

<sup>11</sup> Now there was there nigh unto the mountains a great herd of swine feeding.

<sup>12</sup> And all the devils besought him, saying, Send us into the swine, that we may enter into them.

<sup>13</sup> And forthwith Jesus gave them leave. And the unclean spirits went out, and entered into the swine: and the herd ran violently down a steep place into the sea, (they were about two thousand;) and were choked in the sea.

<sup>14</sup> And they that fed the swine fled, and told it in the city, and in the country. And they went out to see what it was that was done.

<sup>15</sup> And they come to Jesus, and see him that was possessed with the devil, and had the legion, sitting, and clothed, and in his right mind: and they were afraid.

<sup>16</sup> And they that saw it told them how it befell to him that was possessed with the devil, and also concerning the swine.

### Biblical Insight

When Jesus cast the demons out of the demon-possessed man who identified himself as Legion, the demons begged to go into the swine. Given the fierce kosher laws that prohibited eating pork, associating devils with pigs is not surprising. Pigs were thought to be unclean and so are devils—they're even known as unclean spirits. These pigs were doubly unclean. The demons drove the pigs over a cliff to their deaths. Thankfully, the man wanted to be set free, and Jesus was willing to set him free.

### Daily Devotion

Something about a hot dog on a summer day makes the day complete. However, as you grew older and paid closer attention to you health, you may be tempted to investigate how hot dogs are made. That newfound knowledge may drastically alter your perception of hot dogs and even change your opinion of the taste. Some things just taste better when you don't know the ingredients.

The Bible speaks of the pleasures of sin being seasonal (Hebrews 11:25), but maturity in Christ will reveal the true ingredients. What once may have seemed like happiness, living blindly for the pleasures of the world, can be likened to the process of mixing random ingredients together to form a semblance of normal nutrition called a hot dog. Ingredients matter when the outcome matters. Although the world offers the pleasures of sin for a season, only the truth we find in Christ will nurture a developing Christian.

### Reflection and Prayer

» *What can you do to apply this principle to your life today?*

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# AN

## IN EVERY NATION

### TRUTH ABOUT GOD

God saves all who come to Him in faith, no matter their ethnicity.

### TRUTH FOR MY LIFE

I will love and rejoice with all who are born into the kingdom of God.



### FOCUS VERSE: Acts 10:35

But in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him.

### LESSON TEXT: Acts 10:34-48; 15:6-17



**Lesson Title:** In Every Nation

**Icebreaker:** Have you ever had a vision from God? If so, what did it mean?

**I. PETER'S VISION****A. Peter's Struggle**

» *Have you ever received clear instructions from God but resisted obeying? What created that struggle within you?*

**B. I Will Obey God's Voice****II. PETER'S MESSAGE****A. God Shows No Partiality**

» *Peter spoke the will of God but still had to be taught how to live it out. How easy is it to know and speak the will of God without allowing it to penetrate our minds and transform how we live?*

**B. I Will Tell Everyone the Gospel**

» *Who are some of the people God has placed in your life for you to reach with the gospel? What can you do to reach them this week?*

**III. PETER'S APPEAL****A. The Jerusalem Council**

» *In what ways can the Jerusalem Council serve as a template for resolving conflicts among believers?*

**B. I Will Love and Rejoice with All Who Are Born into the Kingdom of God**

» *In what ways could culture potentially impair someone's ability to receive or share the gospel?*

**Prayer Focus**

- For God to help us love and share the gospel with all people
- For God to help our church be multicultural

# BIBLICAL OVERVIEW

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**Lesson Scripture:** Acts 10:34–48; 15:6–17

Throughout history, Jews have referred to Gentiles as “goy” or “goyim.” This name refers to people who were not of Jewish ethnicity or religion. Because Jews sometimes used these words to describe someone of another nation, Scripture often mentions Jews and Greeks when speaking of Jews and Gentiles.

God’s prophecy to Abram in Genesis 12 contained a promise that Abram’s descendants would be a blessing to all nations. The roots of the fulfillment of this prophecy may be found in the Persian Period in the fifth century BC when the Persians conquered the Babylonians. The Persians treated the Jews well, allowing them to return to the province of Yehud to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem. The Persians also financed the rebuilding of the Temple.

These blessings all started with Cyrus the Great, a Gentile king the Bible refers to as anointed (Isaiah 45:1). Because of Cyrus’s benevolence, Jews started seeing Gentiles in a more positive light. Prophets like Zechariah spoke of Gentiles joining with Jews (Zechariah 8:23) and seeing their value because the Lord was with them.

The Gentile revival in the Book of Acts fulfilled this prophecy and many others from the Old Testament. Acts 1:8 speaks of reaching those in the uttermost part of the earth. The Gentiles represented the uttermost as ethnic and spiritual outsiders to the promises of God. Through the power of the Spirit, they joined the Samaritans in becoming part of the plan of God as those on the fringes also drank from the rivers of living water. At the Jerusalem Council in Acts 15, James quoted the prophet Amos, stating that the influx of Gentiles fulfilled the promise that the Tabernacle of David would be restored. The Holy Spirit brings unity to all nations, inviting everyone to come to Jesus, no matter their ethnicity. All of us are welcome to worship together in the Tabernacle of David.

**GOD’S PROPHECY TO ABRAM IN GENESIS 12 CONTAINED A PROMISE THAT ABRAM’S DESCENDANTS WOULD BE A BLESSING TO ALL NATIONS.**

# DAY 1

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## Acts 10:34

Then Peter opened his mouth, and said, Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons.

## Biblical Insight

Simon Peter had a vision that convinced him Gentiles could be part of the kingdom of God. His vision came to him just as men from the house of Cornelius sought him out. Peter argued with God at first, but he ultimately saw that the early church should include Gentiles. In Acts 10:34, Peter contended that God does not show favoritism. Paul, who later became the Apostle to the Gentiles, believed the same as he wrote, "For there is no respect of persons with God" (Romans 2:11).

## Daily Devotion

Celebration without discrimination is how one pastor described their multicultural church. What a beautiful concept! Hearts overflow with joy the first time fellow church members share a family recipe from Mexico or a sister teaches a tradition she brought from the Philippines. How amazing that the God of all creation has gathered His children from all over the world and united them through one Spirit.

Our minds often become cluttered with the messages of division pushed on us by hurtful agendas, all the while God is simply calling us to love without boundaries and minister without borders. The heart of God sees no lines of division between His children, and if we are truly seeking His heart, neither will we.

God has given each of us a testimony, learning experience, and exposure to the uniqueness of our own background. Since God is sovereign, He can and will use anything we surrender to Him, including our cultural uniqueness.

## Reflection and Prayer

» *What can you do to apply this principle to your life today?*

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## DAY 2

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### Acts 10:38

How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power: who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with him.

### Biblical Insight

Peter preached to the Gentiles in Cornelius's house and testified of the wonderful works Jesus did. The Savior went about doing good and healing all who were possessed of the devil. Perhaps that setting reminded Simon Peter of the events of Mark chapter 5 when Jesus encountered a demon-possessed man in the former territory of the Gadites. Jesus told this man to proclaim the message of salvation to the Gentiles. If Jesus told him to preach the gospel to the Gentiles, Peter felt confirmation that he could do the same.

### Daily Devotion

Nothing is more powerful than a personal testimony. One family had never doubted God's ability to heal the sick, but only when they were faced with their own life-threatening situation did God become their Jehovah-Rapha, "the Lord who heals." The doctor shared the MRI images that revealed a softball-sized tumor in the husband's skull. They were placed in a position that tested their own faith and message.

In that moment when fear could have reigned, they humbled themselves before God and placed the entire situation into His hands. The peace that passes all understanding flooded the hospital room, and their testimony was born. The next couple of months were filled with one miracle after another as God proved Himself faithful time and again.

Now, when they speak to people concerning the healing power of Christ, the words come from more than just the knowledge of His Word; they come with confidence formed in the test that became the testimony. God is your Jehovah-Rapha too. If you are facing an impossibility today, call on Him to be your healer.

### Reflection and Prayer

» *What can you do to apply this principle to your life today?*

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## DAY 3

### Acts 10:47-48

<sup>47</sup> Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we?

<sup>48</sup> And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord. Then prayed they him to tarry certain days.

### Biblical Insight

The plan of salvation is succinctly explained as repentance from sin, baptism in the precious name of Jesus, and the baptism of the Holy Spirit with the initial sign of speaking in other tongues. (See Acts 2:38-39.) While we must repent before baptism and receiving the Spirit, we may receive the Holy Spirit before being baptized. Such was the case for the Gentiles in Cornelius's household. Since they had received the baptism of the Spirit, they needed water baptism to fulfill the plan of Jesus.

### Daily Devotion

Several years ago, a family from a Trinitarian Pentecostal church discussed some questions of doctrine. They believed in the infilling of the Holy Spirit with the sign of speaking in tongues; however, the doctrine of the oneness of God had eluded them, so they did not feel that was important.

One night after Bible study, someone began to speak about Jesus' resurrection, comparing the empty tomb to the Ark of the Covenant. The very shekinah glory of God rested in the tomb, marked by the angels at the head and foot of where Christ's body had lain.

Just then the presence of God swept through the building as the man began speaking in tongues and declaring the glory of God. He later testified how God revealed Himself in a completely new way to him. Just like for that man and for Cornelius, God will always reveal Himself to a hungry, searching heart.

### Reflection and Prayer

» *What can you do to apply this principle to your life today?*

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## DAY 4

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### Acts 15:1-2

<sup>1</sup> And certain men which came down from Judaea taught the brethren, and said, Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved.

<sup>2</sup> When therefore Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and disputation with them, they determined that Paul and Barnabas, and certain other of them, should go up to Jerusalem unto the apostles and elders about this question.

### Biblical Insight

Acts 15 records one of the earliest business meetings of the New Testament church. At this meeting known as the Jerusalem Council, the apostles wrestled with what God required of the Gentile converts. Although circumcision was a major issue, the church ruled the Gentiles did not have to be circumcised to be saved. As with most meetings, not every issue was settled. In the next chapter of Acts, Paul had Timothy circumcised because the Jews knew Timothy was partly Jewish and Greek. (See Acts 16:1-3.) Paul later took a stronger stand against circumcision when he wrote the Book of Galatians.

### Daily Devotion

It's easy to lose sight of the humanity of the early church. They walked on water, worked miracles, and turned their world upside down. Shouldn't that mean the disciples were super-human, exempt from our carnal foibles and temptations? Scripture indicates that was not the case. The apostles who founded the first church on the teachings of the Messiah they walked with struggled with human weaknesses. Luke was transparent in recording the unfortunate reality of their prejudice (Acts 15).

We're naïve if we think we will somehow be exempt from the selfish temptation to show bias. Even these early church leaders were prone to make a distinction among who was eligible for church membership based on tradition and opinion. They talked through their differences and ultimately followed the message of Calvary and the moving of the Holy Ghost to accept the truth that Jesus Christ died for everyone. We too must talk through any traditions, practices, or opinions that could create divisions in the church. Like them, we should embrace the hope of the beautiful revelation that everyone is equal at the foot of the cross.

### Reflection and Prayer

» *What can you do to apply this principle to your life today?*

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## DAY 5

### Acts 15:16-17

<sup>16</sup> After this I will return, and will build again the tabernacle of David, which is fallen down; and I will build again the ruins thereof, and I will set it up:

<sup>17</sup> That the residue of men might seek after the Lord, and all the Gentiles, upon whom my name is called, saith the Lord, who doeth all these things.

### Biblical Insight

The Book of Acts relies on two minor prophets who had a major impact on the church. In Acts 2, Peter preached about the fulfillment of Joel's prophecies that sons, daughters, servants, and handmaids would receive the Holy Spirit. That fulfillment continued with the Samaritans in Acts 8 and the Gentiles in Acts 10. When the apostles wondered what to do with the new Gentile Christians, James turned to the prophet Amos, who spoke of the restoration of the Tabernacle of David. If the early church relied on these "minor" prophets, we should look to them as well.

### Daily Devotion

Nothing catches God off guard. Although this concept may seem obvious, sometimes we are tempted to project our own shock onto God. Do we do that because God is not handling situations the way we think He should? In our day when so many biblical prophecies are being fulfilled, it is more important than ever to remember God is on the throne and still in control. Just as the early church faced trials and tribulations, today's church will face the same before the second coming of Christ.

However, the presence of trials does not mean the absence of Christ. They often mean the opposite. Jesus said, "These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world" (John 16:33). Nearly two thousand years ago, Jesus Christ looked into the future and spoke directly to us to be of good cheer. He is still in control.

### Reflection and Prayer

» *What can you do to apply this principle to your life today?*

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# 2.4

## YOUR FAITH HAS MADE YOU WHOLE

**TRUTH ABOUT GOD**

God responds to faith.

**TRUTH FOR MY LIFE**

Because it is never too late to touch Jesus, I will take my need to Him.



**FOCUS VERSE: Mark 5:34**

And he said unto her, Daughter, thy faith hath made thee whole; go in peace, and be whole of thy plague.

**LESSON TEXT: Mark 5:24-34**



**Lesson Title:** Your Faith Has Made You Whole

**Icebreaker:** How was life different or the same for you twelve years ago?

- I. THE WOMAN WITH THE ISSUE OF BLOOD SUFFERED FOR TWELVE YEARS
  - A. She Sought Many Cures Without Improvement
  - B. I Will Reject Hopelessness in Favor of Faith
    - » *When you feel hopeless or overwhelmed, what do you do?*
- II. THE WOMAN DID NOT TOUCH JESUS, BUT SHE TOUCHED HIS CLOTHING
  - A. Faith, Not Formulas, Produce Results
  - B. She Was Not Deterred Because Jesus Was Busy
    - » *Why do we sometimes feel like God is too busy to heal us or help us?*
  - C. I Will Trust in God, Not Formulas
    - » *Have you ever caught yourself trying to find a formula to cause God to work in your life, or do you simply put your faith in His knowledge and wisdom?*
- III. JESUS HEALED THE WOMAN AND GAVE HER PEACE
  - A. She Was Made Whole and Inspired Others
    - » *If you were Daughter, how do you think Jairus or the disciples might have acted toward you? How do you think Jesus might have acted toward you?*
  - B. Because It Is Never Too Late to Touch Jesus, I Will Take My Need to Him
    - » *What is the balance between faith and works? How do we make sure we wait on God while reaching out to Him in faith?*

**Prayer Focus**

- For us to have faith in Jesus for our need
- For Jesus to give us the courage to reach out to Him in faith

## BIBLICAL OVERVIEW

**Lesson Text:** 5:24–34

The woman with the issue of blood in Mark 5 desperately needed to touch the hem of Jesus' garment to receive her healing. Merely using the word *hem* does not present the full picture of the chapter's events. We can more accurately define the hem of Jesus' garment as *tzitzit*, or tassels on a garment. They are also worn on Jewish prayer shawls.

The command to wear *tzitzit* appears in a couple of passages from the Torah. According to Numbers 15:38, God told Moses, "Speak unto the children of Israel, and bid them that they make them fringes in the borders of their garments throughout their generations, and that they put upon the fringe of the borders a ribband of blue." (See also Deuteronomy 22:12.) The following verses in Numbers 15 reveal the Lord's particular purpose for these tassels: "And it shall be unto you for a fringe, that ye may look upon it, and remember all the commandments of the LORD, and do them; and that ye seek not after your own heart and your own eyes, after which ye use to go a whoring: that ye may remember, and do all my commandments, and be holy unto your God" (Numbers 15:39–40).

Since Jews attached *tzitzit* to the corners of clothing, the tassels may have reminded wearers to avoid sin, especially the sin of adultery or fornication. The verses above may refer to different types of iniquity, but we cannot ignore the practical reminder that the wearer had to handle the *tzitzit*—which was a reminder of holiness—before disrobing. That simple reminder may have prevented sexual sin.

The fringes not only represented sins to avoid but also ways to maintain holiness. Ironically, the woman with the issue of blood touched the holy *tzitzit* even though she was unclean. Although the King James Version tells us Jesus knew virtue had gone out of Him, most other translations rightly use the word *power*. Since the Lord ends the command to wear *tzitzit* in Numbers 15:41 with a recognition of power to deliver the Israelites from Egypt, it is no surprise these tiny threads helped this lady at the end of her rope as Jesus' *tzitzit* served as a touch point for her healing.

THE WOMAN WITH THE ISSUE OF BLOOD  
IN MARK 5 DESPERATELY NEEDED TO  
TOUCH THE HEM OF JESUS' GARMENT TO  
RECEIVE HER HEALING.

# DAY 1

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## Mark 5:22-24

<sup>22</sup> And, behold, there cometh one of the rulers of the synagogue, Jairus by name; and when he saw him, he fell at his feet,

<sup>23</sup> And besought him greatly, saying, My little daughter lieth at the point of death: I pray thee, come and lay thy hands on her, that she may be healed; and she shall live.

<sup>24</sup> And Jesus went with him; and much people followed him, and thronged him.

## Biblical Insight

Mark 5 describes Jairus as a ruler of the synagogue who needed Jesus to heal his daughter. As the ruler of the synagogue, Jairus made sure everything was in order for the services. While we might think of a synagogue as a place, the Greek word actually means “to gather together” and focuses on the people, not a building. Ten men known as a *minyan* were required to form a synagogue based on the ten faithless spies who did not believe Israel could conquer the Promised Land. (See Numbers 13:31-33.) Jairus faced similar unbelief from those around him that Jesus could work this miracle. Thankfully, Jairus had the giver of faith at his side.

## Daily Devotion

“She will never use her left arm.” How devastating it must have been for the young parents to receive that news after the birth of their child. The prognosis was undisputed among the doctors. The traumatic birth had caused too much damage to the nerves in the infant’s left shoulder, creating paralysis in her left arm.

One day the baby’s grandmother was caring for her and began to lift the infant’s tiny arm into the air and pray in the name of Jesus. When she released her grasp, the baby’s arm fell lifelessly. However, with her faith undeterred, she lifted the arm one last time and declared, “In the name of Jesus!” At that moment she released her grasp, and the infant’s arm stayed in the air, mimicking the movement of her healthy arm. Nearly forty years later, she still lifts her left arm into the air to declare the power and glory of Jesus Christ, our healer. Are you facing a desperate situation? Declare the mighty name of Jesus over your dilemma and believe for God to make a way.

## Reflection and Prayer

» *What can you do to apply this principle to your life today?*

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## DAY 2

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### Mark 5:27-29

<sup>27</sup> When she had heard of Jesus, came in the press behind, and touched his garment.

<sup>28</sup> For she said, If I may touch but his clothes, I shall be whole.

<sup>29</sup> And straightway the fountain of her blood was dried up; and she felt in her body that she was healed of that plague.

### Biblical Insight

The Bible does not always give us much information about the people inside its pages. We encounter a desperate woman in Mark 5, but we know little about her other than her major need. However, the text provides us with her thoughts; she thought if she could touch the clothes of Jesus, she would be healed. We could view this mention as a mere explanation of her mental process, but the narrative proves more powerful because her thoughts expressed her faith—a faith that led to her healing.

### Daily Devotion

If you think you can or think you cannot, you are correct either way. Without fail, people have used the power of their mind to push their successes or excuse their failures. Every decision begins in the mind. But changing our mindset can be very difficult. After all, we didn't form our mindsets overnight, and we cannot change them overnight on our own.

Thankfully, we have the power of Christ. By renewing our minds daily and submitting our thought processes to Him, we are able to have His thoughts for our lives. Although our world preaches that we cannot overcome old mindsets, God says we can. Paul wrote, "And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God" (Romans 12:2). Transformation begins with a mind that is submitted to Christ.

### Reflection and Prayer

» *What can you do to apply this principle to your life today?*

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## DAY 3

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### Mark 5:30

And Jesus, immediately knowing in himself that virtue had gone out of him, turned him about in the press, and said, Who touched my clothes?

### Biblical Insight

The King James Version of the Bible states Jesus felt virtue flow from Him when the woman with the issue of blood touched the hem of His garment. The Greek word for virtue is actually *dunamis*. Translations can make a large difference in how we view a text. The word *dunamis*, which is often translated “power,” makes the story ironic. Many people in the crowd followed Jesus closely and likely touched Him while walking. However, only one woman felt the true power of Jesus.

### Daily Devotion

Have you ever been to a museum that featured a Van de Graaff Generator? In simple terms, this instrument detects static electricity in fun ways, such as by making your hair stand on end. The intensity of the electrical power affects a person’s body in visible ways.

It’s a crude comparison, but have you ever considered what the ailing woman felt as she grasped the fringe of Jesus’ garment? We have no reason to suspect her hair stood on end or anything similar—the disciples didn’t seem to notice her. But the most important person present did; Jesus immediately felt the transfer of power, just as she did.

Today He is still transferring that power to heal. Sometimes when we receive our healing, it comes in that dramatic powerful burst just as it did when she crawled through the mob. Other times He unleashes a progressive work of healing within us. In either instance, His power makes all the difference. How can you press through the distractions and obstacles to touch Jesus today?

### Reflection and Prayer

» *What can you do to apply this principle to your life today?*

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# DAY 4

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## Mark 5:31

And his disciples said unto him, Thou seest the multitude thronging thee, and sayest thou, Who touched me?

## Biblical Insight

Many Christians have a high view of Jesus' disciples because of their great works in the Book of Acts and beyond. But they often appear as incompetent in the Gospel of Mark. They failed to understand Jesus' parables, and they had little faith. In Mark 5:31, they assumed Jesus—who is all knowing—had no idea what was going on. The disciples' problem was seeing things naturally without looking into the dimension of the Spirit. Thankfully, they realized who Jesus was and kept following Him until they received the baptism of the Holy Spirit. Then their understanding increased.

## Daily Devotion

Have you encountered someone everyone wants to avoid? Perhaps this person seems to be completely miserable and loving every moment of it. It feels like God has placed these particular types of people along our way to keep us humble. It may make us think, *Why would they choose to be that miserable? Nothing makes them happy, and their outlook of the world is so cynical.*

An elder once said, "Cynicism is a scab; something has to cover a painful wound." Consider every miserable person you have tried to avoid so as to not be affected by negative attitudes. Sadly, each one was probably covering a painful area of life with the scab of cynicism. Today let God allow your spiritual eyes to see the wounds and pain beneath the sarcasm to help hurting people heal.

## Reflection and Prayer

» *What can you do to apply this principle to your life today?*

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## DAY 5

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### Mark 5:34

And he said unto her, Daughter, thy faith hath made thee whole; go in peace, and be whole of thy plague.

### Biblical Insight

Jesus made an interesting statement to the woman who had just received her healing; Jesus told her that her faith had made her whole. The Messiah did not even take credit for her healing. While we regularly see Jesus actively healing the sick and casting out devils in the Gospels, this Mark 5 narrative highlights the woman as the initiator of her own miracle. We often talk of stepping out by faith, but this woman carried her faith many steps further. She pressed through the crowd by faith and received her healing by faith.

### Daily Devotion

Healing and wholeness cannot be achieved without acknowledging brokenness. Even Christians sometimes feel a sense of lacking although we have been filled with the Holy Spirit. Sometimes you may encounter those who cannot explain the emptiness they feel in prayer, relationships, and even in their self-perception. Maybe you've even been there yourself. Conversations about these feelings often lead to past experiences that secretly placed a level of shame in our lives.

By acknowledging this brokenness and weight, we are able to work through the process of surrendering the shame we have carried for so many years. The amazing freedom that follows such surrender elevates our acceptance of God's transformational healing in our lives and brings a fresh intimacy in prayer and relationship with Him. But first, we have to understand the source of brokenness in order to be restored to wholeness. "And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Thessalonians 5:23). Prayerfully ask the Lord today if you have faced shame and how you can find freedom and wholeness through God's healing power.

### Reflection and Prayer

» *What can you do to apply this principle to your life today?*

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# 3.1

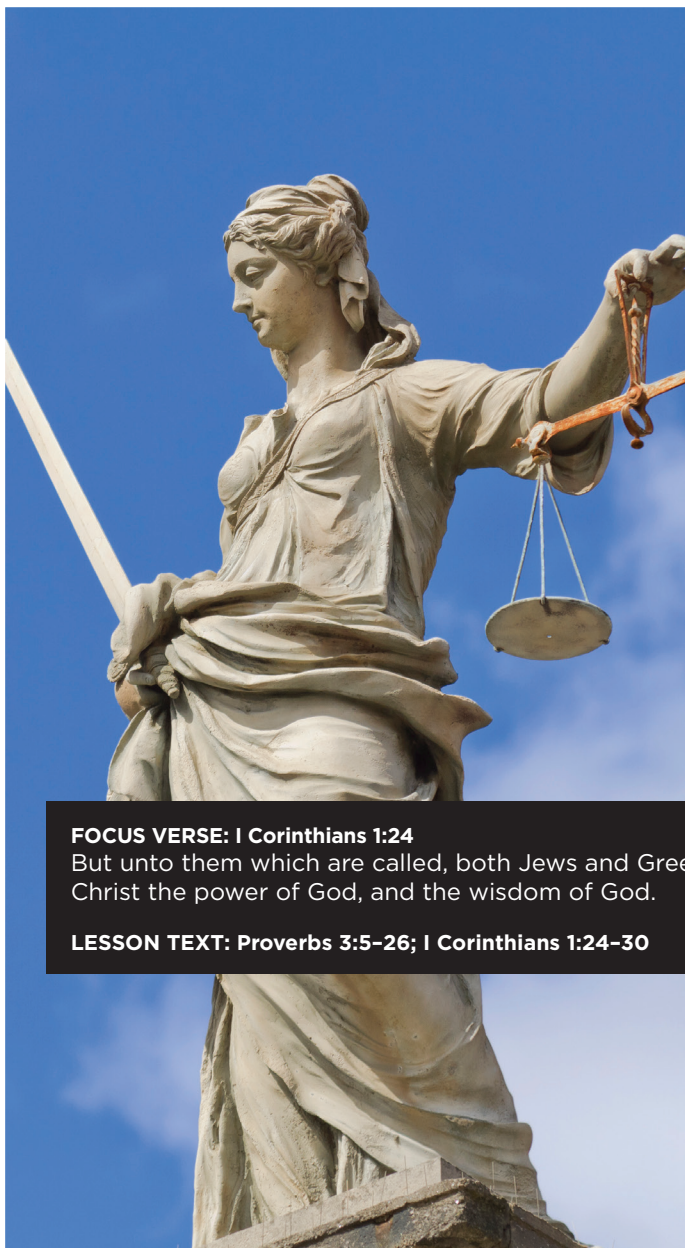
## WISDOM'S WORTH

### TRUTH ABOUT GOD

Godly wisdom is the most valuable asset we could ever obtain.

### TRUTH FOR MY LIFE

I will deepen my relationship with Jesus Christ, the source of wisdom.



### FOCUS VERSE: I Corinthians 1:24

But unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God.

**LESSON TEXT: Proverbs 3:5-26; I Corinthians 1:24-30**



**Lesson Title:** Wisdom's Worth

**Icebreaker:** What is the most difficult stand you have ever made for your faith?

I. HUMILITY IS REQUIRED TO OBTAIN WISDOM

» *What is a proverb from the Book of Proverbs you rely on because it speaks to you?*

A. Looking to God Instead of Ourselves

B. I Will Embrace Humility

» *What are some steps we can take to be more humble in a world that values individualism, often at the cost of wisdom?*

II. WISDOM'S REWARD

A. The Benefits of Wisdom

» *What wise steps can you take to create more peace in your life?*

B. I Will Pursue Godly Wisdom

III. TRUE WISDOM IS FOUND ONLY IN JESUS CHRIST

» *Since wisdom is not always about gaining, what might we have to lose to be wise?*

A. Worldly Wisdom Will Not Save Us

B. I Will Deepen My Relationship with Jesus Christ, the Source of Wisdom

» *What wise action plan can you make for your life? What steps will you take in making godly plans for the future?*

**Prayer Focus**

- For us to look to Jesus for the wisdom we need
- For us to live with faith and courage in the wisdom God provides

## BIBLICAL OVERVIEW

**Lesson Text:** Proverbs 3:5–26; I Corinthians 1:24–30

Scripture often speaks of putting our faith and trust in God. Despite many sermons and lessons on the same, we can sometimes struggle to fully understand how to trust the Lord. Proverbs 3:5 provides one of the most famous explanations of what this means. We trust Him with all our hearts if we do not lean to our own understanding.

The word *lean* in this verse can literally refer to leaning on something or relying on something. Ezekiel 29:6–7 provides a poignant reminder of what happens when we fail to lean on the Lord. Egypt had assisted Israel like a staff assists a shepherd, but the staff was not made of something strong like wood; it was flimsy like a reed. When Israel used the reed staff as a crutch, the weak reed broke, tore Israel's shoulders, and made their legs unsteady. What was meant to serve as a help actually hurt them and left them in worse shape than when they started.

Sometimes God's people suffered because those who should have been wise proved unreliable. Rulers, priests, and prophets sought financial gain instead of the good of the people. They had the audacity to claim that the Lord was with them and no harm would come to them. Because of their folly, Micah prophesied the ruin of Jerusalem (Micah 3:11–12).

Israel had a bad habit of leaning on the wrong allies. The prophet Hanani told King Asa that his enemy escaped because he leaned on the king of Aram instead of on the Lord. But there was hope. Isaiah 10:20 declares that Israel would no longer lean on those who struck them but on the Lord. Second Chronicles 13:18 reveals the victory associated with leaning on the Lord because it enabled Judah to defeat Israel. (See also II Chronicles 16:8.)

These verses demonstrate the pitfalls of leaning on our own understanding and the wonderful promises of leaning on the Lord. Some kings could make a logical argument that leaning on the Egyptians or other allies served as the best possible solution. But in the end, their own understanding doomed them. We too must be careful to avoid leaning on the wrong people. We must lean on our most valuable asset: the wisdom of God.

SOMETIMES GOD'S PEOPLE SUFFERED  
BECAUSE THOSE WHO SHOULD HAVE  
BEEN WISE PROVED UNRELIABLE.

# DAY 1

## Proverbs 3:5-6

<sup>5</sup> Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding.

<sup>6</sup> In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.

## Biblical Insight

When we study the Word of God, we often contrast the wisdom of the Lord with the wisdom of humans, knowing that divine wisdom is so much greater. In exploring the Book of Proverbs, we may sometimes forget that God sent His wisdom into various nations, cultures, and languages. Solomon and others set about to gather this wisdom and collect it into proverbs. The Bible says, “A merry heart doeth good like a medicine” (Proverbs 17:22). A Chinese proverb has a similar saying. Such an occurrence reveals the universality of wisdom and the power of God to permeate all cultures.

## Daily Devotion

In 1933 the German government implemented a campaign called “Kraft durch Freude”—translated “Strength through Joy.” The Germans believed people would be able to contribute more to society through the workforce if they were able to have a time of relaxation and leisure. However, they were mistaken in thinking that joy was a result of leisure, which could be attained by vacations and fun-filled activities.

This concept may seem like great wisdom, but it failed miserably when citizens did not find great strength because of an absence of true joy. The slogan had been subverted from the verse that reads, “The joy of the LORD is your strength” (Nehemiah 8:10). In their effort to motivate the entire nation with words that seemed like wisdom, the German government attempted to replace the very source of joy—the Lord Jesus Christ—from their campaign.

Our journey to joy must begin with and be centered in a connection to Jesus Christ. Ask the Lord today to restore the joy of your salvation (Psalm 51:12).

## Reflection and Prayer

» *What can you do to apply this principle to your life today?*

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## DAY 2

### Proverbs 3:7

Be not wise in thine own eyes: fear the LORD, and depart from evil.

### Biblical Insight

The Bible consistently warns of danger when people do what is right in their own eyes. In the Book of Judges, we see the destruction that comes from people doing whatever they want. Proverbs 14:12 speaks of a way that seems right to an individual; however, this way turns out to be the way of death. The New Testament even addresses this selfsame problem. First John 2:16 tells us that the lust of the eyes is of this world. Something may seem correct to us but turns out to be completely wrong.

### Daily Devotion

As he sat in the pastor's office, the young man spoke with confidence and quickly rejected anything the pastor said that contradicted his perception of his wise decisions. It quickly became clear to the pastor the young man was in the process of making dreadful decisions that would destroy his family. He quoted non-existent verses concerning God's approval and declared God wants people to be happy above all else. The pastor struggled with a mournful feeling deep in his soul as dreadful scenarios of the family's future played through his mind.

The young man was not there for counsel; he was only there to announce the decisions he had already made. The pastor prayed with him and told him he loved him no matter what. The young man left that night with every intention of doing what he thought was right, regardless of any wisdom others offered. Ultimately, destruction did come to his family.

Sadly we learn from cautionary tales like these the danger of shunning wisdom. In contrast, Jesus can protect someone at His feet crying, "Show me Your ways, even if they contradict mine." Are you willing to pray that prayer?

### Reflection and Prayer

» *What can you do to apply this principle to your life today?*

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## DAY 3

### Proverbs 3:11-12

<sup>11</sup> My son, despise not the chastening of the LORD; neither be weary of his correction:

<sup>12</sup> For whom the LORD loveth he correcteth; even as a father the son in whom he delighteth.

### Biblical Insight

The Book of Proverbs shares tremendous wisdom from a father to a son. The son should not despise the chastening of the Lord, nor resent the Lord's rebuke. The heavenly Father and an earthly father both correct the ones they love. Hebrews 12:7-9 provides an interpretation of this passage. Those who do not receive correction are illegitimate, meaning they are not true heirs. If we want to live and prosper, we must be in subjection to our heavenly Father.

### Daily Devotion

Have you ever pouted because you didn't get something you wanted? Of course you have. Everyone has at some point in life. Maybe you felt terribly mistreated if not allowed to go to certain activities with other children your age. Obviously, other children and teenagers' parents must have loved them more than yours loved you since they were allowed to have so much fun.

However, as young adults, we begin to see a difference in the direction our lives head compared to childhood friends with no guardrails. Those raised with protection typically do not have the baggage of past mistakes following them into adulthood like youth raised with no boundaries. Fences of protection placed around us protect our future.

Just as mature adults can look back gratefully at the safeguards parents enforced in childhood, mature Christians should reflect with gratitude on the ways God protects and corrects His children, always in love. Take some time to thank God today that He loves you enough to guide and redirect you.

### Reflection and Prayer

» *What can you do to apply this principle to your life today?*

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## DAY 4

### Proverbs 3:13-17

<sup>13</sup> Happy is the man that findeth wisdom, and the man that getteth understanding.

<sup>14</sup> For the merchandise of it is better than the merchandise of silver, and the gain thereof than fine gold.

<sup>15</sup> She is more precious than rubies: and all the things thou canst desire are not to be compared unto her.

<sup>16</sup> Length of days is in her right hand; and in her left hand riches and honour.

<sup>17</sup> Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace.

### Biblical Insight

Proverbs 3 extols the virtues of Lady Wisdom as she proves herself to be more profitable than silver, more enriching than gold, and more precious than rubies. She gives long life and brings riches. In the midst of all these wonderful blessings, perhaps a forgotten aspect of Lady Wisdom is her ability to bring peace. Those who walk with her will journey through pleasant paths. Romans 3:10-18 teaches that the ungodly do not do good. They are perverse liars full of bitterness, and their feet are swift to shed blood. They do not know the way of peace because they are not following Lady Wisdom.

### Daily Devotion

Have you ever spoken with an elderly minister and it seemed like everything he or she said was dripping with wisdom and great insight? Seasoned Christians exude both dignity and humility. When someone compliments them on wise insight, they likely direct the compliment back to God and quickly acknowledge that without God, they wouldn't have a word to say.

One of our greatest goals should be to walk with God so closely that His words come from our mouth in my daily conversations. This level of godly wisdom only comes with consistent, daily time invested in the presence of the Master. Only when we are familiar with His voice will His words and thoughts unite with ours.

### Reflection and Prayer

» *What can you do to apply this principle to your life today?*

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## DAY 5

### I Corinthians 1:27

But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty.

### Biblical Insight

In ancient Israel, Egypt, Babylon, and other places, many wise sayings come from proverbs associated with great leaders. While people needed wisdom to survive in these important areas, the weak often possessed great wisdom. Women in ancient cultures were associated with wisdom, and we often see them saving their cities. A woman mortally wounded the pretender king Abimelech in Judges 9. In II Samuel, the wise woman of Abel Beth-Maacah saved her city by throwing down the head of the rebellion leader Sheba. While many considered women weak in the ancient world, women shamed the strong, just as Paul told us in I Corinthians 1:27.

### Daily Devotion

Sometimes we confuse knowledge and wisdom. It has been quipped that knowledge knows a tomato is a fruit; wisdom knows it doesn't belong in a fruit salad. Our society is packed full of opportunities to learn new things. We are surrounded by tutorials and step-by-step instructions on everything from changing the alternator in the car to making the perfect pie. However, there are no tutorials to know when to listen to someone who just needs to verbally process an issue and when we should offer solutions. This is a perfect example of using wisdom to encourage.

It can be difficult to simply listen to a situation and not instruct when we feel we clearly know how to fix the ordeal. Many times people just need to know someone cares enough to listen to them without judgment or condemnation. When we offer a shoulder to cry on, the opportunity arises to share the truth of the gospel at a later date. Wisdom teaches us to show how much we care before we show how much we know. Think about someone in need of encouragement today and reach out with compassion to bring encouragement.

### Reflection and Prayer

» *What can you do to apply this principle to your life today?*

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# 3.2

## WISDOM'S WORKS

### TRUTH ABOUT GOD

God's wisdom produces tangible results in our lives.

### TRUTH FOR MY LIFE

I will put God's wisdom into action by obeying His Word.



#### **FOCUS VERSE: Proverbs 31:31**

Give her of the fruit of her hands; and let her own works praise her in the gates.

#### **LESSON TEXT: Proverbs 31:10-31**



**Lesson Title:** Wisdom's Works

**Icebreaker:** What is the wisest decision you have ever made?

I. WISDOM IS DISPLAYED THROUGH OUR ACTIONS

» *What bits of wisdom have others shared with you? Why did you find them so valuable?*

A. Attributes of Wisdom

» *What will you do to follow the example of wisdom set by the Proverbs 31 woman?*

B. I Will Put God's Wisdom into Action through Obedience to His Word

» *What are some of the major distinctions between the people of God and the world?*

II. MY FAITH IN JESUS IS DISPLAYED THROUGH MY ACTIONS

» *What parts of your life need evaluating? Where could you use a little more wisdom in your daily life?*

A. Wisdom Is Proved Right by Her Deeds

» *What are some keys for success that do not change over time?*

B. God So Loved That He Gave, Proving His Love through Action

C. I Will Show My Faith in God and Love for Him through My Daily Actions

» *Whom do you know who is in need? How can you help to meet the spiritual needs and other needs they may have?*

**Prayer Focus**

- Praise to God for His wisdom He so willingly gives
- For God to continue to give us wisdom to do right for the right reasons

# BIBLICAL OVERVIEW

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**Lesson Text:** Proverbs 31:10-31

The Proverbs 31 woman represents a model for ladies to follow. Although they need not possess all her skills or even her exact abilities, they should appreciate her diligence and the way she cared for her husband and her children. One of the key features of the passages is her use of material to create clothing. For generations, some people have derogatorily referred to the world's oldest profession as prostitution. This idea is not only demeaning toward women, but it is also historically inaccurate. The world's oldest profession is textile manufacturing. Women first worked the loom to create clothing before any other vocations came into existence.

The skill of weaving required the ability to procure the right materials. The Proverbs 31 woman had the know-how to acquire whatever she needed. She likely learned how to work the loom from her mother. Women often used songs to remember particular patterns with the words and rhythm helping them produce the desired object each time. Even today, indigenous women still weave and often use ancient songs to help them make clothes, blankets, and linens.

The Proverbs 31 woman held the distaff and grasped the spindle with her fingers. The heart of her husband likely trusted in her because even if he could not see her, he could hear the consistent cadence of her loom. He and their children had no fear of the snow because they would be clothed with scarlet. This ideal woman not only provided wardrobes for her family, but she also sold linen garments and sashes to merchants.

We should not be surprised that many passages in Proverbs refer to wisdom as a woman. For example, Proverbs 1 speaks of her crying out in the streets. Proverbs 3 says she is more precious than jewels and has long life in her right hand and riches and honor in her left hand. While these chapters and others present a grand view of Lady Wisdom on a metaphorical level, we can see the practicality of a wise woman in Proverbs 31, producing tangible results.

THE WORLD'S OLDEST PROFESSION IS  
TEXTILE MANUFACTURING. WOMEN FIRST  
WORKED THE LOOM TO CREATE CLOTHING  
BEFORE ANY OTHER VOCATIONS CAME  
INTO EXISTENCE.

# DAY 1

## Proverbs 31:10-15

<sup>10</sup> Who can find a virtuous woman? for her price is far above rubies.

<sup>11</sup> The heart of her husband doth safely trust in her, so that he shall have no need of spoil.

<sup>12</sup> She will do him good and not evil all the days of her life.

<sup>13</sup> She seeketh wool, and flax, and worketh willingly with her hands.

<sup>14</sup> She is like the merchants' ships; she bringeth her food from afar.

<sup>15</sup> She riseth also while it is yet night, and giveth meat to her household, and a portion to her maidens.

## Biblical Insight

While the Book of Proverbs has a universal appeal because anyone can glean from its teaching, Wisdom Literature in the Bible often focused on training young men. They needed to know how to honor their parents, behave in the king's court, and conduct themselves properly at all times. While we recognize the importance of wisdom in the palace and among the elders at the city gate, we cannot ignore the fact that wisdom often begins at home. The Bible speaks of wise women, and Proverbs 31 tells the story of one of the wisest and most prosperous woman of all time. She must have taught her children well—both her sons and her daughters.

## Daily Devotion

Many nations around the world have instituted laws that establish the rights of women. North Americans generally provide and protect a place for women to forge their own paths. Today we are surrounded by women making a difference in the home and in the world at large.

This is no new thing; the pattern was set by the virtuous woman of Proverbs 31. In addition to her influence in the community, Scripture bares out that she cared for household. A mother's influence is understated today. Those who one day become business owners, teachers, doctors, creatives, lawyers and everything else first sit in the presence of their greatest teacher, their mother. Not only are lessons concerning basic education bestowed upon the little hearts and minds of civilization, but also the examples of character, moral responsibility, and righteous living.

A mother's influence is a bedrock for each individual, and the impact shapes our world. Our greatest calling may not be what we do, but whom we raise. Take a moment to honor your mother or her memory this week. If you are a mother, be encouraged that you are a treasure and your influence is far-reaching.

## Reflection and Prayer

» *What can you do to apply this principle to your life today?*

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## DAY 2

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### Proverbs 31:11

The heart of her husband doth safely trust in her, so that he shall have no need of spoil.

### Biblical Insight

Proverbs 31 was likely written to encourage young men to choose the right spouse while also serving as a paradigm for young women to follow. Verse 11 proves to be key in this study because it states that the husband of the Proverbs 31 woman lacked nothing of value. The distinction is important because the world may place a certain value on things that prove worthless. In fact, the Bible often talks about “sons of Belial.” Literally, they were sons of worthlessness—good for nothing. They lacked all the good things that make an individual wise and prosperous.

### Daily Devotion

It was the most wonderful time of the year. At least that is how the children remember the year their mother spent extra time making Christmas decorations with them. Bright-colored paper made into a chain decorated their mantle, and handcrafted ornaments were hung with pride. They were the most beautiful Christmas decorations the children had ever seen.

What the children did not know was there was no money that year for extra things. The budget was tight, and the parents were concerned about making ends meet. However, the home was filled with love, faith, and a sense of well-being. This sense of stability did not come from unexpected financial blessings, but from the heart of a woman who used her God-given ability to nurture her family and to ensure nothing was lacking in the hearts of her children.

That year, that little mother stepped into her calling with greatness, and her family lacked for nothing. Our ministry in the home is not determined by the riches we possess, but how we use what we have.

### Reflection and Prayer

» *What can you do to apply this principle to your life today?*

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## DAY 3

### Proverbs 31:14

She is like the merchants' ships; she bringeth her food from afar.

### Biblical Insight

The people of ancient Israel had access to diverse food choices since they lived in a land flowing with milk and honey. Nevertheless, finding the right items proved important for the Proverbs 31 woman. She prepared such a diversity of dishes that the text compares her to merchant ships bringing food from a great distance. The Bible tells us she could procure the best linen and flax, and she possessed the same acumen with food choices, serving up the best of international cuisine for her crew.

### Daily Devotion

Not all leftovers are created equal. Perhaps you have a family recipe such as a legendary spaghetti sauce or a savory stew that is wonderful on the first night and even better on the second night. Unfortunately, not all dishes improve with time, and leftovers have a negative connotation for that reason.

It's possible to unintentionally present our family with the leftovers of our time and patience. Situations in life tend to require our complete attention during the day and drain us. However, when we finally get home and sit down with our family, we have to decide whether we will present them with our full attention and energy or if we will give them the leftovers of my patience.

There will be days when it feels leftovers are all you have to offer. Fortunately the Lord helps us in every season. We can rely on Him to give us renewed strength. Pray today that the Lord would strengthen you and help you to prioritize your family.

### Reflection and Prayer

» *What can you do to apply this principle to your life today?*

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## DAY 4

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### Proverbs 31:16

She considereth a field, and buyeth it: with the fruit of her hands she planteth a vineyard.

### Biblical Insight

The Proverbs 31 woman possessed the good business sense to consider a field and then purchase it. Women in ancient Israel could own property, but it was not easy. Numbers 36 tells the story of the daughters of Zelophehad who wanted to maintain their family inheritance. Moses told them they needed to marry within their clan. In Joshua 17, these women received their inheritance in the Promised Land along with the men in their family. Most likely, the husband of the Proverbs 31 woman trusted in her to buy the field. His trust was well served because she sold the field and then planted a vineyard with her earnings.

### Daily Devotion

Living abundantly is a choice. Take our finances, for instance. The choices we make every day will either lead us toward financial freedom or keep us in the bondage of debt.

Consequently, we can apply godly wisdom to our financial situations by acknowledging the habits we have formed that lead to the formation of debt and then making the practical steps to correct them, one new habit at a time. This is applicable in so many areas of our lives, such as relationships, eating habits, sleep patterns, and even faithfulness in our walk with God.

Jesus came that we may have life more abundantly, but it is our choice whether or not we will allow Him to fulfill that promise in us. If we are willing to let God do a new thing in us, we must be willing to put away the habits of bondage. After all, we are new creatures in Him, and that requires new, healthy habits of growth.

### Reflection and Prayer

» *What can you do to apply this principle to your life today?*

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## DAY 5

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### Proverbs 31:20

She stretcheth out her hand to the poor; yea, she reacheth forth her hands to the needy.

### Biblical Insight

The Book of Amos decries those who fail to help the poor, condemning the elite of the northern kingdom of Israel who sold out their brothers and sisters. In Amos 4:1, the prophet castigated the women of the nation, calling them “kine [cows] of Bashan.” Despite being elite and having more than enough for themselves and their families, they ignored the cries of the poor and even made things worse. The Proverbs 31 woman would not have faced such criticism because she reached out to the poor, despite her busy life.

### Daily Devotion

It is easy to become overwhelmed with the push for charity during the holidays since we do not want to feel guilt for not helping the less fortunate while enjoying our own festivities. The ease of conscience has become one of the greatest marketing campaigns ever. However, what about the rest of the year? Shouldn't we have an open heart concerning those around us all year long?

Charity is most effective when it is most sincere. The human tendency to turn service into something self-serving is nothing new. One of Martin Luther's critique of the high church in the 1500s was his objection to the faux humility and hypocrisy he sensed in the practice of footwashing. Religious leaders were making a show of washing a needy person's feet to portray themselves as caring and compassionate. They irony, hypocrisy, and exploitation of what Jesus instituted for the purpose of service and humility outraged Luther, and he admonished believers instead to focus on serving their neighbors.

Our human nature is prone to self-serving tendencies; however, as we pursue a depth in our walk with God and a genuine love for others, God helps correct our perspective. Consider how you could help someone in need this week and how God can get the glory.

### Reflection and Prayer

» *What can you do to apply this principle to your life today?*

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# 3.3

## WISDOM WAITS

### TRUTH ABOUT GOD

God acts according to His sovereign timeline.

### TRUTH FOR MY LIFE

I will patiently trust God's timing for my life.



### FOCUS VERSE: Ecclesiastes 3:11

He hath made every thing beautiful in his time: also he hath set the world in their heart, so that no man can find out the work that God maketh from the beginning to the end.

### LESSON TEXT: Ecclesiastes 3:1-15



**Lesson Title:** Wisdom Waits

**Icebreaker:** What is the fastest you have ever driven to avoid being late?

- I. THERE IS A TIME FOR EVERY PURPOSE AND ACTIVITY
  - » *How good are you at managing your time with God? What can you do to improve?*
  - A. Seasons Are a Natural Part of Life
    - » *What steps can we take to manage lifetime goals?*
  - B. Wisdom Includes Knowing How to Wait Patiently for the Right Season
  - C. I Will Follow God's Plan and Will for My Life
    - » *Think about a time when God appeared to be silent. How did you make it through to hear His voice again?*
- II. TIMING IS CRITICAL IN THE CHRISTIAN LIFE
  - » *Why do you think God sometimes seems to delay things in our lives?*
  - A. When the Time Was Right, God Sent Forth His Son
  - B. If We Patiently Labor, We Will Reap the Harvest "in Due Season"
  - C. I Will Patiently Trust God's Timing for My Life
    - » *How can we be more intentional about accepting God's timing in our lives?*

**Prayer Focus**

- For the discernment to know God's timing in our lives
- For the grace to trust God's timing in our lives

# BIBLICAL OVERVIEW

**Lesson Text:** Ecclesiastes 3:1-15

Ever since God created humanity on the sixth day, people have wrestled with time. Some claim to manage it. Others try to tame it. Some seem caught in its escapable web, showing up late and consistently trying and failing to meet deadlines. Still others attempt to ignore it, but it will eventually catch up with all of us.

Ecclesiastes 3 presents time in a very real way, recognizing that different seasons and times exist in our lives. While other passages in the Bible focus on particular transitions in life, Ecclesiastes pairs opposite times together to show that we will experience both healing and hurt, building up and tearing down, life and death.

We can learn a great deal when we compare Ecclesiastes to other verses of Scripture. Psalm 30:11 features the rejoicing we feel when the Lord turns our mourning into dancing because He has taken off our sackcloth and clothed us with joy. In contrast, Lamentations 5:14-15 speaks of a time when young men have left their music. The joy of the people's hearts has ceased. Their dancing has turned into mourning. This great reversal reflects a common feature of laments. Ecclesiastes 3 takes us in a different direction than these passages. Rather than focusing on one thing or the other or noting a reversal of the situation, verse 4 simply tells us there is a time to mourn and a time to dance. We will experience both seasons in our lives.

When we sing, "You have turned my mourning into dancing," we do not want to think of the reality presented in Ecclesiastes. Many readers have noted the potentially depressing nature of the book. However, perhaps we should view its wisdom as a reality check.

We all like to have times of laughing, dancing, and embracing. Indeed, Qoheleth, also known as the Preacher in Ecclesiastes, wrestled with hedonism in 2:24, saying there is nothing better than eating, drinking, and making merry. However, Qoheleth did not stop there. He recognized all the various seasons of life. Perhaps he was telling us to enjoy the good times while we can because old age and other challenges of life await us. Therefore, we must trust the Master of time in our lives.

EVER SINCE GOD CREATED HUMANITY  
ON THE SIXTH DAY, PEOPLE HAVE  
WRESTLED WITH TIME.

# DAY 1

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## Ecclesiastes 3:1

To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven.

### Biblical Insight

Ecclesiastes 3 can help us to better understand the history of humanity and the nation of Israel. Creation was a time to be born. The people were planted in Egypt, and God plucked them up in the Exodus. In the Wilderness Wanderings, they sought the Promised Land and lost out due to unbelief. God used kings to build up the nation, but then it was broken apart when Israel and Judah split into two kingdoms. The Exile was a time to tear, and the Return was a time to sew. Then Jesus came to stop our weeping, mourning, and losing by giving us laughter, peace, and love.

### Daily Devotion

A young pastor's wife went through a particularly terrifying season with her health. Mentally, she was overwhelmed, and then her physical strength became taxed as well. She could feel her body starting to go downhill. She went to the doctor expecting some basic blood work to answer all her questions and perhaps a good dose of vitamins to fix all her problems. However, it was not that simple. The condition with her health would not be discovered until nearly a year later. She sat in the doctor's office feeling completely hopeless. She knew something was wrong, but they couldn't find the problem.

When the doctor realized how distressed she was becoming, he stopped all the medical language and pulled his chair up in front of her. With a kind and comforting voice, he said, "You know, we all have seasons." Although his words held truth, he spoke more than just wisdom to her on that day; he spoke comfort. The Lord showed her that this season would be difficult, but it wouldn't last forever.

If you're in one of those difficult seasons today, be encouraged; it won't last forever.

### Reflection and Prayer

» *What can you do to apply this principle to your life today?*

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## DAY 2

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### Ecclesiastes 3:3

A time to kill, and a time to heal; a time to break down, and a time to build up.

### Biblical Insight

The Ten Commandments state, “Thou shalt not kill.” Most translators argue that the verse should read, “Thou shalt not murder.” Only in very particular circumstances does the Bible sanction violence, such as in times of war. Because of the sin in this world, there may be times when killing becomes necessary for defense. These seasons should be the rarity. Nations and individuals should always be looking for times to heal because untreated wounds can lead to more times to kill. Many historians argue World War II occurred because the nations of the world punished Germany without mercy after World War I. Without healing, more killing happened. Moving beyond history to our personal lives, we must seek the times of healing and building up.

### Daily Devotion

Have you ever had a plan B—a backup plan just in case your first plan wasn’t successful? Someone jokingly made the statement that if this Christian life doesn’t work out, he would make a great bank robber. Although the statement was made in jest, it makes you wonder how many people go into their walk with God with a backup plan.

If people enter marriage thinking there is a good possibility the marriage will fail, therefore they need to have new prospects on the back burner, the marriage will likely fail. Our walk with God is no different. If we entertain hypothetical, alternative lifestyles or allow thoughts of what our life would be like if we were not serving God, we will sabotage our Christian walk.

There is a time to kill, a time to completely assassinate, all backup plans and what-ifs in our walk with God. Sell out completely and whole heartedly; you won’t regret it.

### Reflection and Prayer

» *What can you do to apply this principle to your life today?*

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## DAY 3

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### Ecclesiastes 3:5

A time to cast away stones, and a time to gather stones together; a time to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing.

### Biblical Insight

Some people may feel joy when they read about a time of embracing, especially the huggers among us. Some may feel surprised to read about a time to refrain from embracing. This verse likely connects to the purity laws in the Torah—any number of sanctions about avoiding human contact during times a person was unclean. Perhaps a broader principle for us today is to understand and respect boundaries in relationships.

### Daily Devotion

Perhaps a decade ago we never imagined a day when hugs would be unwelcome in our society. However, a combination of the prevalence of abuse and the recent pandemic brought about significant changes. The implementation of social distancing brought about newfound reservations toward human contact such as hugs, to some degree changing our traditions of physical contact. Although there is some hygienic benefit to the lack of human contact, the mental effect has become a serious issue.

According to Forbes magazine, a person needs at least four hugs a day for survival. Scientific evidence supports the claim that a hug can help reduce high blood pressure, strengthen the immune system, increase feelings of safety, and even strengthen one's sense of belonging.

No doubt extra precautions should be taken in times of health risks; however, there must be a time for everything. God made us to connect to those around us. Human interaction is necessary for survival. Wisdom encourages balance. Consider how you could reach out to someone in your circle who may need the blessing of human interaction this week.

### Reflection and Prayer

» *What can you do to apply this principle to your life today?*

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# DAY 4

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## Ecclesiastes 3:7

A time to rend, and a time to sew; a time to keep silence, and a time to speak.

### Biblical Insight

The Bible teaches the incredible power of the tongue. Proverbs 18:21 tells us that life and death are in the power of the tongue. James chapter 3 warns of the unruly nature of the tongue, noting that such a little part of the body can cause major destruction. Therefore we need to be careful when we speak. Sometimes silence can prove more golden than the words of wisdom we think we might have. We should all follow the advice of James and think before we speak. He tells us to be “swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath” (James 1:19).

### Daily Devotion

A mother who wanted to prepare her daughter for her first day of middle school took her daughter shopping. They bought decorations for her new locker, gym shoes, new clothes, and a tube of toothpaste. When they got home, the young girl inquired why her mother had purchased the toothpaste; it seemed so random.

Taking advantage of the perfect opportunity, the mother took a plate out of the cabinet and handed it to the young girl along with the toothpaste. She then instructed her daughter to squeeze all the toothpaste from the tube onto the plate. The girl completed the task with ease, just as the mother expected. Then the mother made her point; she instructed the girl to put all the toothpaste back into the tube. Exasperated, the girl exclaimed that she could not; the task was impossible. “Exactly,” the mother said. She continued to explain that words are just like the toothpaste; once they are spoken, there is no way to put them back where they came from, so choose them wisely. That advice is not only good for students beginning middle school; in all seasons of life we should ask the Lord to give us wisdom in our conversation.

### Reflection and Prayer

» *What can you do to apply this principle to your life today?*

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## DAY 5

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### Ecclesiastes 3:8

A time to love, and a time to hate; a time of war, and a time of peace.

### Biblical Insight

Some people who read the Bible criticize it for including phrases like “a time to hate.” They argue that we should never hate. While in theory the idea is good, it is simply not realistic. At times we all wrestle with anger and frustration. In Psalm 137 we read that the ancient Israelites felt hate seething in their bones; they wished God would cause the babies of the Babylonians to be dashed among the rocks. People reading this verse often forget that these mothers and fathers experienced this atrocity at the hands of the Babylonians. They needed to express their hurt. While we should never act on our rage, sometimes these times of hate are necessary to bring back times of love and peace.

### Daily Devotion

Think about the last strong emotion you felt. Was it anger? joy? sadness? something else? Often we reduce our emotions into simplified generic labels, but the range of emotions we experience span a broad spectrum that might surprise you when you take the time to pinpoint what you’re feeling. In the 1980s psychologist Robert Plutchik theorized that eight primary human emotions could be expressed in a number of ways as a person can learn to more specifically articulate the particular emotion.

Whatever the number of emotions, what is clear is that God intentionally made us emotional creatures. How can we pray for the lost if we never feel empathy? How will we know to pray for healing if we never feel pain? And how can godly sorrow lead us to repentance if we never experience sorrow?

Emotions can be uncomfortable, but acknowledging them is vital to a relationship with Jesus Christ and others. There is a time and season for everything, even emotions. Consider today the state of your emotions. Is there anything you should do to be whole and holy in the way you steward your emotional health?

### Reflection and Prayer

» *What can you do to apply this principle to your life today?*

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# 3.4

## WISDOM'S WARNING

### TRUTH ABOUT GOD

God sees and knows everything and therefore can and will judge perfectly.

### TRUTH FOR MY LIFE

I will fear God and keep His commandments.



### FOCUS VERSE: Ecclesiastes 12:14

For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil.

### LESSON TEXT: Ecclesiastes 12:1-14



**Lesson Title:** Wisdom's Warning

**Icebreaker:** What is the wisest advice you have ever received? What about the wisest advice you have ever given?

- I. NOW IS THE TIME TO SERVE GOD
  - » *What steps can you take to make more time for the Lord?*
  - A. Time Will Eventually Rob Us of Both Opportunity and Strength
  - B. I Will Serve God Now
    - » *What are some things you would like to accomplish in your lifetime? What is on your "bucket list"?*
- II. GOD WILL RIGHTEOUSLY JUDGE EVERY WORK
  - A. Every Secret Will Be Revealed and Every Word Judged
    - » *If you were allowed only one tweet or one paragraph for the world to remember you by, what would you write?*
  - B. I Will Align My Words, Actions, and Motives to God's Word
- III. OUR HIGHEST PRIORITY IS TO FEAR GOD AND KEEP HIS COMMANDMENTS
  - » *Think of an example of someone who blatantly disobeyed the Word of God. What was the result?*
  - A. Our Greatest Obligation in Life Is to God
  - B. I Will Fear God and Keep His Commandments
    - » *Give some examples of blessings you have received from obedience to God and His Word.*

**Prayer Focus**

- Examine your life to see if you are following God and keeping His commandments
- For God to reveal to you what He would have you do in your lifetime

# BIBLICAL OVERVIEW

**Lesson Text:** Ecclesiastes 12:1-14

Whenever people think about the Book of Ecclesiastes, they often turn their attention to the times and the seasons of chapter 3. They easily remember the words of the author, thought to be Solomon, but identified in the text as Qoheleth or the Preacher. After Ecclesiastes 3, perhaps one of the most famous lines we recognize from the book is “vanity of vanities, saith the Preacher, vanity of vanities; all is vanity” (1:2). Even if we cannot completely grasp the meaning behind the phrase, Qoheleth seemed very upset about something, so much so that he continually talked about vanity.

Other translations render the phrase: “Utterly meaningless! Everything is meaningless!” (NIV) and “Futility of futilities! Everything is futile!” (NASB). Because we cannot be completely sure what the phrase means, ironically, it may be utterly futile to try to translate it.

Thankfully, Ecclesiastes 1:14 may provide us with some insights because the verse shows that vanity of vanities parallels chasing after the wind (NKJV). No matter how hard we might try, we can never catch the wind. It will forever remain elusive to us. The phrase definitely helps us to see the frustration in Qoheleth’s words.

Some might go even further and argue that vanity of vanities means trying to shepherd or corral the wind. We cannot lead the wind or stop its movement throughout the earth. It is foolish to even try.

As we read through the Book of Ecclesiastes, we see Qoheleth attempting to find meaning in life. He tried enjoying pleasure, only to find it meaningless (2:1). He viewed all his achievements as meaningless (2:11). Although Ecclesiastes is usually listed among the books of Wisdom, Qoheleth even stated that being wise gained him nothing, arguing that it too was meaningless (2:15).

Although time and space prevent a full catalog of everything Qoheleth deemed meaningless, we can see he attempted to exhaust almost all possibilities to solve his existential crisis. In the end he gave up trying to chase the wind and chose to fear God. At that point, he found true wisdom, a wisdom that surpasses human understanding.

WHENEVER PEOPLE THINK ABOUT THE BOOK OF ECCLESIASTES, THEY OFTEN TURN THEIR ATTENTION TO THE TIMES AND THE SEASONS OF CHAPTER 3.

# DAY 1

## Ecclesiastes 12:1, 5-7

<sup>1</sup>Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them;

<sup>5</sup>Also when they shall be afraid of that which is high, and fears shall be in the way, and the almond tree shall flourish, and the grasshopper shall be a burden, and desire shall fail: because man goeth to his long home, and the mourners go about the streets:

<sup>6</sup>Or ever the silver cord be loosed, or the golden bowl be broken, or the pitcher be broken at the fountain, or the wheel broken at the cistern.

<sup>7</sup>Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it.

## Biblical Insight

While many people many wonder why Qoheleth wrestled with figuring out the meaning of life, perhaps the answer lies in the final chapter. Qoheleth was likely getting old. The first eight verses of the final chapter provide metaphors for failing eyesight and hearing while noting the struggle to get around without aches and pains as we age. Qoheleth may have found life meaningless because he could not do the things he once did. His wisdom should encourage us to take care of our bodies and prepare for the days when our health declines.

## Daily Devotion

The nursing home was usually quiet, at least until the latest resident arrived. Every day, the elderly lady would scream with all her might and beg the orderlies to get the witch out of the room. The staff would attempt to calm her down while patronizing her, assuming she was imagining things because of her current state of mind.

However, one day a new nurse entered the lady's room and tenderly helped her stand and walk to the restroom. When the nurse turned on the restroom light, the elderly lady shrieked and screamed, "Look, the witch!" It was then the nurse noticed that the elderly lady had simply seen her own reflection in the mirror and did not recognize herself.

During the process of time, the lady's complexion had aged, but her mind had gone back to a happier time in her life, a time when she was young and fair. In order to help the lady relax in her new setting, all mirrors were removed. It was a kind gesture to comfort an elderly lady who had just a little while yet to hold onto the vapor of time. When we think of our lives as a vapor, it should call us to set right priorities. Ask the Lord to direct you in that process this week.

## Reflection and Prayer

» *What can you do to apply this principle to your life today?*

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## DAY 2

### Ecclesiastes 12:10-14

<sup>10</sup> The preacher sought to find out acceptable words: and that which was written was upright, even words of truth.

<sup>11</sup> The words of the wise are as goads, and as nails fastened by the masters of assemblies, which are given from one shepherd.

<sup>12</sup> And further, by these, my son, be admonished: of making many books there is no end; and much study is a weariness of the flesh.

<sup>13</sup> Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man.

<sup>14</sup> For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil.

### Biblical Insight

Qoheleth set out on a quest to find proverbs he could use. He looked for the acceptable words, knowing a word fitly spoken is of great value (Proverbs 25:11). Qoheleth did not look for pretty words to tickle the ears of his hearers. He desired words of truth. Perhaps his disappointment in his quest occurred because he could not fully uncover the truth. In John 17:17, Jesus declared, “Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth.” Jesus came to be the way, the truth, and the life. When Pontius Pilate asked Jesus, “What is truth?” he was asking the wrong question because the truth was standing right in front of him.

### Daily Devotion

“Everyone has Chester drawers, don’t they?” a wife asked her husband. With a blank expression, his response was simply, “What in the world are Chester drawers?” She thought he was being silly. “Everyone knows about Chester drawers; it’s a cabinet with drawers in it that hold folded clothes.”

After an evening of intense conversation and a few internet searches, they discovered that in the region of the United States where he was raised, such a piece of furniture was called a chest of drawers. However, in the south, the term had morphed into Chester drawers. Although she would not admit it that night, the correct term was a chest of drawers, and they had nothing to do with someone named Chester. She felt as though her childhood was a lie. How could she have spent over twenty years believing something that was incorrect?

An untruth does not become true because someone has spent a lifetime believing it. When we seek the kingdom of God wholeheartedly, we will find truth and the freedom that comes with it. “And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free” (John 8:32).

### Reflection and Prayer

» *What can you do to apply this principle to your life today?*

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## DAY 3

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### Ecclesiastes 12:11

The words of the wise are as goads, and as nails fastened by the masters of assemblies, which are given from one shepherd.

### Biblical Insight

We may have heard preachers get up in the pulpit and warn us that they may be stepping on someone's toes during the sermon. Qoheleth would have had no problem with this direct style of preaching. He wrote that the words of the wise are like goads. A goad was a sharp point used to prod livestock to force them to move in the right direction. Goads are parallel to nails in the text, giving us a feeling of how wisdom can hurt us slightly while providing healing in the long term.

### Daily Devotion

After surgery, a man and his wife learned a lot about the treatment and care needed for a major incision. Although it would seem that a major incision should be covered to heal correctly, they were instructed to do just the opposite. They were very diligent to keep the incision site clean as the fresh air aided in the scabbing process. However, the time came when the healing halted, and they saw no progress for several days.

Confused as to why the treatment was no longer working, they contacted the doctor for further instruction. The doctor said, "You have to remove the old layer where the healing is complete to expose the new layer that is yet to heal." He then warned them it would be painful, but it was necessary.

At times we have to allow God to peel away the old layers that have healed in our spirits so the unhealed wounds can be exposed and consequently begin to heal. Yes, it will hurt, but the healing process is worth every bit of pain.

### Reflection and Prayer

» *What can you do to apply this principle to your life today?*

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## DAY 4

### Ecclesiastes 12:11-12

<sup>11</sup> The words of the wise are as goads, and as nails fastened by the masters of assemblies, which are given from one shepherd.

<sup>12</sup> And further, by these, my son, be admonished: of making many books there is no end; and much study is a weariness of the flesh.

### Biblical Insight

In the closing lines of Ecclesiastes, Qoheleth noted that there is no end to making books. He also stated that much study is a weariness of the flesh. His tiredness likely arose from all the proverbs he collected and analyzed. His view of research contrasts with one of the proverbs he likely collected. Proverbs 25:2 states, "It is the glory of God to conceal a thing; but the honour of kings is to search out a matter." Perhaps Qoheleth once saw the glory in researching the hidden things of God, but he realized he could never have all the knowledge and wisdom of the Lord. Something would always be hidden from him; he still needed to rely on God despite all his wisdom and achievements.

### Daily Devotion

Words are elusive in describing the transition from life to eternity. No two experiences are alike. Some families are shattered by grief and hopelessness because they knew their loved one was not right with God. However, other families sing praises to God as precious saints joyfully step into eternity with their Savior.

In their final moments, people do not seem comforted by their knowledge and education. Only their faith in God and their relationship with Him brings peace and comfort. The understanding and acceptance of the love of God is the only eternal factor that surpasses all else: "Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment: because as he is, so are we in this world" (1 John 4:17). Take a moment today to pray and make your calling and election sure.

### Reflection and Prayer

» *What can you do to apply this principle to your life today?*

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## DAY 5

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### Ecclesiastes 12:13-14

<sup>13</sup> Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man.

<sup>14</sup> For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil.

### Biblical Insight

Some people like to think the Bible only applies to those who believe it, such as Christians and Jews. However, Qoheleth preached a universal wisdom in the Book of Ecclesiastes that requires all of humanity to fear God and keep His commandments. The rabbis taught that all humans must obey certain statutes known as the Noahide Laws. These seven laws were similar to the ones that appeared in the Jerusalem Council in Acts 15 because they prohibited sexual sin and eating a live animal (i.e., eating with blood). The laws also prohibited blasphemy, idolatry, theft, and murder. They encouraged the establishment of law and order.

### Daily Devotion

After her grandmother's funeral, a lady stood by the graveside and engaged in a riveting conversation with the funeral director. They spoke of different customs no longer used in burials, such as placing the coffin six feet under the earth. The funeral director pointed to all the tombstones that filled the cemetery and asked, "Do you know what all these deceased individuals have in common? They all are buried facing the eastern sky."

Knowing what he was implying but wanting to clarify just to be sure, she asked, "Why exactly is that?" His response was, "Because the dead in Christ will rise first, we are pointing them in the right direction." How ironic that even those who have lived as atheists are buried facing the eastern sky where Jesus Christ will appear in that great and glorious day. The most important endeavor of your life will be your preparation for eternity. Today take a moment to evaluate your spiritual health and ask the Lord to speak to you about how you can grow closer to Him to be ready for His return.

### Reflection and Prayer

» *What can you do to apply this principle to your life today?*

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## **SERIES 1: THE WORK OF THE SPIRIT**

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This series, “The Work of the Spirit,” will highlight the role of the Holy Spirit in our lives. These lessons will explore the necessity of the Spirit, what it means to be led by the Spirit and empowered by the Spirit, and how we can receive victory through the Spirit. Though we as Apostolics recognize the importance of being filled with the Holy Ghost, this series will challenge each of us to daily surrender to the work of the Spirit in our lives.

## **SERIES 2: VICTORY THROUGH FAITH**

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This series, “Victory through Faith,” follows the Israelites as they learn to believe God’s promises and ultimately conquer the Promised Land. These lessons focus on the report of the twelve spies, the crossing of Jordan, the battle of Jericho, and Joshua’s final address to the Israelites. God declared special promises to Israel through Moses and Joshua and has made unfailing promises to each of us through His Word. This series will help us step into promised victory through exercising our faith.

## **SERIES 3: PUTTING OTHERS FIRST**

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This series, “Putting Others First,” will take a look at Jesus’ love for the oft overlooked. Jesus welcomed children the world rejected, and He healed a blind man the world ignored. He even ministered to a rich young ruler who had everything but the gospel. While others esteemed riches and authority, Jesus valued service and ministry to one another. Everyone, those with little or much, is welcome in the kingdom of God.

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